

Effect of Communication on Service Delivery of Enugu State Fire Service Commission

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Abstract: *The title of the research work is “effect of communication on service delivery of Enugu State fire service commission. The need for the research arose due to the less attention that has been given to effective communication in respect to discharging the constitutional duties of public agencies, especially the communication between the government agencies and the people, this communication gap has disconnect the institutions that supposed to provide services to the people, thereby breeding distrust between government service providers and citizenry. The study sought to examine the effect of communication on service delivery of fire service commission in Enugu State Nigeria. The study made use of primary and secondary data. The population for the study is 6000, this population comprises officials of fire service commission and the public while the sample size is 400. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in the administration of the questionnaires, while the data collected were presented and analyzed with frequency and percentages. The study revealed communication channels used in Enugu state fire service commission, and also it examined how effective these communication channels are, and the impediments of communication flow in Enugu state fire service. The study also determined the solution to the communication impediments. In all these the study discovered that there is no effective communication flow in Enugu state fire service commission. The study found out that there is communication gap between the people or residents of Enugu state and the fire service commission in the state as a result of the ineffective methods of communication by the organization and this has jeopardize their promptness and effectiveness in service delivery. The study found out that lack of adequate communication gadgets, poor road network, lack of motivation of workers, not sensitizing the public and lack of adequate firefighting trucks, are among the factors that militate against the effectiveness of the Enugu state fire service commission.*

INTRODUCTION

In Enugu State, many properties and lives amounting to billions of naira have been lost to fire outbreaks as a result of ineffective communication medium to reach fire service commission in the state. This ugly situation needs adequate attention between the commission and the citizenry to avoid or to curtail the menace.

Myers and Myers (1982) define organizational communication as “a central binding force that permits coordination among people and thus allows for organizational behavior.

The losses of lives and properties to fire outbreaks in Enugu State occur in different categories ranging from motor accidents to offices, residential places or buildings and bush burning or even markets. Whenever this ugly situation occurs, the citizens suffer absolutely since nobody pays them compensation or damages.

Communication permits every process of man’s life; the study of communication is no less way to study the society. Indeed, the pervasiveness of communication is what makes it a useful object of study. The field of communication study has grown enormous in recent decades because its particular perspective has proved a useful one for perceiving society.

Udeze. (2002) stated that “communication is the epicenter of human society”. It is the wheel on which all human activities revolve or will remain static and stagnant.

Nwatu (2010) opined that “without communication, life will be very boring and uninteresting”. Without communication, individual(s) cannot interact and relationship between nations, organizations will be very difficult if not impossible to conduct. Communication can increase productivity and decrease productivity. Communication can also bring about industrial harmony (peace) or industrial unrest.

Amadihe (1999:17) stated that “communication is an act or process of transmitting or exchanging intelligible information (knowledge, instruction, feelings, ideas, facts, opinions, news, intelligence, advice, message, etc.) between individuals through accepted system of signs, symbols, words or behavior and through well-defined medium or channel of communication”.

It is a circular, two-way process always involving a speaker and a listener or a sender and receiver.

Ile (1999:19) suggested that “communication lays an important function in the management of public services. Management means getting things done through others, it provides key to such dealings. Its most elementary contribution is that it facilitates the change of idea or information and the meeting of hands. It can be described as the ear and eye of the management.

The importance of communication in an organization for effective public services delivery can be likened to that of the nervous system of a biological organism. Therefore, communication, as discussed here refers to the administrative function of the public bureaucrats.

Dick. (2003) stated that “in public agencies, communication enables public bureaucrats to collect the relevant information necessary for the process of decisions making and plans.

The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (2003) maintains that “communication is any transmission of signs, signals or symbols between persons”.

Also, the New Columbia Encyclopedia (2003) insists that “communication is the transfer of information, such as thoughts and messages, as contrasted with transportation, the transfer of goods and persons”.

Rogers and Rogers (1980) argue that the behavior of individuals in organizations is best understood from communication point of view. Effective communication is a prerequisite for implementing organizational strategies as well as for managing day to day activities through people.

Many of the citizens of the state do not know the call number of the fire service commission necessitating sensitization of the people. Many car owners and bus drivers have fire extinguishers in their vehicle but just a few know how to use it while some do not refill theirs when it expires.

In the light of these, this research states the following problems: that there is no adequate communication channels in Enugu State Fire Service Commission; consequently, there are far reaching effects of communication in public services delivery and that there are also impediments to communication flow in Enugu State Fire Service Commission.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research work has the following objectives:

1. To ascertain if there is adequate communication channels in Enugu State Fire Service.
2. To find out the effects of communication on public service delivery in Enugu State Fire Service
3. To find out the impediments of communication flow in Enugu State Fire Service.
4. To proffer solutions to the problems of communication in Enugu State Fire Service.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

In the course of this research work, we applied the systems theory as a theoretical framework to vividly portray the effects of communication in the public services delivery. This theory was propounded by **David Easton** (1957).

All things can be viewed as a system and/or as part of a system, composed of systems and interfacing with other systems, systems show a circular and cyclic quality to their functioning. Certain principles apply to all systems while other principles are unique to specific types of systems. All are interconnected and affect other systems to varying degrees. All systems are constantly changing and are in dynamic balance with each other.

The system theory is of the view that the society or an organization is like a system made up of different sub-systems or parts that must work coherently for the survival of the system or the system will collapse. Here, every organization is like a system made up of different parts, like departmental, categories of workers, the government, environment and the masses.

For the organization to be at its best, all the parts must be effective or the organization will not be effective. To the system theorists, organization is to work in an atmosphere of inter-dependence and interactions with its environment which has its cultural links, it prescribes a set way of doing things.

Feedback is the key of system control, so in line with the system theory, the Enugu State Fire Service Commission has to be in harmony with its various parts, such as the departments, government, environment and the public lubricated by effective communication system for effective public services delivery or performance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research poses the following questions.

1. What are the communication channels in Enugu State Fire Service?
2. What are the effects of communication on public service delivery in Enugu State?
3. What are the impediments of communication flow in Enugu State Fire Service?
4. What are the solutions to the problem of communication in Enugu State Fire Service?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It will lead to prevention of losses of lives and properties to fire outbreaks.

It will proffer the best communication medium, effective for fire emergency situation.

It will expose the ills surrounding the poor performance of the fire service commission and thereby enhancing their capability.

It will minimize losses for fire outbreaks which will enhance economic growth.

Theoretically, the study could add to the existing body of qualitative knowledge on the issue of communication in Nigeria public sector-

Empirically, is a good guide to practicing administrators, administrative planners and reviews.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In carrying out a study of this nature, it is necessary that some critical examination be made of existing literatures so as to establish the necessary acquaintance with prevailing views and ideas in the area of study.

The literature review is arranged under the following headings.

- 1 Overview of Communication
- 2 Effects of Communication
- 3 Poor Communication Channels/gadgets as impediments to Effective Communication.
- 4 Feedback as hallmark of Effective Communication.

1 OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATION

According to Udeze (2002) communication is the epicenter of human society; it is the wheel on which all human activities will remain static and stagnant. There is no doubt that without communication, life will be very boring and uninteresting. Without communication, individual(s) cannot interact and relationship between nations, organizations will be very difficult if not impossible to conduct.

According to Nwatu, (2010) Communication is said to be the transferring of information, ideas and attitude from one person to another. It presupposes that both the sender and the receiver of such information operates at the same wavelength in terms of understanding the language or symbols.

According to Amadihe, (1999) communication is an act or process of transmitting or exchanging intelligible information (knowledge, instruction, feelings, ideas, facts, opinions, news, intelligence, advice, message, etc.) between individuals through accepted system of signs, symbols, words or behavior and through well defined medium or channel of communication.

According to Baron (2002:5) communication is a reciprocal and on-going process with all affected parties more or less engaged in creating shared meaning. Indeed, for development to occur, the exchange process must be ongoing and reciprocal.

According to Ojebode (2006:13) communication also has size related dimension. The size dimension is reflected in the following forms of communication, like intrapersonal communication, group communication, organizational communication and mass communication. The development agent should make a conscious effort to realize how a given setting can affect communication and know how to manipulate it to his/her advantage.

Gamble and Gamble (2001:13) stated that communication is a continuous process, without a definite beginning or end. It is not static. The process keeps changing. All its elements constantly interact with and affect each other. Our present communication experiences may be thoughtful as points of arrival from past encounters and as point of pasture for future ones.

According to Nirber, in Amadihe (1999), communication is the cement that makes organization of any human groups, for an organization to achieve its goals with communication, the activities within the organization must be properly coordinated. No leader can efficiently perform, no matter his other qualities as a leader if he cannot communicate to his people.

2 THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION ON SERVICE DELIVERY.

According to Ben, (2008) the most important effect of communication is to create relationship with people and things around. A piece of communication is always targeted toward other people with whom you want to have a relationship or with whom a friendship or enmity already exist.

According to Conrade & Pode (2005) the positive effect of communication is to maintain cordial relationship between the management and the people or subordinates in any establishment towards enhancing productivity or service delivery in order to achieve their lofty objective.

According to Dominick (2007:6) the strong effects of striving to achieve purposes of human communication are visible and helped bring harmony of living in a number of ways. Communications at various points help organizations in service delivery and promoting effectiveness.

According to Okunna (2002:295) effects of communication are not limited to present day activities but as a matter of fact they go beyond the limits of time and space. This is quite possible that an idea generated at one time of history is materialized in some physical form at another stage. Most scientific inventions, like radio, telephone, are the result of a multiple pieces of communication made by scientists over a period of 150 years, which is currently enhancing service delivery in various organizations.

According to Moemeka (2000) communication is responsible for social, economic and political development in our society, communication; also enhance intellectual capacity of the people in every society, through exchange of ideas, message and scores of issues shared by the people in the society as well as in an organization to effectively and efficiently enhance service delivery and productivity.

According to Gamble (1996) there are three kinds of effects namely, physical emotional and cognitive effect. Physical effect occurs when someone does a physical act as a result of what you said, if this results in a change of mood as regard to service delivery the effect is said to be emotional, but in a situation where a new idea or knowledge is received in order to enhance service delivery, the effect is cognitive.

3 POOR COMMUNICATION CHANNELS/GADGETS AS IMPEDIMENTS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION.

According to Nwatu, (2010:127) poor communication channels could lead to the breakdown of communication, which may result to catastrophic consequences in every walk of life; it could also lead to major wars that could lead to decimation of human lives. Any gap in communication even in a home, between husband and wife may result to total divorce.

According to Enudu (1999:34) posited that for communication to be successful, the message will not only pass through the channel to the destination but it must also be received by the intended person or group of persons through appropriate channel for decoding and attaching meaning to the message, therefore poor communication channel hinders feedback, which jeopardize the essence of communication.

According to Ben et al (2008:19) the popular channels of communication include face-to-face or oral media such as speeches, lectures and sermons or preaching; written or print media such as letters, tracts, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, posters, books, audio-visual or electronic media such as radio, television films and slides. For communication to be effective, the channel must be defined by the receiver and the sender in order to receive appropriate feedback.

According to Moemeka (2000) poor communication channel distorts message, information and feedback in any organization, therefore communication can hardly function effectively without properly designed channel that will accommodate the receivers understanding or comprehension. Therefore, whatever media are used, whatever strategy is employed in communication activities, adequate channel should not be taken lightly.

According to Yunkim (1992) poor communication channels hinder the achievement of organizational objectives, therefore for an organization to achieve its set objectives in administration or management, there must be a flourishing communication channel between the management and public.

FEEDBACK AS HALLMARK OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION.

According to Ben and Ifeanyi (2008) positive and negative feedback can come from internal or external sources. Internal feedback is the feedback you give yourself as you monitor your own behavior or performance during a transaction. External feedback is feedback from others who are involved in the communication event.

According to Dominick (2007) these responses of the receiver shape and alter the subsequent messages of the source and represent a reversal of the flow of communication. The original source becomes the receiver; the original receiver becomes the new source. This is why communication is an exchange and a “talking with” experience not “talking at”.

According to Ojebode (2006) communication is a two-way process. It is give-and-take simultaneous process with a past, a present and a future; our past experiences affect the way we react to a communicative situation. When we communicate with someone, we think of the future. The way we do this will show whether we want the relationship or encounter to continue in future or not.

According to Baron (2002:7) feedback encourages us to continue behaving the way we are doing. It encourages and enhances the communication behavior in progress. Negative feedback extinguishes behavior, or attempts to change it. Negative feedback can help eliminate unwanted ineffective behavior.

According to Gamble (1996) feedback may be immediate or delayed. Immediate feedback takes place when the reactions of the receiver are directly perceived by the source. Feedback is usually immediate in face-to-face communication while it is delayed in mass communication.

According to Moemeka (2000) feedback is important to the source because it enables him or her to assess the impact of the message on the receiver and know whether there is a need for a change in the message, strategy or some element in the communication process. The same applies to the receiver.

According to Gamble and Gamble (2002:17) we need feedback from others all the time and others are constantly in need of feedback from us. Thus, opportunities for self-other discovery abound in interpersonal, small group, public and media communication. They noted that, it is through communication encounters that we are able to learn why we are trusting or untrusting, whether we can make our thoughts and feelings clear, under what conditions do we have power to influence others and whether we can effectively make decisions and resolve conflicts and problems.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The research design used was case study method. This is significant because case study research deals with the particular application of the already standardized theories available in social and behavioral sciences. It deals with the study of how theories developed through pure research works in practical life situation.

In this method, opinions of the respondents were ascertained through the administration of questionnaires. The study will involve a standardized instrument called an evaluation questionnaire, on the effects of communication in public services delivery in Enugu State.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION TABLE

CATEGORIES OF DISTRIBUTION	POPULATION	PERCENTAGE
Female	2500	42
Male	3500	58
Total	6000	100

Source: Research Data, 2021

SAMPLE SIZE DISTRIBUTION

CATEGORY OF DISTRIBUTION	TOTAL	SAMPLE	PERCENTAGE
Female	2500	202	51
Male	3500	198	49
Total	6000	400	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

FINDINGS

The study made interesting revelation about the effects of communication on public services delivery in Nigeria (A case study of Enugu State Fire Service Commission). This study vividly revealed that effective communication is a prerequisite for any organization to function and perform its roles efficiently and effectively, especially those involved in public services delivery.

In this work, i was able to discover that there is no effective communication flow in Enugu State Fire Service Commission, hence the poor quality of services that they render to the masses.

The study found out that there is communication gap between the people or the residents of Enugu State and the Fire Service Commission in the state as a result of the use of wrong channel by the organization to communicate to the public which in turn jeopardizes their promptness and effectiveness in service delivery.

The study found out that lack of adequate communication gadgets, poor road network, lack of motivation of workers, not sensitizing the public and lack of adequate firefighting trucks are among the factors that militate against the effectiveness of the Enugu State Fire Service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. Efforts should be made by the information and communication ministry or department involved to improve the condition of communication in the Enugu State Fire Service Commission, which is in a sorry state, such as buying new communication equipment.
2. Government should also endeavor to construct motorable roads that link various areas in the urban area for easy accessibility in case of any fire outbreak.
3. The Fire Service Commission should publicize their distress call numbers through appropriate channel or medium, such as the mass media and not only by writing them on the walls of their office building.
4. The workers should be shown a good gesture by providing to them protective and preventive kits that will enhance efficient and effective service delivery.
5. Sequel to the findings, I recommend that the feedback system in the Fire Service Commission should be improved; this can be done by creating a cordial relationship between the management and the workers so that they can feel free to pass on information and reactions upwards as feedback.
6. Be that as it may, management of the Enugu State Fire Service Commission should train and retrain workers from time to time in order to update them with new technologies as regards to fire fighting and communication.
7. I recommend that since telephone is the quickest channel in communicating or passing information to the Fire Service Commission in emergency situation. Therefore, telephone should be made more affordable
8. I recommend three digit or four digit phone number such as 112 or 1123 that will be easy to remember in case of any fire outbreak or accident

CONCLUSION

The researcher hereby conclude by stating clearly that for any organization to succeed, there must be effective and adequate information flow at the right time-

(communication), it is what the management uses to dish out orders and commands goal actualization. If the Enugu State Fire Service Commission implements all the recommendations made by the researcher, then the effects of communication in public service delivery in Enugu State shall be positive and lives and properties will be saved for the betterment of all. In connection to all the analysis made, i tend to study and understand how the concept of communication can bring about effective public services delivery in Enugu State, using the Fire Service Enugu as a case study. It is of keen interest to me to find out if communication makes difference to public service delivery in Fire Service, Enugu.

All these occur as a result of lack of adequate communication channel between the citizens and the fire service commission.

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