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The Impact of Communication on Policy Implementation in Organizations: A Case of the Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers Limited

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Abstract:

The execution and communication of a policy and what it intends to accomplish is as critical as the development. A policy if ineffectively communicated could fail to accomplish the objectives of its creators. Conveying policies to be implemented wrongly, may meet devastating drawbacks due to the fact that the individuals who initially make them, are typically not the ones who execute them. This examination tried to find out what role internal communication plays as far as policy implementation within organizations are concerned: a case of The Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers. The study was guided by the objectives below; to evaluate whether channels of communication impact policy implementation in The Coca-Cola Company; to establish the effect of hierarchical communication on effective policy implementation in The Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers Ltd; to assess the impact of communication satisfaction levels among employees on effective policy implementation in The Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers Ltd. This study utilized the Media Richness Theory of communication. The study employed the case study design to obtain information on the phenomena under study. The study population was 280 out of this a specimen populace of 165 was taken. 165 questionnaires were issued to 165 workers of Coca-Cola Kisii Bottlers from all its departments. The study gathered information from 150 respondents which constituted a reaction rate of 90.91 % which was sufficient for factual speculation of the study discoveries. The study established that both top-down and bottom-up communication are key to enhancing policy implementation in any organization, it additionally uncovered that while administration's dedication is a positive flag for the association to improve policy implementation, workers are key resources. The study concluded that effective communication is a key in the achievement of the organizations' goals and objectives.

Keywords: Organizational communication, Media Richness Theory, communication of policy, The Coca-Cola Company

1. Introduction

To accomplish tasks and achieve organizational goals, every individual of an organization communicates with others concerning various issues. Superiors deliver tasks to the subordinates; employees report results or create proposals to the managers; members of a group agree on how to achieve their main aim; and so forth. Communication is unavoidable in each part of policy implementation, as it relates unpredictably to sorting out processes, organizational setting and execution of its objectives which, truly, affects the procedures of policy implementation. Recent studies about communication show that communication has positive correlation with many organizational outputs, and of those outputs is effective policy implementation. Communication during the policy implementation period reduces resistance to change. When resistance to change levels is low within an organization, the change-effort becomes more productive. Since organizational change results in variation of work assigned to individual workers, communication of information to these individuals on future change is an important and integral part of the change methods.

Worldwide, Elving and Hansma (2008) conducted an interview research between management and the workers at a time of organizational change. The crucial conclusion gathered was that the success of the adaption and dissemination of organizational change depends upon communication skills of managers at every level. Even though leaders seem to be aware of fast change in a business (Bolden & Gosling, 2006), communicating the change is hard (Lewis, 2000). Bennebroek-Gravenhorst et al. (2006) found that together with the role of management on the contribution of the employees to the looming change, passage of information and the communication connected with the need for the change and the targets of the modification in an organization are also important. Clear cut communication informs and enlightens subordinates at all levels and prepares them to back the strategy completely (Barrett, 2002). Regionally, Inedegbor et al. (2012) researched the impact of organizational communication on business performance in Nigerian industries. Based on the findings of this study, the research revealed that effective communication leads to mutual understanding between management and workers which aids in creating genuine relationship among parties in the organizations. Additionally, this research found out that poor communication can influence employee performance. As a result, businesses should regularly articulate it

goals, policies and targets to it workers in order to improve work performance. This assertive can be linked to Ayatse (2005) who in his study observed that communication is needed to highlight and disseminate the aims of the enterprise.

In Kenya, Achieng' (2015) sought to assess the effect of worker communication on business performance in Kenya's horticultural industry. The research was carried out in flower farms in Kenya. It was discovered that communication helps in enhancing operational efficiency thus improving business performance, 55% of the respondents agreed that communication aids in the execution of decisions and accomplishing of tasks and that 44% of the respondents also agreed that communication assists in enhancing teamwork thus reducing grievances. When a business is communicating effectively with its internal stakeholders, regardless of whether they are employees, management or volunteers, it creates a cohesive culture where everyone is focused on the similar goals and has the same targets.

Inability of managers of any organization to coordinate a perfect and smooth flow of communication interaction among employees may facilitate low productivity as well as disarray in the implementation process. Because of the volume of work needed in conducting such a study, most studies in communication flow in corporate services organizations have been conducted in the developed world. A clear need therefore exists to extend these studies into the developing world such as Kenya, where as far as academic records have shown, very little studies have been conducted linking communication with effective policy implementation. Similarly, organizations in Kenya fail to implement policies due to communication problems. It is in this context that this study examines the impact of communication on effective policy implementation, using The Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers in Kenya.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Media Richness Theory

Media richness theory suggests that task performance will be enhanced when task needs are synced to a medium's ability to relay information (Daft & Lengel, 1986). In short, Daft and Lengel debate that media with the ability to send "rich" information (e.g., face-to-face meetings) are preferred to equivocal jobs (where there are multiple interpretations for available information), while media that are less "rich" (for instance, computer-mediated communication) are best equipped to tasks of uncertainty (where there is a lack of information). The major examination of media richness theory have looked into perceptions of media fit, not actual results of media use (cf. Rice, Hughes & Love, 1989; Rice, 1992). Typically, managers have been tasked in deciding which medium to use to send a set of hypothetical information to determine whether their choices match the predictions of media richness theory.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Channels of Communication in Organizations

Communication channels or mediums are the means by which individuals in an organization communicate. Thought must be given to what mediums are used to complete various tasks, because using an inappropriate medium for a task or interaction can lead to severe consequences. Complex messages require richer channels of communication that facilitate interaction to ensure clarity. Currently, companies and their workers and members have access to many communication channels. Choosing the most appropriate media is a crucial issue for professional communicators as soon as they have determined targets and strategies, assessed relevant audiences and quality messages. No one has made this point as strongly as McLuhan (1964), who stated that the media is the message. He went on and said that each media, independent of content, connects receivers in various ways and affects the scale and use of communication.

McLuhan differentiated between hot and cool media, which entails different levels of receiver participation. Hot media are much more segmented and directed, while cool media might be more abstract and need more participation to comprehend.

Recent studies have shown that media choices are influenced by the social environment in businesses, which affect the worker's attitudes toward a channel and how it is used in their particular company (Fulk et al., 1987). The dual-capacity model of media usage (Sitkin, Sutcliffe, & Barrios-Choplin, 1992) debated that any channel contains two types of messages—a "data" or task-related message, and a "meaning" or symbolic message. The data-carrying capacity of media is the same across the organisations, however, the symbol-carrying capacity differs from one organization to the other as a result of cultural differences. Thus, communicators have to select media based on richness, message ambiguity, available resources and organizational culture. Personal communication is among the richest channels of communication that can be incorporated into any organization. Physical presence, facial expressions and the tone of the communicator's voice assist recipients of information understand that message as the communicator intends. It is the best channel to use for complex or emotionally charged data as it enables communication between speaker and recipients to clarify the ambiguity. The speaker is able to evaluate whether or not the audience has received his intended message and ask or answer any questions.

The practical implications of the results dictate that business may use the lean medium for relaying information about the organization to the satisfaction of workers. Managers should share task relevant data with subordinates in personal meetings or through the phone, since communication of job related information through a rich medium is more connected to satisfaction in the information than when it was relayed through a lean medium. Data from top management was seen as accurate, useful and timely when delivered through a lean communication channel, thus top executives need not worry on having to interact with everyone in person to ensure their communications were perceived with the highest quality.

3.2. Impact of Hierarchical Communication on Policy Implementation

Managing how information flows effectively is mainly seen as crucial for organizations that want to achieve an edge over competitors (Dierickx and Cool, 1989; Collins and Clark, 2003). Managers in a hierarchical system become a link in the communication system. It is the hierarchical chain that gives direction to and imposes restrictions upon the flow of communications. Executive decisions and directions flow from higher to lower levels in the business. Responses and reports from the lower level flow upward in the company. Managers also spend time interacting with their peers. Therefore, communications must function effectively in a straight direction, as well as downward and upward. Information must be complete, timely and accurate. When decisions are made, they must be relayed to all concerned groups within the company. The messages containing the decisions must be discernable and precise.

In businesses, there are communication systems which represent how communication flows in the organisation. Networks can be formal and informal. In a formal communication network systems, messages travel through official channels which reflect the organization's hierarchy. Informal communications move along unofficial media which is now electronic, fast and multidirectional and includes rumours, opinions, aspirations and expressions of emotions. Informal communications are mainly interpersonal and horizontal, and employees believe they are more authentic than the formal interactions (Burton, 2008). Workers and members use both network systems to interpret and understand their organizations.

Communications also can be defined as vertical, horizontal or diagonal. Vertical communication can be flowing downwards through the hierarchy of an organization—or upward, moving from lower to higher levels in the hierarchy. The boss-employee transaction through downward or upward communication is probably the most used communicative situation within a work space. The downward communication indicates the flow of messages from superiors to lower-ranked employees, and it is a dominant medium according to the formal communication systems. Garnett (1992) identified four roles of downward communication: conveying a vision, giving feedback on the performance of the subordinate staff, communicating to motivate subordinates, and assigning tasks and conveying task-related information.

The upward communication stands for communication within a company where information flows from employees to the managers. Upward communication is a medium to know “how work is processing, what hurdles and opportunities subordinate staff see, what notions they have for improving their performance, what intelligence workers collect about what customers and other businesses are doing and what they feel about the agency, their superiors, and their tasks.” Garnett (1992)

The horizontal communication consists of messages that are relayed to other people on the same level of the company's hierarchy such as three supervisors from different functions. In essence, lateral communication happens when people who have the same status communicate with one another in an organization. It displays the lateral exchange of messages, which flows according to the functional principle among the people on the same level in a business.

Diagonal or omni-directional communication happens among workers at different levels and in various functions. Evolving organizational systems and technologies create opportunities for new and clashing communication flows (Williams, 2008). Studies regarding the efficiency of communication flows often show worker dissatisfaction with both downward and upward communications. Results by the Opinion Research Corporation, which has investigated worker perceptions of internal communication for more than half a century, generally show that more than half of workers are not satisfied with both downward and upward communications (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006).

Horizontal and upward communications are emphasized for worker fulfilment (Miller, 1999). But, upward communication could be another tool to control and regulate subordinates, as Shermerhorn, (2005) stated: “upward communication makes higher dimensions informed about what the lower levels of workers are doing, what issues they have, what opinions they have for developments around the,, and how they feel about the company and their careers.”

3.3. Impact of Levels of Communication Satisfaction among Employees on Effective Policy Implementation

Hecht (1978) defined communication satisfaction as a socio-emotional feeling gotten from interacting or communicating. As per Hecht, affective responses that symbolize an enjoyable fulfilling moment are included in communication satisfaction. Anderson and Martin(1995) saw that to meet their own face-to-face needs of pleasure and inclusion, workers seek for opportunities to interact with their co workers and managers. Rubin (1993) said that satisfying communication helps meet the needs of employees, which is likely to lead in building better workplace relationships. Communication satisfaction and overall policy implementation are seen to positively correlate with one another. Since employees are an integral part of the business, the importance of employee communication satisfaction cannot be emphasized further (Pettit et al., 1997). Gray and Laidlaw (2002), studied full-time and part-time employees at an Australian retail company and found that communication satisfaction factors were nearly related to each other. They also noticed that the workers of the organization were generally dissatisfied with all components of communication. Employee communication and supervisory communication received the highest level of satisfaction among the workers, while personal feedback and communication climate were seen to be the areas where subordinates were least satisfied.

Ahmad (2006) investigated various factors or dimensions from Downs and Hazen's (1977) eight factor scale in his research on academic staff at two state universities. He compared the factors separately and found that among his participants, high satisfaction was perceived from employee and management communication, media quality, and horizontal communication, while low satisfaction was thought off when considered business integration, personal feedback, communication climate, and organizational integration factors. In their attempt to examine relationship between employees working either full-time or part-time and communication satisfaction at a large Australian retail organization, Gray and Laidlaw (2002) observed that part-time employees were significantly more dissatisfied than full time employees. There was a major difference in four communication satisfaction factors that were involved with the level of satisfaction with the content and flow of information (Gray &Laidlaw, 2002). Akkirman and Harris (2005)

explored the differences between the communication satisfaction levels among top groups who worked either in virtual or traditional offices at an individual entity. They revealed that the findings were contrasting previous studies. The virtual office employees were seen to be more satisfied than traditional office labourers in their experience with communication at work.

Wińska (2010) said that based on the study on work appreciation, internal communication and communication feedback play a crucial part in communication satisfaction among workers. She further noted the importance of the manager's oral communication, perceived management communication competence, perceived leaders effectiveness, and the behaviour of the manager's trust, communication climate, and organic as compared to mechanistic form of business as the segments that affected satisfaction.

The study sought to look into how communication satisfaction levels among the employees of The Coca-Cola Company Kisii Bottlers Ltd. affects the policy implementation process. In this regard, it must be mentioned that a main factor in low worker morale is the failure on management to link up with workers. The main phrase here is "communicating with" as opposed to talk to. At times executives has little knowledge what the individuals lower in the institution think, want or need; and some surveys display that a little more than 15% of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) time is used communicating with other CEO's. Unresponsiveness leads to dissatisfied employees and low productivity. It also hurts a company's reputation, since workers are any organization's public relations frontline (Newsom et al 1992).

The ineffectiveness of communication and hurdles however militates against the smooth flow of data and its reciprocal result is failure to effectively implement policies in most companies. Berger (2008), states that information flow (internal communication) in each company is an intricate practice that is important to the success of any business in today's vibrant global marketplace, and The Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers Ltd is no exception. Effective communication enhances engagement and fosters trust, among the workers of an organization which is a crucial ingredient in effective policy implementation in companies as stated by (Grates, 2008). So, from the above it is evident that communication helps individuals and groups coordinate activities to achieve goals, and it is critical in policy implementation to aide companies such as the Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers Ltd achieve their desired results.

3.4. Research Design

A case study design was adopted to establish the impact of internal communication on effective policy implementation in The Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers Ltd.

3.5. Target Population

The study targeted all the seven departments of The Coca-Cola Company, Kisii Bottlers, that is; Administration, Production, Accounts, Logistics, Procurement, Engineering and Marketing making a total population of 280 Kisii Bottlers employees.

3.6. Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample size of 165 respondents was studied

4. Summary of Findings

4.1. On Communication Channels

The study established that communication plays a major role in policy implementation at Coca-Cola in Kisii. Findings from the study also showed that among the organizational media/channels of communication used in the organization, intranet is the most used, second are newsletters, followed by memos and notices and then e-mails. However, meetings recorded very low ratings in terms of usage, at 4.45. This was quite interesting because the findings indicate that the organization has embraced technology.

Plans for communication are prepared that include what could be communicated, when, by whom and at which events. A critical issue is the ability to manage communication about the policy plans. There are a number of ways of communicating information during policy planning namely: interpersonal i.e. emails, telephone calls and other activities that allow personal listening and response; organizational i.e. webinars, seminars, meetings, memos, intranets, newsletters, workshops, presentation; community i.e. local radio, talks, debates, local newspapers, signage; and public media i.e. newspapers, TV, radio, internet, cell phones.

4.2. On Hierarchical Communication

Findings of the study showed that good and effective hierarchical communication can affect employees' work behaviours in a positive manner and consequently positively affect the policy implementation process. This finding is a response to the second research question which sought to establish the effect of hierarchical communication on effective policy implementation.

Subordinate communication focuses on two-way exchanges upward and downward communication. The manager's responsiveness to downward interaction and the extent to which employees initiate upward communication assist in enhancing satisfaction of employees and keeps them involved in policy implementation. Coca-Cola scored higher weighted means of 4.31; also the majority (75%) of the respondents indicated that proper hierarchical communication and co-ordination of activities influence policy implementation to a great extent. The structure of a business consisting of dimensions like human resource orientation, external orientation, autonomy, inter-departmental co-operation, and improvement orientation proposed by Widerom and Vandenberg (2004) has been empirically tested, verified and modified through this research. Each of the dimensions of organizational culture recorded higher than moderately weighted means in all categories of organization culture of communication. The study found that majority of the respondents agreed that changes caused by external forces affecting them are communicated accordingly on time such as the economy and government regulations ($x=4.58$)

4.3. On the Correlation between Level of Communication Satisfaction among Employees and Policy Implementation

Consistent with past research (De Rider, 2004; Abugre, 2010), this study found that effective organizational communication displays a direct and positive relationship with effective policy implementation as a result of general employee satisfaction. This finding effectively responds to the third research question. The results enhance support to the general belief that efficient internal organizational communication influences workers' attitude to the job due to subordinate satisfaction with communication (Maertz and Griffeth, 2004; Kim, 2002; Abugre, 2010).

The study revealed that there is a weak correlation between organizational communication culture and policy implementation. The study findings show a probability value of $r=0.0683$ which is greater than the correlation coefficient of $P=0.8223$. Results of this research revealed that there is no effective communication in place in the company processes and procedures to all stakeholders leading to information vacuum and confusion. Regarding organizational policy results, the study indicates that there is no adequate communication to all employees. Also, the study results revealed that top management leadership does not provide feedback to employees after evaluating policy progress. The study also showed that high level of performance among teams in the company does not exist as a result of an ineffective communication process.

5. Conclusion

The importance of effective organizational communication is very crucial in retaining employee satisfaction and consequently employee performance in companies. Effective organizational communication is only possible if organizational leadership is enhanced on their communication methods and create unrestricted access of communication channels to their subordinates. The consequences of poor organizational communication would result in an increased failure to effectively implement policies. The above results have both theoretical and practical significance to organizational studies, and increase our understanding on managerial practices in a number of ways. Theoretically, the results highlight some important experiences of organizational communications in The Coca-Cola Company Kisii Bottlers Ltd, Kenya, stimulating more research in the area of communication in developing countries. From a practical view point, results of this study confirm that to retain and motivate subordinates to work hard and ensure policy implementation is effective, effective organizational communication plays a significant role. The work has established the positive impact of good organizational communication on policy implementation in the workplace. Also, the work provides useful guidelines for managerial practice and implications in the area of organizational communication.

6. Recommendations of the Study

Effective communication is crucial for many aspects of the organization's proper functioning. Constant and ongoing evaluation of efficient approaches and developing an internal communication practice plan for the company's departments or units through collaboration with other members of the organization at all levels can aid in effective communication practices. The supervisors can provide better communication practices by creating open-door policy, more face-to-face communication opportunities, use of different mediums or channels of communication, trust, conveying feedback, and opportunities for their subordinates(staff) to interact, contribute, and participate in the process for improvement and coming up with solutions.

It is also important for both supervisors and subordinates to understand each other, listen, communicate, and maintain a positive and healthy relationship. Organizations can improve communication by providing opportunities for training programs and workshops for continuous improvement with the focus on effective communication and leadership skills. By providing more collaboration opportunities at all levels, organizations can improve relationships that can help improve professional relationships. The leader of each unit or department should facilitate communication by creating an opportunity for staff to come together and collaborate on the needs, understanding of the existing policies, and design a plan for communication improvement based on the suggestions and concerns presented. A well-thought strategy based on the needs, accomplishments, resources, and past failures and successes can help create an environment where everyone works towards a common goal and perceive themselves to be part of a team. Leaders could send out information through a monthly or quarterly newsletter about the accomplishments, recognition, and state of the department. Also, they could create opportunities for group collaboration for departmental projects to help build healthy and positive co-worker relationships. Communication satisfaction has been shown to be crucial for job satisfaction. The results from this study found that communication satisfaction and policy implementation has a direct relationship. Keeping this in mind, the supervisors can educate their individual units or departments on the importance of effective communication. By creating an environment of open communication, organizations can create an effective workplace. A communication plan or procedure can be a great asset for improving the functioning of the organization. Similar strategies for effective communication by different units of the organization can aid in the overall effectiveness of the functioning of the organization. Receiving right amount of information through two way communications, having a good communication flow through appropriate channels of communication, and receiving personal feedback can assist in increased satisfaction in communication and policy implementation. To make this possible, the organizational leaders could emphasize using clear and consistent information to improve the internal communication process that currently exists in their organizations.

Employees in the company should ensure that there is effective communication during the policy implementation process. This will create a high level of performance among teams in the company since well-motivated employees help in the attainment of the desired organization goals. Top management should tailor their channels of communication to the needs of their audience since most employees felt that there needs to be a change in the communication process in the organization.

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