

BOOK REVIEW

COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

AUTHOR

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Introduction

The fact that we humans are communicating beings can be easily discerned even by the unskilled observer. That we are communicators by nature is so true that we are incapable of not communicating – we cannot not communicate. Even in silence, humans still communicate (pg. 10).

Again, no human being is an island; we are all wired up in relationships with other humans. And, most times, the quality of our relationships depends, in direct proportion, on the quality of communication.

The book, *Communication and Interpersonal Relationship In Educational Management*, by Doctor Felix Terhile Bua, which I am honoured at this event to be the reviewer, deals with the subject in such simple terms as can be read and understood by and be beneficial, beyond educational management, to all classes of readers, the fact notwithstanding that the author specifies *Colleges and Universities* as the target readers.

Generally, as one becomes academically more aware and intellectually more mature, one always comes to the realisation that reading authors becomes more important than reading just titles. The book under review is a case in point of a thorough product of mind of a thorough young PhD.

The book is 459 pages in all, spread over twenty-five chapters; 450 of those pages constitute the main body of the work and the references take the nine last pages. There are twenty (xx) Roman numeral preliminary pages. The publisher of the book is TENT-D ASSOCIATES and CONSULTING PUBLISHERS, Makurdi, Nigeria; the publication date is 2020 and the book's International Book Standard Number (ISBN) is 978-978-51451-1-0.

The preface to the book is written by the author himself. He reveals therein that it “presents to readers the multidimensional nature of communication and interpersonal relationship in educational management which involves the transmission and accurate replication of ideas ensured by feedback for the purpose of eliciting actions which will accomplish organisational goals” (pg. v).

The foreword is written by Prof. Hauwa Imam, a professor of Educational management at the University of Abuja-Nigeria and President of the Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP). Prof. Imam points out that the book “*Communication and Interpersonal Relationship in Educational*

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Management has been published at appropriate and right time, when there is acute shortage of materials and research works in the area in management” (pg. vii); she testifies that “the book is written in line with the National Universities Commission (NUC) benchmark on academic standards in Nigerian Universities in the area of Communication and Interpersonal Relationship in Educational Management” (same page).

Review

The opening chapter, quite naturally, treats *The Nature and Concept of Communication in Educational Organisations*; Chapter Two is on the *Types and Importance of Communication in Educational Management*; Chapter Three dwells in greater detail on *Upward Communication in Organisations* and Chapter Four explores *Communication Channels and Directives in School Organisations*.

The author highlights the importance of communication in human life and in human organisations generally, then, in educational organisations, specifically. Noting that the word “communication” is derived from the Latin root *communis* meaning “common” he proceeds to define communication simply as making something common or sharing it. Communication is explained further as “the process of passing information from the first party (the sender) to the second party (the receiver)” (pg. 15). The six different components of the communication process, namely, source, message, channel, receiver, feedback and noise factor are explained carefully (pp. 10-23).

Communications management is explained as “the systematic planning, implementing, monitoring and revision of all channels of communication within an organisation and between organisations”; it is said, furthermore, to include “the organisation of new communication directives connected with an organisation, network or communications technology” (pg. 9).

Examined in great detail are the different types of communication and the routes of communication, vertical communication, downward communication, horizontal communication, grapevine communication and consensus (pp. 24-8). *Grapevine Communication in Education Management* is taken up and treated in greater detail Chapter Eighteen (pp. 317-27).

One clear highpoint of the book is the emphasis on the role and importance of effective communication in the workplace – especially in educational organisations. Mere communication is simply the flow of information from the sender to the receiver regardless of whether the message is properly understood or not; whereas effective communication ensures that the message is received in the exact manner intended by the sender (pg. 31). “Effective communication reduces conflicts and results in a better understanding among individuals.” Therefore, “One needs to take care that information is passed on and received correctly” (pg. 35). Effective communication can be learned; it can be acquired and it is an essential skill this book aspires to instil or inculcate in the reader.

Insisting that the “ultimate aim of communication in every organisation is to ensure the importance of meaningful dialogue between super-ordinates and subordinates with the end goal being the economic success of the organisation and that of the employees within the organisation,” it is the author’s very strong position that “upward communication ... the process of information flowing from the lower levels of hierarchy to the upper levels” is key (pg. 43).

Chapter Five exposes *Communication Barriers in Educational Institutions* and proffers solutions for same in the very next chapter which the author titles *Improving Communication and Organisation of Idea Sharing at a Workplace*.

“Communication barriers are the various obstacles and hurdles which [detract from] effective communication leading to misunderstanding and misinterpretations by the receiver. ... [They] are problems that arise at every stage of the communication process and have the potential to create misunderstanding and confusion” (pg. 71). It is of essence that managers in educational organisations possess the required “additional skills to be able to recognise them” and have the capacity to resolve issues where there is breakdown” (same pg.).

Classifying communication into four broad categories personal, interpersonal, organisational and technological factors, Dr Bua enumerates seventeen (17) communication barriers some of which include people using different symbols; members of a group having different values; lack of acceptance of diversity; one way concept of cooperation and vested interest (pp. 76-88). Some of the remedies the author proffers are use of clear and concise words; encouraging feedback; measuring time properly and ensuring that actions support one’s communication (pp. 92-93).

Group Discussion in Educational Organisations is discussed in Chapter Seven while *Presentation, Preparation Content and Delivery* are the concerns in Chapter Eight.

The author defines “a group in the context of organisational communication” as “a collection of individuals who interact with each other, accept expectations and obligations as members of the group and share a common identity” (pg. 114); he explains discussion to mean thoroughly shaking up a subject, that is, examining it thoroughly to reach a conclusion” (pg. 115). Group discussion is, then, inferred as a discussion which involves about seven to eight participants in an attempt to reach a common decision on a common issue (same pg.).

Some advantages of group discussion are enumerated to include providing a deeper understanding of the subject; improving the ability to think critically and enhancing confidence in speaking among others; there are eight in all (pg. 124).

Learning the art of participation; speaking only if one is well prepared; never being rigid in one’s views and being alert are among the nine tips which the author gives as being helpful to a successful group discussion (pp. 127-8).

For impactful presentation, the author encourages proper research on the subject the presenter has the task of covering; jotting down all the points one wishes to cover; carefully choosing the words; using short sentences and covering as much information as the time one has for the presentation permits. Use of charts, graphs, diagrams, tables or pictorial representations enhances the effectiveness of the presentation and use of examples from real life certainly aids a better understanding of the listeners (pg. 136).

The author practices what he preaches by amply using all these aids throughout his own book. It would be a plus, however, if, in the next edition, the author uses more of especially the pictorial representations taken from our very own educational organisations so as to enable the reader to be better able to identify with.

Taking up again the discussion begun in the very first chapter of the book, the author, in Chapter Nine, revisits *Understanding the Communication System*. Chapters Ten and Twenty-five are devoted to very detailed discussions on theories and models; those focused on in Chapter Ten are *Communication Theories and Models* generally; whereas the ones treated specifically in the last chapter of the book are *Interpersonal Relationship Theories and Models*.

Citing the 1980 writer, S. F. Scudder, Dr Bua reiterates the basic communication theory that “all living beings existing on the planet communicate; although the ways they communicate are different” (pg. 164). The photo on the cover which is not of humans but of penguins – those intelligent sea birds – communicating is truly apt!

The Communication Models he takes up in the book are: Aristotle Model of Communication; Berlo’s Model of Communication; Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication; Schramm’s Model of Communication; Helical Model of Communication and Wesley and Maclean’s Model of Communication. The six models of communication, the author notes, are all initiatives by great scholars to simplify the process of communication and help in the better understanding of the communication process (pp. 164-184).

If Chapters Nine, Ten and Twenty-Five are more theoretical in their discourse, Chapters Eleven, Twelve, Fifteen and Nineteen are practical. It is in these chapters that the observation made at the beginning of this review of Dr Bua’s book that he “deals with the subject in such simple terms as can be read and understood by and be beneficial, beyond educational management, to all classes of readers” becomes most apparent. The chapters treat, respectively, Reporting, Minutestaking and Telephone usage.

He carefully and gradually, but methodically, takes the reader through the rudiments of basic reporting with such proficiency as must be appreciated even by the most seasoned journalist; and proceeds to handle the art of taking and making minutes with such simplicity as even the not-very-learned secretary of the most rural community progressive union will learn to improve himself or herself from (pp. 185-214).

Then, appropriate telephone usage practices are reevaluated and appraised in ways that will benefit the completely new telephone user and in a manner that even those who are already very conversant with the telephone, telephone facilities and online conferencing will again appreciate greatly. One is reminded, for instance, to always identify oneself at the beginning of a telephone call; to be sensitive to one’s tone of voice; to think through what one wants to say before placing a call and not to allow oneself to be distracted during a telephone conversation (pp. 263-5).

Prospective interviewees and the interviewers who interview them for the purpose of hiring their services will find Chapter Sixteen of this book very helpful. It explains what an interview is; defines the purpose of an interview; enumerates the types and kinds of interview and gives the interviewee the tips of the three Ps of an interview, namely, to Predict, Prepare and Practice interview questions and answers (pg. 271).

Interviewers on their own part are reminded, among other things, to arrive early at the interview venue; to check that the necessary papers are on the tables in front of each interviewer including possible questions or guidelines as to what the organisation is looking for in the candidate; to distribute assessment sheets ahead of time; to welcome interviewees in a way that dispels distress from them and makes them feel relaxed and at home (pg. 273).

The trend of thought which was developed in Chapter Two on the importance of effective communication is re-emphasised, deepened and completed in Chapters Thirteen, Fourteen and Seventeen. The fact is stressed again that effective communication produces a lot of wonderful results and that listening, especially on the part of managers, is a very important aspect of that effective communication process.

The seventeenth chapter coaches one on not only on how to become an accomplished public speaker but on how to manage public speaking and other public speakers. The essential ingredients are writing an effective speech; overcoming the fear of public speaking; practising the speech and delivering the speech (pg. 286).

The practical use of the Library which are vital to all study activities are what the author deals with at length in Chapter Nineteen. After introducing the reader to the general purpose of the use of the library, he takes the novice researcher through the practice of consulting the right catalogues, getting a book from the library, the reference section, the serials section, the media section and new arrivals (pp. 327-330). The study skills he attempts in this chapter to inculcate in his readers are listening skills, reading, writing and note taking (pp. 332-336).

The last six chapters of the book deal with various aspects and levels of relationships in educational management:

One thing is very clear, namely, that all the principles for quality relationships between humans in all circumstances, be they formal or informal, from the casual friendships between colleagues at work; the relationship between super-ordinates and subordinates in the most advanced of organisations or the deep and lasting life-long relationship between spouses in a marriage between a man and a woman, are equally valid at all times and in all circumstances.

Some of these principles which Dr Bua deals with beautifully, but simply – in a non-complex style –, are trying one's best to adjust with each other and compromising as much as possible; maintaining a positive frame of mind always and not unnecessarily making issues out of small things (pg. 339); transparency in communication – effective communication, that is; encouraging activities that provide occasions for working together; assigning challenging work to the team so that the members be motivated to deliver best results; motivating subordinates to avoid politics and blame games at work; superiors or team leaders not acting pricy and trying to dominate team members; and avoiding partialities (pp. 341-4).

Others are matching interests with areas of specialisation; avoidance of casual attitudes in the case of serious work; maintenance of decorum and dignity at the workplace; mutual assistance of each other in areas where work schedules overlap; and nipping conflicts in the bud before they escalate (pp. 357-360).

And nipping conflicts in the bud is precisely the main concern of the twenty-fourth chapter of the book which is devoted exclusively by the author to *Conflict Resolution in Educational Management*.

The very minimal typographical errors that occur in the book can be picked up and corrected even by the author himself through a careful readings as he edits the book in future for the next edition.

Conclusion

In summary, the book *Communication and Interpersonal Relationship In Educational Management* is a well-researched and very well written book which will be of immense benefits to all classes of readers.