AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION AT THE OPERATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL LEVEL AT THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract:
Among the many types of interaction at the workplace are communication at the organisation level and communication among employees. Effective communication at the operational level provides good foundation for interaction within and outside the organisation. effective communication at individual levels among the employers' help create positive work environment and therefore enhance productivity of each employee in the long run. This quantitative pilot study was carried out in a government organisation. 68 respondents answered a 34-item survey on 5-likert scales. Findings showed that employees felt that besides effective communication at top-down level, there should also be good communication within the organisation and among the employees themselves. Positive interaction would lead to positive communication and thus improve motivation at work as well as productivity.

Keywords: communication, workplace, organisation, operational level, individual level

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Communication is a very important skill at the workplace. The success (or failure) to communicate will influence the nature of interaction within the organisation. Coffelt, Baker & Corey (2016) investigates the meaning of communication skills from employers' perspectives. Effective communication at the operational level provides good foundation for interaction within and outside the organisation. Mayfield and Mayfield (2017) further

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reports that leadership communication has important influence in the organisation. Effective leadership communication will further enhance the productivity of the organisation. Next effective communication at individual levels among the employers' help create positive work environment and therefore enhance productivity of each employee in the long run.

1.2 Statement of Problem

According to Mallett-Hamer (2005), communication is the most important of all entrepreneurial skills. The success of any business transaction depends on the whether successful interaction and/or negotiation. As such, the destiny of the business is dependent on the quality of the relationships of the business with partner industries as well as within the industry. One important form of communication is the communication within the organisation. Among the many types of communication that are important within the organisation are communication at operational as well as individual level. In addition to that, Bucata and Rizescu (2017) also reported that successful communication can help snowball a variety of positive effects. Firstly, communication in a company can create job satisfaction among employees. Good communication helps the company to increase in productivity. Good communication also facilitates the use of resources more effectively within an organisation. This positive reaction would then help the growth for the organisation. How does communication differ at operational and individual levels?

1.3 Objective of the Study and Research Questions

Generally, this study investigates the influence of communication at both the operational and individual level at the workplace. Specifically, the researcher looks into how managing and people skills can f=influence communication at the operational level. In addition to that, this study also looks at how word and spoken skills influence individual communication at the workplace. Hence, this study is conducted to answer the following questions;

- Research Question 1: How do managing and people skills influence communication at the operational level?
- Research Question 2: How do word and spoken skills influence individual communication at the workplace?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communication Within the Organisation

Communication at the workplace has a great impact on the organisation which further impacted the management process. Figure 1 presents the communication process management at the workplace. Several factors are considered important to ensure a smooth transition of communication management. Firstly, the way communication is carried out determines how message is transmitted and later accepted. Next, leadership skills will further enhance (or impede) the transaction of communication from one

department to another. Good leadership skills that includes effective communication would reduce stress and conflicts among the communicators and thus further reduce any disfunctions within the organisation. Finally, good management process should encourage employees to improve themselves personally at the workplace.


Figure 1: Communication Process Management
(Beattie & Ellis, 2014)

To further support the importance of communication at the workplace, McGehee and Thayer (1961) introduced a Three-Level Analysis and this model (Figure 2) provides a systematic means of conducting a TNA at three levels: organisational, operational (or task), and individual (or person). The figure presents important factors to consider for the training needs analysis at the workplace. Three important factors need to be taken into consideration when thinking of improving communication at the workplace. Firstly, effective communication at the organisational activities at the operational task level. Successful communication activities at the both organisational and operational level can only take place if there is good communication at the individual level. Communication at one level will affect communication at other levels.
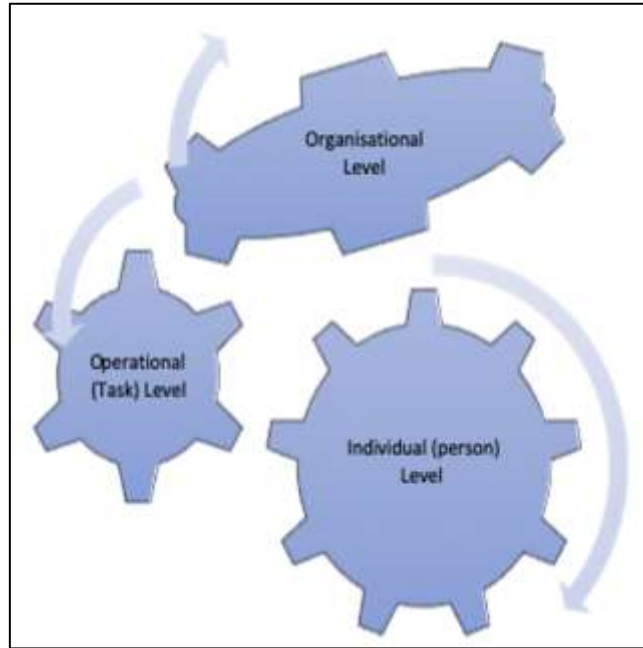
Figure 2: Three-level Training Needs Analysis (TNA)
(McGehee and Thayer, 1961)

How can communication be effective? Miller (2012) suggested the internal corporate communication process to show the cycle of internal communication at the workplace (Figure 3). The communication process shows the flow of interaction within the organisation. When the management wants to convey messages to the employees, the involved parties need to fist inform the employees. This can be done by engaging staff in planned dialogue sessions. These sessions allow the staff to voice their opinions and needs. These sessions also allow the management to gain feedback from the employees.
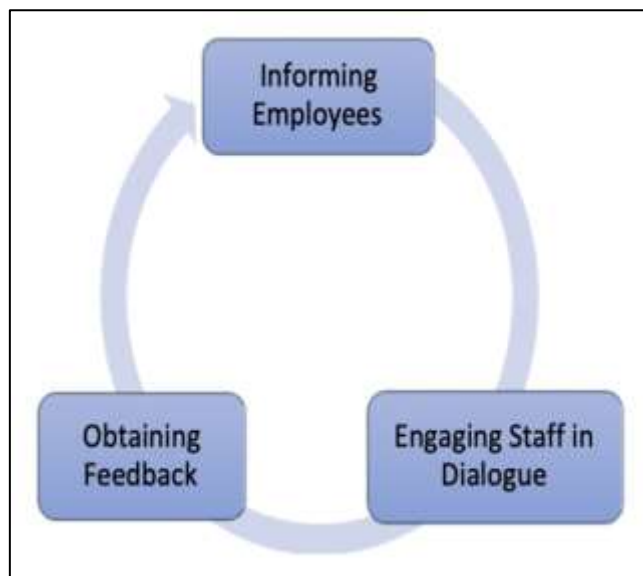
Figure 3: The Internal Corporate Communication Process

Changes are usually planned by the organisations. However, how can the changes be evaluated? Harp (2011) suggest effective change to be done at two important levels. The first level is the organisational level. The management first plan for changes to be made available, the plans must be accurate and clear. Once changes have been planned carefully at the organisational level, individuals must encouraged to participate in the change. The individual's success is dependent by their behaviour, trait as well as their knowledge.

3. Communication among Individuals at the Workplace

Successful communication among individuals at the workplace can help to enhance successful organisation change. According to Hussain (2013), there are several criteria for successful positive change in the organisation (Figure 4). Firstly, the management need to handle queries from individuals who need further clarifications. Next, the management need to create a community spirit among the employees. Next, the management need to put their trust in the employees in order to gain their commitment and participation. This move can lessen uncertainty among the employees. Finally, the management need to monitor feedback on regular basis.

Figure 4: Change Communication Model
(Hussain, 2013)

3.1 Past Studies
The study by Bergman, Dellve and Skagert (2016) explored the communication process during workplace meetings in a Swedish healthcare organisation. Data was collected through observations, interviews, focus group interviews and mirroring feedback seminars. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and conventional content analysis. Findings revealed that the communication flow and the organization of the observed meetings varied in terms of physical setting, frequency, time allocated and duration. The topics for the workplace meetings were mainly functional with a focus on clinical processes. Overall, the meetings were viewed not only as an opportunity to communicate information top down but also a means by which employees could influence decision-making and development at the workplace.

Next, Asamu (2014) examines the significant relationship between communication and workers' performance in some selected organisations in Lagos State, Nigeria. Data for the study were collected through questionnaire with sample population of 120 respondents. The result of this study reveals that a relationship exists between effective communication and workers' performance, productivity and commitment. The study recommended that managers need to communicate with employees regularly to improve workers commitment and performance.

3.2 Theoretical Framework
Figure 5 reveals the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework is rooted form Harp (2011) and McGehee and Thayer (1962). For an effective communication to take place both the organisation and individuals must work together. Both parties need to optimise managing and people skills for successful communication at the workplace.
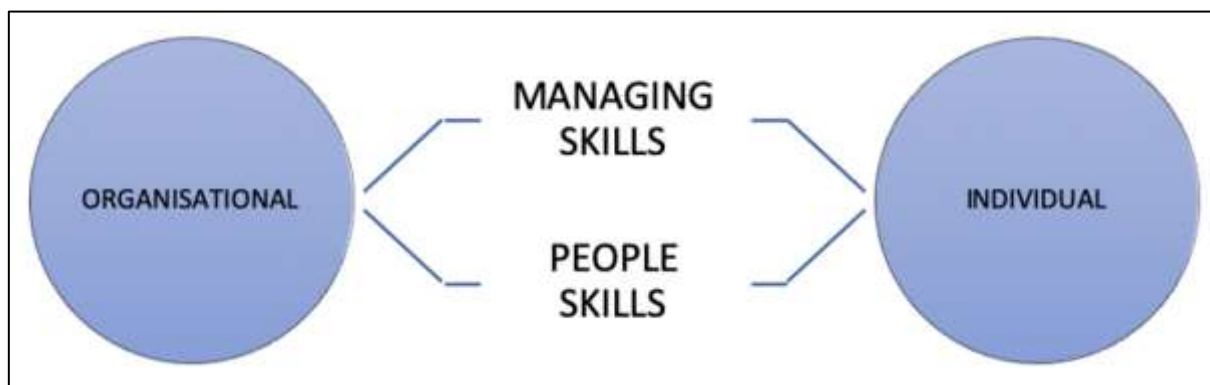
Figure 5: Theoretical Framework of the Study
Effective Communication at the Workplace

4. Methodology

This quantitative pilot study is done to investigate the influence on managing and people skills at the workplace. A government organisation is chosen with 68 respondents. The instrument used is a 5 likert-scale survey with 34 items. Cronbach's alpha was carried on the instrument and the result revealed 0.96 thus showing high internal validity of the instrument used. Data is analysed using SPSS to reveal mean scores.

5. Findings

This section will answer the two research questions presented above.

5.1 Organisation Level
Research Question 1: How do managing and people skills influence communication at the operational level?

According to Husain (2013), how people use their managing and people skills would affect the nature and ability of their communication at the operational level. Data from the survey reveal interesting findings for both managing and people skills.
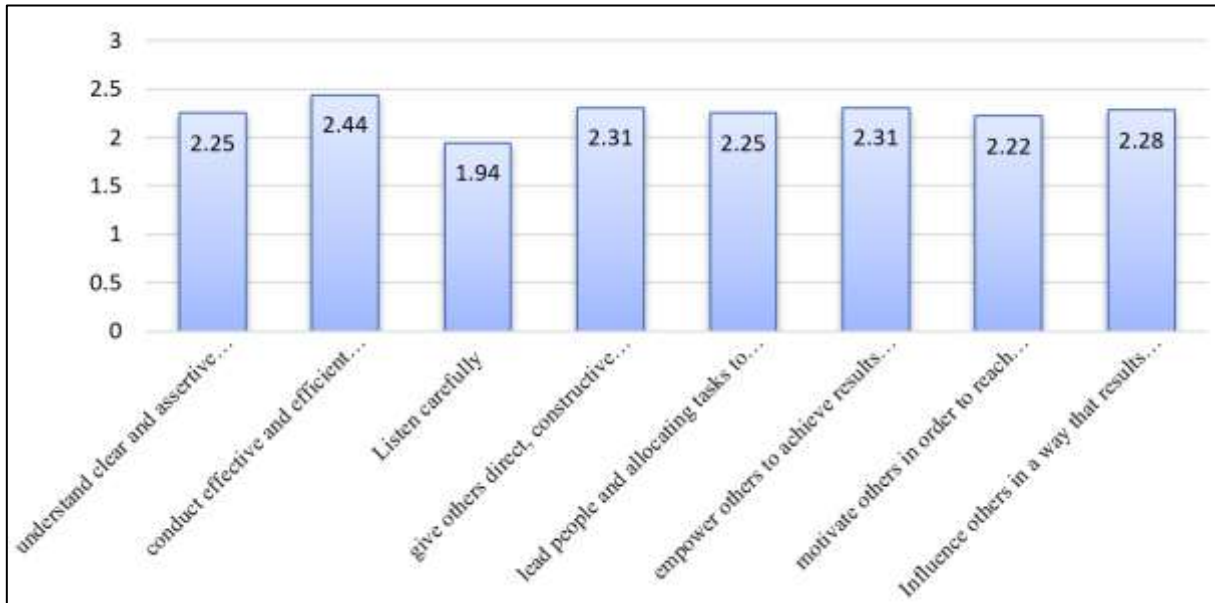
Figure 6: Mean Score for Operational Level (Managing Skills)

Figure 6 above presents the mean scores for operational level (managing sills). The highest mean score is for the managers to "conduct effective and efficient meetings" (2.44). This result shows how the employees prioritise meetings as an important form of communication at the workplace. Next, interesting low mean score of 1.94 for "listen carefully" shows the employees hoped the management listened to them more than what they are doing at present.

Figure 7: Mean Score for Organizational-People Skills

Next, Figure 7 shows the men scores for organisational-people skills. The employees consider conducting regular meetings" (2.58) important to improve communication among themselves. They also hope to improve their communication by "receiving constructive criticisms and suggestions from others" (2.5).

5.2 Individual Level

Research Question 2: How do word and spoken skills influence individual communication at the workplace?
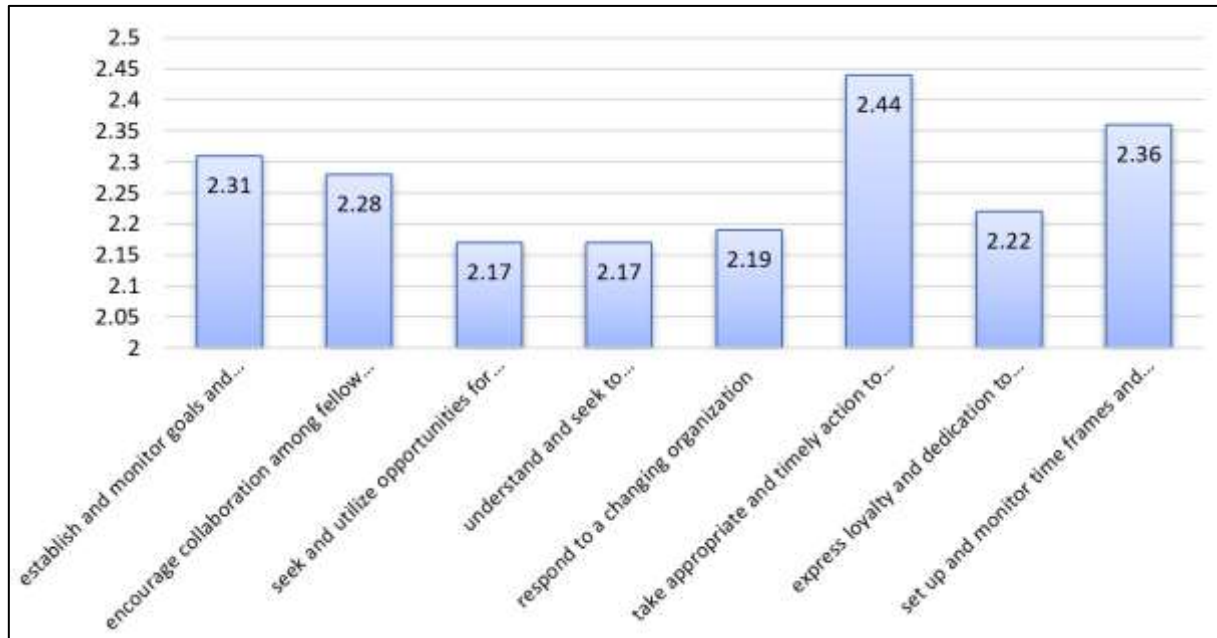
Figure 8: Mean Score for Individual (Person-Word Skills)

Figure 8 presents the mean for individual (person-word skills). The respondents felt that among themselves they should "take appropriate and timely action to overcome unexpected hurdles or obstacles to plan" (2.44). They also felt that they need to communicate to "set up and monitor time frames and plans" (2.36).
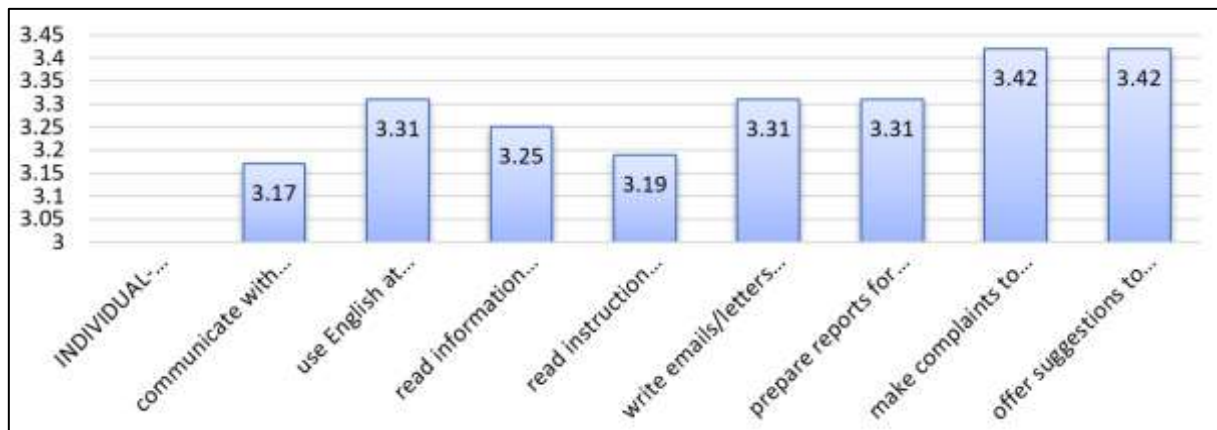
Figure 9: Men Score for Individual (Spoken Skills)

Figure 9 reveals the mean score for individual (spoken skills). Interestingly, the employees felt they need to communicate to "make complaints" (3.42) and "offer suggestions" (3.42).

6. Conclusion

This study has revealed interesting implications for communication in the organisations. It was found that employees still consider meetings as important to facilitate communication between the management and the employees. This is also agreed by Dellve and Skagert (2016) who found that meetings are important to disseminate information from top-down. Meetings also allow for decision making to be understood by all. Meetings are also important to make plans for future progress. Next, this study also revealed that people skills are also important for effective communication at the workplace. The study by Asamu (2014) revealed that communication at the workplace should be done regularly to improve employees' commitment and also performance.

To sum up, with reference to Figure 10, effective communication at the workplace is the responsibilities by the organisation as well as the individual. In addition to that, the use of good people and managing skills helps the organisation to move towards positive change for improvement. Future studies could be done to see more factors that influence communication at the workplace.
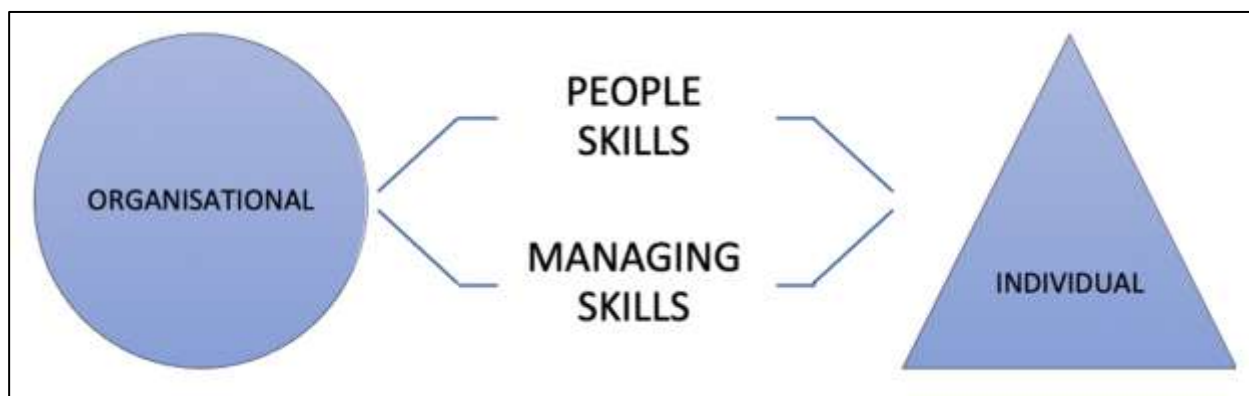
Figure 10: Effective Communication at the Workplace

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