

The Nature of Communication in Secondary Schools in Makindye Division, Kampala District, Uganda

Dr. Kayindu Vincent*, Nakiyingi Sarah

Kampala International University, Uganda

**Corresponding Author*

Abstract: Carried out in all the 16 secondary schools found in the eight parishes of Makindye division, Kampala district Uganda, this study explored, among other things, the nature of communication in secondary schools in Makindye division, between school managers and classroom teachers, between school managers and the learners, as well as between teachers and learners/students. The idea was to find out whether it was very good, good, poor or very poor. Communication in schools was conceptualized in terms of verbal and nonverbal, written and electronic communication between school administrators and teachers, between school administrators and students as well as between teachers and students. Since secondary schools in Makindye are few, only 16, and since at the time of data collection only two classes were at school, S.4 and S.6, there was no sampling of the teachers. Thus, all the 16 schools and 198 teachers of S4 and S6 participated in the study. Out of the 198 questionnaires which are distributed to all the teachers using five research assistants, 150 usable questionnaires were returned, hence the response rate of 79.4%. Ten out of the very teachers who filled the questionnaires were also subjected to oral interviews. In addition, twenty students were interviewed to supply information about their teachers' productivity and communication in their schools. Using arithmetic means to analyze data, the findings revealed that communication in schools was generally poor (mean). The researcher recommended for the need of a more effective communication system in schools.

Key words: Communication; Secondary schools

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational communication is defined as the process by which language and social interaction promote coordinated action towards a common goal. It is the study of how systematic communication practices are used to coordinate and control the activities of members inside an organization. This practice of communication will then promote organizational effectiveness. In schools, communication exists between school administrators and teachers, between school administrators and the non-teaching staff, between school administrators and students, between school administrators and other stakeholders, such as parents and the local leaders or government, and also the communication between classroom instructors and the learners, parents and non-teaching staff. This communication is vital and can influence the productivity of teachers (Cole, 2010).

Communication can be written, verbal or non-verbal. Written

communication is the delivery of information or message to the recipients in written form, such as through circulars on notice boards, sending messages on individual members' phones, e-mails or writing letters to them. Verbal communication is the delivery of information or message to the recipients by word of mouth, such as telling people or a person face to face or through phone calls. Non-verbal communication is the delivery of information or message to the recipients indirectly by requiring a person to use common sense to get that information. These are usually referred to as non-verbal cues. If a school administrator for instance usually looks at teachers with an angry face, that can send a signal to teachers that there is something wrong, and vice versa (Drucker, 2008).

Whereas effective communication is necessary in all organizations, there is a tendency in schools for headteachers to promote one-way communication; from school managers to the employees and students, and discourage or fail to adhere to the communication from teachers to the school managers. In other instances, headteachers over-listen to students such that whatever they report about their teachers is taken as the gospel truth and a teacher can be sacked by merely basing on such rumors without giving him or her chance to defend him/herself (Naigaga, 2017). This study was therefore carried out to establish the nature of communication in post-primary schools in Makindye division, whether it was very good, good, poor or very poor.

1.1 Problem Statement

In all organizations, communication is a key aspect. If communication is poor or very poor, adverse effects can result, yet if it is good or very good, positive effects can be got. Based on media reports, government publications and academic researches, it is claimed and stated that poor communication exists in many educational institutions. Educational institutions' managers' failure to communicate effectively to students and staff has led to strikes in public educational institutions. Some leaders of educational institutions are poor communicators as they are rude and arrogant. Others use institutional e-mails to communicate to employees yet some members of staff do not have active e-mails of the institutions they are working in; they usually use their personal e-mail addresses. The founders and managers of private educational institutions always urge

students to report to Management all the teachers they no longer want to teach them and once the institutional managers get the information from students, they tend to react by expelling the concerned teachers without even giving them an opportunity to defend themselves. In other instances, abrupt staff meetings are held after very short period of communicating to teachers and those who fail to attend are punished (The National Council for Higher Education, 2019; Musota, 2017; Naigaga, 2017). Whereas these claims are common, they do not specifically mention secondary schools in Makindye division, hence the current study.

II. RELATED LITERATURE

Communication is the act of transferring information from one place, person or group to another. It is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, sign or behaviors. In order to effectively carry out the activities of an organisation, there needs to be effective communication from the managers to the subordinates so that the subordinates are informed of what is required of them, how and when. Whereas communication is in many instances from superiors to the subordinates, at times it should also be from subordinates to the superiors. The subordinates need to take directives, advice and guidance from the superiors/managers, and the managers also need to listen to what the subordinates say, otherwise the organisational objectives may not be achieved (Dessler, 2008; Cole, 2010).

Communication is a process that ensures transfer of information, ideas, facts, opinions, messages and behavioural inputs from a sender to a receiver with the message being understood by the receiver. In other words, it is what the receiver understands, not what the sender says or intends to mean. If a sender wants to mean something and the receiver understands a different thing, then that is not communication; it implies that communication has not taken place.

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. Verbal communication is the use of words as may be produced orally in the human speech. This can be intrapersonal or interpersonal. With intrapersonal communication, it goes on in an individual's mind. As one conceives an idea, one thinks of it, trying to put it in a rational and meaningful manner. With interpersonal communication, two people exchange ideas and information physically (face-to-face), one phone, or through teleconference devices. There is also group communication whereby a person or persons can talk to many other people, such as a teacher addressing learners, a headteacher addressing students and teachers, a religious leader communicating to a congregation, etcetera (Drucker, 2008).

Communication can also be non-verbal. This is made up of body movement which can be exhibited in body language

or paralanguage. Paralanguage refers to the conveying of information not by actual words but by qualities of the voice, such as pitch, volume, resonance, rhythm, whistling, belching, moaning, groaning, yelling or even whispering. Body language refers to the use of one's body gestures, movements or even silence to put a message forward.

In all organisations, communication is important as it guides employees on what to do and how to do it. In the accomplishment of all management functions like planning, controlling and organising, communication is necessary. Also, bringing about change in individuals working in an organisation, communication is necessary. Communication is also necessary in persuading clients to buy or appreciate goods and services in an organisation; the more one convinces clients through communication, the better one stands the chances of his/her goods and services being appreciated.

In order for the manager to explain to the employees the goals of an organization, the duties of the different categories of employees, how to carry out these duties effectively, effective communication is necessary and must not be ambiguous; clear statements must be used for the employees to understand properly. This provides coordination between various employees and also departments. Therefore, communication helps a lot in coordinating activities in an organisation. The manager's roles in an organisation include among others, staffing, planning, coordination, and control (Drucker, 2008). All these can be done properly if effective communication exists in an organisation. Proper communication provides information to the manager which helps him/her in making sound decisions, as no proper decisions could be taken in the absence of information. Thus, communication is the basis for taking the right decisions. In addition, through communication, the manager conveys the targets and instructions and allocates jobs to the subordinates. All of these aspects involve communication. Communication is therefore an essential aspect. The two-way communication process promotes co-operation and mutual understanding amongst the workers and also between them and their bosses. Good communication also helps the workers to adjust to the physical and social aspect of work. It also improves good human relations at the place of work. An efficient system of communication enables the management to motivate, influence and satisfy the subordinates which in turn boosts their morale and keeps them motivated (Beach, 2005).

Communication can also be informal. Any communication that takes place without following the formal channels of communication is said to be non-formal. The non-formal communication is often referred to as the 'grapevine' as it spreads throughout the organization and in all directions without any regard to the levels of authority. The informal communication spreads rapidly, often gets distorted and it is very difficult to detect the source of such communication. It also leads to rumors which are not true. People's behavior is often affected by the rumors and informal discussions which

sometimes may hamper the work environment (Durbin, 2004).

However, sometimes these channels may be helpful as they carry information rapidly and, therefore, may be useful to the manager at times. Informal channels are also used by the managers to transmit information in order to know the reactions of his/her subordinates.

Whereas communication is necessary in any organization, it usually faces many barriers. These may prevent communication or those being communicated to may not get the message correctly; the message can be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Therefore, it is essential for a manager to identify such possible barriers and take steps to avoid them. The barriers to communication in organizations can be personal, organizational, psychological, and semantic. Semantic barriers are concerned with the problems and obstructions in the process of encoding and decoding of a message into words or impressions. Normally, such barriers result due to use of wrong words, faulty translations, different interpretations, etcetera. For instance, the use of English phrases like kicking the bucket, pumping a balloon, among others, can easily be misunderstood by those being communicated to. This is the case in all languages; local and foreign. In Luganda language for instance, the Phrase, "Okugenda e Kaganga" means to die.

The literal translation of the phrase is, "Going to Kaganga". A person who doesn't know Luganda language very well may think that the communicator means that somebody has gone to a certain geographical area/place called Kaganga, which is actually not the case. Therefore, it is necessary for employers to avoid such semantic barriers, or else effective communication will not take place. Psychological barriers deal with the sender and receiver's state of the mind. A worried person cannot communicate properly and an angry recipient cannot understand the message properly. Thus, at the time of communication, both the sender and the receiver need to be psychologically sound. If the receiver perceives the sender to be his/her enemy, he cannot understand the sender's message in its original sense. Organizational barriers are related to the nature of the organization, such as its structure, rules and regulations authority relationships.

Many times, the organisations founded and run by semi-illiterate mediocre individuals, there is usually no free communication. In organisations where there are rigid rules and regulations, as well as the cumbersome procedures, there is likely to be no effective communication. Personal barriers are concerned with the personality of the individuals (sender of communication and those receiving the communication). If the superior/boss/manager thinks that a particular communication may adversely affect his authority, he may suppress such communication. Also, if the superiors do not have confidence in the competency of their subordinates, they may not ask for their advice. In other instances, if the subordinates perceive their boss to be incompetent, there is a possibility of ignoring the communication from him/her, or not taking it seriously

(Miner, 1980).

Given the importance of communication, some studies have been carried out on it. For instance, Jjumba (2015) carried out a research in Bukomansimbi district, a rural district in the Central region of Uganda. In the findings, communication was cited as one of the challenges in the management of schools since the school founders and head teachers over-listen to students but usually do not listen to teachers. A related view was reported by Kayindu (2011) in the Doctoral study he carried out in private universities in Uganda. He reported that university managers always dance on the tunes of the founders; the founders need profits and because of that, the founders at times dictate what the managers must do, such as not expelling students even if they were caught cheating examinations. It was also reported that the students in private universities are taken as customers who must be over-listened to; if they report a lecturer that they do not want to him/her to teach them, he/she is expelled. They usually base on rumors from students and other informers as they are managing the universities. These were however not on secondary schools in Makindye division, hence the current study.

In a study carried out by Ssansa (2016) on students' discipline in Kampala district private secondary schools, it was reported that some forms of indiscipline, such as fornication, adultery, escaping from school, abortion, nicknaming teachers, taking marijuana and stealing others' books and pens were existing in schools despite the written communication in the school rules and regulations. It was reported that though written communication exists, teachers usually do not over-emphasize it orally since many of them are not motivated to do so due to poor pay, delayed pay, job insecurity and the arrogance of the school founders. The implication of this in managing institutions is that written communication needs to be emphasized by oral communication or else written communication may lie in books without being implemented.

III. METHODOLOGY

Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the cross-sectional survey design was employed. A cross-sectional study is defined as a type of observational research that analyzes data of variables collected at one given point in time across a sample population or a pre-defined subset. The researcher did the study in Central Uganda in Makindye Division, another of the five political zones which make Kampala district. This area has four government aided schools all of which are religious founded. It also has 12 private schools. The target population for this study was 189 teachers of S.4 and S.6, who, at the time of carrying out data collection were the only teachers in school due to COVID-19. These were from four government aided secondary schools and 12 private secondary schools located in eight parishes. Since the study population was not very large, there was no sampling of teachers and schools. All the 16 secondary schools found in Makindye division, in all the

eight parishes of Bukesa, Ggaba, Kabalagala, Kansanga, Kibuli, Kisugu, Nsambya Estate and Wabigalo participated in the study.

All the 189 teachers were given questionnaires with the help of five research assistants. The selection of the respondents is shown in table 1.

Table 1 showing selection of respondents

Parish name	No. of secondary schools	No. of teachers (of S4 and S.6)	Teachers in the study
Bukesa	1	10	10
Ggaba	3	32	32
Kabalagala	2	22	22
Kansanga	3	31	31
Kibuli	2	34	34
Kisugu	1	11	11
Nsambya Estate	2	32	32
Wabigalo	2	17	17
Total	16	189	189

Source: Makindye Division Education Department, 2021.

IV. FINDINGS

Response Rate

Out of the 189 questionnaires distributed, 150 questionnaires were returned, hence a response rate of 79.4%. Table 2 below presents a breakdown of the response rate of the respondents by their categorization.

Table 2: Response Rate

Respondents Category	Sample Size	Actual returned	Percentage
All respondents	189	150	79.4

Source: Primary Data, 2021

The nature of communication in secondary schools in Makindye Division, Kampala District

On this research objective, it was found out that there was generally poor communication in secondary schools in Makindye Division, Kampala District, as shown by the mean of 2.35. The details are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Nature of Communication in secondary schools, Makindye Division

- Between school management and Teachers

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
The communication is mainly through staff meeting	22	14.67	27	18	65	43.3	36	24	2.73
The communication is mainly through phone calls	12	8	10	6.67	81	54	47	31	3.08
The communication is mainly through SMS	60	40	52	34.7	30	20	08	5.3	1.86
The communication is mainly through e-mails	28	18.7	40	26.7	52	34.7	30	20	2.60

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	n	%			
The communication is mainly through staff what Sapp group	38	25.3	50	40	30	20	22	14.7		1.82	
The communication is mainly through individual what Sapp group	20	13.3	30	20	62	41.3	38	25.3		2.68	
The communication is mainly through circulars on Staff notice boards	68	45.3	46	30	30	20	07	4.67		1.73	
The communication is always clear	18	12	42	28	55	36.7	35	23.3		2.58	
The communication is always concise	20	13.3	30	20	58	38.7	42	28		2.50	
The communication is always complete	25	16.7	25	16.7	60	40	40	26.07		2.53	
The communication is always coherent	28	18.7	65	43.3	35	23.3	22	14.7		1.86	
The communication is always comprehensive	32	21.3	60	40	41	27.3	17	11.3		1.77	
Average Mean										2.27	Poor
(B) Communication between school management and students											
School managers regularly communicate to students on daily assemblies or parades	40	26.7	62	41.3	30	20	18	12		1.78	

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
School managers regularly communicate to students through circulars on whiteboards	38	25.3	52	34.7	40	26.7	20	13.3		2.31
Students are given freedom to say whatever they want to say	16	10.7	32	21.3	60	40	42	28		2.64
Suggestion boxes are available at school in which students can drop their written views or complaints	09	6	30	20	68	45.3	43	28.7		2.58
School management communicate to students the vision, mission and values of the school	11	7.3	32	21.3	62	41.3	45	30		2.80
Management urges the students to report the teachers who don't deliver well in class	50	33.3	65	43.3	30	20	05	3.3		1.85

Management urges the students to report male teachers who are I love with female students	18	12	22	14.7	65	43.3	45	30	2.71	
Management urges the students to respect their teachers	13	8.7	30	20	64	42.7	43	28.7	2.68	
Management listens to students complaints	10	6.7	48	32	52	34.7	40	26.7	2.52	
	20	13.3	38	25.3	50	33.3	42	28	2.50	
Average Mean									2.51	Good

©. *Communication between students and teachers*

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Teachers are always calm when talking to students.	30	20	55	36.7	40	26.7	25	16.7	2.01	
Teachers always speak at the level of students	31	20.7	56	37.7	42	28	21	14	2.08	
Teachers always urge students to work hard academically	16	10.7	30	20	62	41.3	42	28	2.62	
Teachers urge students to be free with them (teachers)	22	14.7	28	18.7	60	40	40	26.7	2.68	
School culture is always communicated to students by the teachers	50	33.3	68	45.3	28	18.7	14	9.3	2.47	
Teachers always communicate to the students the question approach techniques	14	9.3	40	26.7	58	38.7	38	25.3	2.08	
Students communicate to their teachers in a respectable manner/way	30	20	52	34.7	38	25.3	30	20	2.03	
Average Mean									2.28	Poor
Grand Mean									2.35	Poor

Source: Primary data, 2021.

The findings indicate that in general, the communication was poor (Grand mean, 2.35). The communication between school management and students was good (mean 2.51), the communication between school management and teachers was poor (mean 2.27), while the communication between the students and teachers was poor (mean 2.28)

Many respondents attested to this for example, whereas 43.3% of the teachers reported that regular communication exists between school management and staff and that it is mainly through staff meetings (as reported by 54%) of the respondents, phone calls are rarely used (mean 1.86) even emails are rarely used (mean 1.82) actually 40% of the respondents disagreed with the view that they are highly used. This means it is rarer to use them good enough the communication is generally clear (mean 2.50) as reported by 38.7% of the respondents, 28% of the respondents reported that it is very clear.

During the interviews with a female teacher in one girls' boarding school, she said that it is their staff meetings are held regularly but many times are held to rubber stamp the head teachers' pre-conceived ideas. She however noted that teachers don't mind about that since they are in a government aided school and teachers are paid reasonably well and promptly during this COVID-19 crisis as teachers in private schools are crying. She reported that since payment is assured, regular and comes in time and the working conditions are good, they don't mind whether the communication is very clear or comprehensive. She said,

" We all know what to do. This school has a culture. We have to produce academically strong female students, well-disciplined and all round. The policy is clear that we have to give regular tests and mark them and we have to do our duties diligently. School managers' communication mainly rotates on those elements. This being a Catholic church founded school staff's integrity is a must failure to live by that, one has to get quick action from school management for action to be taken."

In another Muslim founded government aided school one teacher said that communication was mainly through whiteboards. He said that since most teachers are full time at school, are housed by the school, there is no need of communicating to them electronically through SMS, WhatsApp groups or emails. School managers simply type or write information and pin it in the staffroom. And for students, school management uses every Monday and Friday assemblies to communicate to students writing and pinning information on students on notice boards, suggestion boxes were installed at school for students to make use of them to raise their concerns to school management. They write and drop chits in the suggestion boxes and the head teacher or his deputy picks them every Friday to read them. Management reacts to them during assemblies I was reported that this method prevents students' strikes many other schools use these methods to communicate.

In private schools however, especially those founded by the individuals, it was reported that the school management over listens to students than it listens to the teachers. Once a student in a private school said,

"The head teacher always tells us to report to him either directly or by writing to him anonymously all those teachers who teach poorly, those who are punishing us those we don't want so that he can sack them and bring us the ones that we want."

This concurs with what one teacher in a private school said that, *" in private schools, students are customers who bring money to the school. A student is valued more than a teacher. In order to keep their jobs therefore many teachers in private schools founded by businessmen simply teach and go away they don't even bother to guide students because some students don't want to be condemned for the wrongs they do and don't want to be advised so, it is better to turn a blind eye to their misbehavior teach and go away."*

This therefore concurs with the quantitative data which show the poor communication between teachers and students was poor (mean 2.28).

V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The finding of the study was that communication in secondary schools was poor in the sense that the communication between school managers and teachers is mainly from top to bottom, that is, from school managers to teachers, not vice versa. It was reported that many times headteachers and school founders do not listen to views from teachers, or pretend to have listened to them but hardly implement them. In most cases, it is the school managers who tell teachers to be punctual, to produce results, to be exemplary, to regularly mark students' books, to listen to students' complaints etc. The reasons cited for poor communication were the belief in the education field that teachers are very many, so the school managers do not care. If one teacher leaves the job today, another teacher joins the following day. Other reasons cited were declining professionalism, human nature (some headteachers are naturally arrogant and rude), some school founders being semi-illiterate etc. this therefore concurs with Owolabi (2004)'s claims as he was writing about graduate students' supervision at Makerere University. He reiterated that though some supervisors were communicating effectively with their students, others were not. This arrogance in many public institutions usually occurs since people have job security such that even if the people being poorly served complain, acting takes long due to bureaucracy. That is almost the same with government-aided secondary schools. Some headteachers are arrogant because of the job insecurity they enjoy; it is the government which can just transfer them, not the people complaining.

In private and public institutions however, it was realized that communication between school management and students was good. The reasons cited for this was the prevention of students' strikes. And for private schools, it is mainly done to make students love the school and therefore urge other students to join that particular school; it is a marketing strategy.

Actually, in private schools, a student matters more than a teacher since he/she is the one who brings money to the school through the fees she/he pays. This finding is collaborated by Jjumba (2015)'s research findings in the study carried out in Bukomansimbi district secondary schools. He reported that though Bukomansimbi is a rural area, where teachers would be expected to be highly respected by school managers and head teachers, students are listened to more than the teachers are. Based on Yukl (2002)'s observation, this is seemingly wrong. To Yukl, the manager should listen to all the subordinates and other people being served by the organization, equally.

In one private secondary school found in Wabigalo Parish,

students during oral interviews reported them that their head teacher tells them to report to him all the teachers they don't want to teach them / those who teach poorly. Though this on one hand is good as it can check the performance of the teachers, on the other hand it can be abused especially by the indisciplined students. Some parts of Makindye are slummy, so the students who stay in slummy areas cannot be fully relied on with regard to the information they supply. A serious teacher who punishes students over justified reasons can be maliced by students and hence lose his job. This is in line with Tibenderana (1994)'s observation that though the Ugandans were blaming the British for making the Ugandan education not so relevant, matters worsened after the British left education in the hands of the native Ugandans. It is even worse today as many semi-illiterate men have founded schools. Even the elites who own schools, many of them are corrupt; through corruption they have amassed wealth, hence building powerful schools. A school built by a corrupt person may not easily do things right, as Tibenderana (1994) claims.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the findings and discussions presented above, it is safe to conclude that Communication in the secondary schools in Makindye division is haphazardly done; it is generally poor, thus, there is need for school managers (head teachers and deputy head teachers) to improve communication by communicating more effectively, clearly and timely to their subordinates (teachers), as well as to the students. This communication should preferably be two-way, that is, from top to bottom, and from bottom to top.

REFERENCES

- [1] Beach, D.S. (2005). *Management of People at Work*, New York: Hongton Muffin. Cole, G.A. (2010). *Management Theory and Practice*, London: Letts Education Press.
- [2] Dessler, G. (2008). *Personnel Management*. New Jersey: Prentice Hill Press International. Drucker, P. (2008). *Practices of Management*, London: Heinemann Publishers.
- [3] Durbin, A.J. (2004). *Fundamentals of Organisational Behaviour*. London: Program Management Business Press Ltd.
- [4] Jjumba, P. (2015). *Factors affecting teachers' performance in primary schools of Bigasa sub-county, Bukomansimbi district*. MED dissertation, Kampala University.
- [5] Miner, J. B. (1980). *Theories of Organisational Behaviour*. London: Pry Dem.
- [6] Ministry of education and sports (1989). *Education for national integration and development: Report of the Education Policy Review Commission*. Kampala: Author.
- [7] Musota, P. (2017). *Motivation and teacher' performance in private schools, Mubende district*. MED Dissertation, Kampala University.
- [8] Naigaga, T. (2017). *Teacher related factors and student's academic performance in Iganga district, Uganda*. MED dissertation, Nkumba University.
- [9] Tibenderana, P.K. (1994). *Education system still colonial*. January 17. Kampala; the New Vision Publishing Co.
- [10] Yukl, G. (2002). *Leadership in organization* (Eds). NY: Prentice Hall.