

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organisation and management theorists have stressed the importance of effective communication to the success of organisations. Both Fayol (1949) and Taylor (1947) as classic theorists saw the need for good communication. In their case the stress was on communications along the line of command. The Human Relations approach placed great emphasis on full communication between management and workers. Elton Mayo (1986) and his followers argued that management should take employees into its confidence whenever possible. Many motivation theorists regard good communication as a motivator for higher performance. Probably the most widely applied theoretical approach to communication is systems theory. It regards communication as being crucial for the well being of the system as a whole. Contingency theory makes its contribution by arguing that, just as there are many possible forms of organisational structure and culture, so there are many different forms of communication systems that can be selected to suit the conditions and objectives at any given time.

Communication may be defined as the process of transmitting or exchanging information and instruction. Chester Barnard (1938) viewed communication as the means by which people are linked together in an organisation to achieve a common purpose. This is still the fundamental function of interpersonal communication. It is

recognised that group activity is impossible without interpersonal relationships because co-ordination and change cannot be put into effect. Koontz (1976) makes a valuable addition to the definition of communication when he states:

Communication is the transfer of information from one person to another with the information being understood by both the sender and the receiver.

Norman Sigband (1980), a scholar on managerial communication, defined interpersonal communication as:

The transmission and reception of ideas, feelings and attitudes – verbally and non- verbally - which produce a response.

Krep (1990) pointed out that the four basic hierarchical levels of human communication in organisations are intrapersonal, interpersonal, small-group and multi-group communication. He identified that one of the most important outcomes of interpersonal communication is the development of human relationship. Communication is important in organisational functioning and has been suggested as a means of bringing about greater organisational effectiveness. (Bush and Frohman, 1991).

Weick (1987) explained interpersonal communication as ‘the essence of organisation’. In other words, to effectively communicate we must take the human factor into account. A principal who takes time to get to know the staff and build positive relationship will be able to identify, develop and make best use of each staff member’s capabilities. Furthermore, a sense of teamwork can be nurtured through an earnest effort to help each staff member achieve his or her potential. Teamwork has

been emphasized as a key feature of the flexible organisation of the 1990s (Scully, Kirkpatrick, & Locke, 1995). This orientation involves group members' perceptions that their interactions, communication patterns, and level of trust and participation all enhance working towards the organisation's goals. (Hare, 1976; Isabella & Waddock, 1994).

Failures of communication frequently occur because people have inaccurate perceptions of each other. In many ways the principal's and teachers' perception of each other can determine not only the kind of communication that takes place but whether or not they attempt communication at all. Communication in both short-term and long-term relationships is often enhanced when the participants perceive each other accurately. Improved perception and communication occur only if the participants are willing to acknowledge that their perceptions are subjective. Floyd (1985) believed that empathy is the key to effective listening and therefore to communication.

Spenser (1994) in comparing and making a critical evaluation of models of organisation and total quality management suggested that organisations come first, and social arrangements, by definition organisational culture, are constructed and construed by the organisations members. She further elaborated that as a result of this, the lifeblood of an organisation is the relationship that develops and exists for and among an organisation's constituent membership. Dachler (1989) further adds that

these relationships are essentially:

Communication processes which include a *content* level as well as a *relationship* level, the latter informing how the content level is to be understood within the *context of the relationship*.

Kiloski (1998) stressed that one of the most valuable skills that a principal can possess is the ability to effectively communicate with others. Henry Mintzberg (1973) in his classic work entitled *The Nature of Managerial Work* concluded that private sector managers normally spend close to 80 percent of the time in communicating with others. In another study by Tom Burns (1954) entitled *The Directions of Activity and Communication in a Departmental Executive Group*, it was found that in no more than 50 percent of the instances studied did a subordinate receive the message sent by the superior. Therefore principals should recognize that interpersonal communication is among the most central activities of organisation life. Often, time spent communicating is perceived as a loss of productivity; however, poor communication may also result in lost productivity and efficiency. Principals need to recognize that informed teachers and staff are an asset to the college.

Argenti (1998) cited a nationwide survey of over 5000 employees in US firms conducted by a major consulting firm (1988) revealed that the single biggest criticism employees have of companies is that they do not encourage upward as well as downward communication. A minority of employers seeks workers' opinion about key issues, according to the survey, and 25 percent of those surveyed do not feel free to express their opinions at all.

Argenti (1998) stressed that today's employees are rather different than the employees in earlier decades in terms of values and needs. A CBS news report (Sept. 1996) showed that 25 percent of today's workforce is unhappy and 25 percent is angry. Another report in the Wall Street Journal (Nov. 10, 1995) showed that almost two-thirds of employees want more open communication with managers.

Interpersonal relationships are essential to leadership. It requires good interpersonal communication skills to be an effective leader. An effective principal is not only an active listener but also a confident communicator. In order to be persuasive, the Principal needs to collect and select appropriate information and use them persuasively (Mead 1992). Lassey in *Leadership and Social Change* (1994) pointed out that:

Leadership is the interpersonal influence exercised through the process of communication toward the attainment of a specific goal.

Interpersonal relationships is the largest single factor determining the kind of relationship we have with others and what happens to us in the world around us. Good interpersonal communication improves the staff self-esteem and their image. In these respect interpersonal relationships is extremely useful in handling crisis. The way a college handles a crisis can have profound impact on its future performance. The Principal should not ignore the impact of crisis on the teachers. Experts recommended that crisis should be handled with candour and honesty.

Many contemporary researchers portray effective school leadership as a transformational phenomenon that encourage the development of human potential, the attainment of common goals and shared values, and the implementation of collaborative decision processes between management and staff. Organisation and people need and depend on each other. A college cannot function effectively without the commitment, experience and talents of the teachers.

Bulach, Boothe and Pickett (1997) requested 375 Georgia educators who were enrolled in graduate programmes to list and rank the types of mistakes their administrators made. Most of the shortcomings and mistakes their administrators made fall into the category of poor human relations. From the survey, fifteen categories of mistakes were identified, of which, poor human-relations skills and poor interpersonal communication skills were two factors indicated. Bulach and his colleagues identified that lack of trust and an uncaring attitude were the two behaviours most frequently associated with this category of mistakes. These two behaviours tend to go together, that is, if a person perceives that the supervisor or head does not care, it is likely that trust will be absent.

Research has suggested that interpersonal relationships between superiors and subordinates will improve when an interpersonal trust exists. Katz (1978) viewed effective interpersonal communication as a means to build trust with the staff and helps to build a commitment to the values of the company. It is therefore important

for principals to honour their promises and suggestions should be followed up and upheld confidentially.

The findings of Bulach et.al. (1997) were supported by Stephen H. Davis (1998) who conducted a study on the experiences, perceptions and expectations of 99 California public school superintendents to examine the reasons why some principals could not keep their jobs. The results of the research showed that behaviours relating to a principal's personal characteristics and relationships with others outweigh any other factor related to job failure. Contrasting to other studies on school leadership failure, factors relating to technical management skills were found to be comparatively less important in explaining why some principals are dismissed, demoted, or counselled out of their positions (i.e. involuntary departure). The findings also challenged several popular notions about effective school leadership. For instance, low academic performance, inability to maintain a safe campus, failure to effectively manage cultural diversity, inability to manage time and administrative tasks, or resistance to change, had little influence on superintendents' decisions to remove a principal compared to failures relating to interpersonal or political relationships. From a list of twenty-one at-risk leadership behaviours, the most frequently cited response focused on failure to communicate in ways that build positive relationships with parents, teachers, students and colleagues.

In a survey conducted by Martin (1990) on mistakes of unsuccessful principals in Oregon, it was found that seventy-three percent of responding superintendents had

supervised a principal, whom they had to release, transfer, or “counsel out” of the principalship. Among the reasons cited for their action were avoidance of situations, lack of vision, poor administrative skills, and poor community relations.

In the study by Bulach et.al, the second most frequently occurring mistakes made by principals deals with a category of behaviour labelled “poor interpersonal communication skills”. The example most frequently cited for this type of mistake was failure to listen. They also found that ineffective principals had interpersonal communication problems in the areas of giving and receiving feedback. Listening, caring and trust are interrelated. Listening conveys a caring attitude, and caring is a building block for trust. The ability to build trust is an essential human-relations skill that facilitates interpersonal communication. Generally, administrators who display poor human-relations skills have a very strong “task orientation” as opposed to a “people orientation”. This type of leadership tends to result in low morale. Teachers believe many principals do not know how to motivate staff except through position, reward and coercion (Bulach, 1997). Chermers M. (1993) suggested that effective leaders use both relationship and task-oriented behaviours and are frequently flexible in their leadership styles and behaviours to meet the needs of different situations in the organisation.

Cohn (1987) writes in *A Case Study of the Removal of a Woman Principal* that poor people skills was also found to be a main reason behind the female principal’s failure along with other reasons like inadequate professional preparation for the job and lack

of a socialisation process. Birnbaum et. al. (1992) express that principals who are poor communicators and who do not effectively identify or work to develop the faculty culture in their schools are frequently perceived as being ineffective.

The Multiple Linkage Model of Yulk (1994) provides an integrated framework for describing leadership effectiveness, which can be applied to schools. The four categories of managerial practices mentioned by Yulk (1994) were (a) Building relationship; (b) Influencing people; (c) Making decisions, and (d) Giving-seeking Information. It match particularly well with the seven attributes commonly associated with effective principals of Barnes & Cunningham as illustrated in Table 2.1 as below.

Another survey was by Joanne Martin-Lucchesi (1990) who asked 175 Washington State school district superintendents to share their experiences in dealing with unsuccessful principals. Martin-Lucchesi requested the superintendents to rate 14 behaviours associated with the involuntary departure of school principals as having a ‘high impact’, ‘some impact’, or ‘no impact’ on the superintendents’ decision to remove principals. The most frequently cited high-impact behaviours were “lack of influence over staff” and “avoidance of situations”. The results show that the majority of superintendents also commented that having “poor people skills” had a high impact on the decision to remove a principal.

Table 2.1

Comparison of Yulk's Managerial Practices and Seven Attributes of Effective School Principals.

Attributes Of Effectiveness	Related Managerial Practices
Establishing situation-approach behaviours	Building relationships Influencing people
Employs situation-approach behaviours	Building relationships Making decisions
Facilitates shared values and collaborative decision-making processes	Building relationships Making decisions
Provides strong instructional leadership	Building relationship Giving-seeking information
Facilitates improved academic programs	Making decision Building relationship
Provides a vision and clear goals for the school	Influencing people Giving-seeking information
Establishes a safe and positive learning environment	Making decision

Argyris (1962) emphasizes the importance of “interpersonal competence” as a basic managerial skill. His research showed that managers’ effectiveness was often

impaired because they were overly controlling and competitive, uneasy in handling feelings and closed to ideas other than their own. Davis (1997) pointed out that principals who are abrasive, arrogant, uncaring, and inattentive to the needs of others are far more likely to lose their jobs. These characteristics are interpreted as lack of savvy and people skills that can impede the development of support among teachers, staff, parents and community agencies. Littlejohn (1996) pointed out that 'relationship is at the heart of interpersonal communication'

Interpersonal relationships are one of the more complex of human behaviour and are part of every interaction we have. It is imparted by culture, time, and context and is ever changing. Peters (1982) has suggested that a strong central 'culture' is the key to uniting staff to their manager's objectives, and removing the resentment inherent in some methods of managerial control. He advocated 'management by walking around' (MBWA) and informal relationship as a means of establishing closer links.

De Mare (1989) in an article review entitled *Communicating: The Key to Establishing Good Working Relationships* identified three levels of communication within organisations as: the informal grapevine, the formal organisational communication patterns, and the opinion leader. Evidence indicates that grapevine is alive and well in today's workplaces. It is the unofficial communication system of the informal organisation. Informal communication networks are often an indication of organisational health and morale (Crampton, Hodge and Mishra, 1998). The results of a national survey of the Industry Week, a professional magazine, which was found in

SJ Modic (1989) article: *Grapevine Rates Most Believable* revealed that employees used the grapevine as the most frequent source of information. Allport and Postman (1947) pointed out that grapevine tend to be active when issues are perceived to be important and the situation is ambiguous. Research on informal grapevine reveal the following findings: (a) it is faster than formal channels; (b) it is about 75 percent accurate; (c) people rely on it when they are insecure, threatened or faced with organisational change, and (d) employees use the grapevine to acquire the majority of their on-the-job information (Davis, 1953; Rowan, 1979 and Half, 1987).

Contrary to popular belief, the grapevine is not necessarily counter-productive. Plugging into the grapevine can help the Principal, teachers, staff and the college alike to achieve desired results. It is information that is inaccurate that can often cause organisation problems. The Principal's key managerial role is to monitor and influence the grapevine rather than control it. Openly sharing relevant information with employees and building positive relationship with staff can accomplish this.

Buchanan (1997) explained, "Organisations do not fail because of outside forces. They are put 'out of business' by their own employees who produce barriers that drive customers away." Littlejohn (1996) noted, "Organisations are created through communication as people interact to accomplish their individual and joint goals." It can then be seen that interpersonal relationships is a vital skill for a college. Health (1994) measures the quality of relationships by assessing how well the people obtain and use information for planning, strategic management, and operations.

From the various researchers' findings discussed above, it is clear that no other leadership behaviour is as important as interpersonal relations. A principal who is unsuccessful in encouraging participation and collaborative decision-making is probably not effective in communicating or relating well with others. On the other hand, a principal who is ineffectively managing a conflict-laden college is more likely failing in establishing trust and confidence among the teachers. When it comes to appraising principal's performance, technical and management skills are now considered less important than effective interpersonal relationship. Thus, an important criterion to consider for hiring principals is undoubtedly their human relations skills.