VERSTEHEN
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RESEARCH
Vol. 1, No. 1, September, 2018, ISSN: 2672-5533, PP:133 - 140

A Publication of the
Department of Sociology
Plateau State University, Bokkos.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE APPLICATION OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM)

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ABSTRACT

Total quality management (TQM) is a management philosophy which focuses on the work process and people, with the major concern for satisfying customers and improving the organizational performance. It involves the proper coordination of work processes which allows for continuous improvement in all business units with the aim of meeting or surpassing customer's expectations. It emphasizes on totality of quality in all facets of an organisation with the aim of reducing waste and rework to reduce cost and increase efficiency in production. TQM is applicable to any organisation irrespective of size motives even the public sector organisation are fast adopting the ideology in order to make them effective in meeting public demands. It adopts the participative approach which is aim at improving the competitiveness, effectiveness and flexibility of the entire organisation. The central concept of TQM has to do with the achievement of quality standard in products and services. This achievement is possible through effective communication anchored on modern communication technology otherwise known as information technology. It is designed to improve the general functioning and process of an organisation. Effective communication is logical, rational and persuasive and it is especially useful in industrial relation, organisational change and relaxation. There is a strong relationship between good communication and successful quality implementation. Although communication has always been key requirement of good management, it is even more important in the implementation of total quality management. TQM depends on communication that flows in the direction up, down and external customers have to know suppliers what they need. Supplies have to know their customers what they can realistically provide.

KEY WORDS:

Total quality management, communication

Introduction

Effective communication is the life wire of any organisation regardless of its size or nature. If properly used it is an instrument for effective job performance, and

serves as an index for employee motivation and the resultant high productivity.

There is no doubt too that if systems and organisations are to function well, the information, the information one intends to communicate must not only be well developed but must be well communicated. (Handy, 1973, P. 115).

Industrial relations have perhaps collapsed in a good number of organisations due to absence of effective communication between representative of labour and that of management. This treatise adopts the total quality management (TQM) approach in looking at effective communication in organisational relationship in an economy suffering from depression such as the type Nigeria workers are going through, effective communication remains a strong factor that can bring about hope and reassurance that are increasingly becoming elusive.

Communication

A business can flourish when all objectives of the organisation are achieved effectively. For efficiency in an organisation, all the people of the organisation must be able to convey their message properly. Communication is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages or information as by speech, visuals, signals, writing or behaviour. The human relation writer conceptualized that if workers knew what is expected of them, and are aware of the objective of the organisation and there is a regular feedback of their performance, they invariably will be more productive (Balogun & Hope, 2003, P. 46).

Communication is defined as the exchange of information and understanding between two or more persons or groups (Jablin & Putnam, 2001, P. 171). Note the emphasis on exchange and understanding, without understanding between sender and receiver concerning the message, there is no communication. All information is encoded, and prior agreement must be reached on the meaning of the code, quality must be carefully defined and measures agreed upon. Communication downward cannot work because it focuses on what we want to say, communication should be up and down, employees should be encouraged to set measurable goals.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is an indispensable instrument for organisational success, because without communication one remains isolated and stranded (Krocth, 2007, P. 66). Effective communication occurs when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional information sharing, which is interpreted between multiple entities and acted on in a desired way (Kreps, 1990, p. 188). This effect also ensures the message is not distorted during the communication process effective communication should generate the desired effect and maintain the effect, with the potential to increase the effect of the message. Therefore effective communication serves the purpose for which it was planned or designed. Possible purpose might be to elicit change, generate action, create understanding inform or communicate a certain idea or point of view, when the desired effect is not

achieved, factors such as barriers to communication are explored, with the intention being to discover how the communication has been ineffective (Bibler,1989, p. 61).

As a life wire of an organisation, communication attempts to protect and promote the corporate image of an organisation through effective public relations system. Since communication is an act of transmitting information or a rejoinder can save an organisation a lot of embarrassment. The specific role of communication as a tool for industrial relation with respect to collective bargaining and negotiation is worth mentioning. Here communication takes the persuasive style. As Mead, (1990) puts it, a message is persuasive when

> *It takes as given (and therefore not requiring lengthy repetition) the same information that the receiver takes as given. It fits the receiver's value, perceptions and experiences of the world. It gives appropriate details and received as relevant and acted upon. (P.63)*

In areas of conflict resolutions communication does a wonderful job. There is perhaps no better method of resolving conflicts and conflict situations than through effective communication. One other very important role of effective communication is in the area of change and relaxation. It prepares the mind for change such that when the anticipated change eventually occurs it will be taken as given without the fear and panic usually associated with it. The types of communication we are talking about here is a two-way process, it is participatory in nature and is found to be very ideal for relaxation. This is the highest level of quality management. It is concerned with the management of quality principle in all the facets of a business including customers and suppliers (Dale, 1994, P. 2006, Lockwood, 1996, P. 114).

Application of Total Quality Management

Total quality management (TQM) involves the application of quality management principles to all aspects of the organisation, including customers and suppliers, and their integration with the key business processes. It is an approach which involves continuous improvement by everyone in the organisation. TQM is a principle which involves the mutual cooperation of everyone that aids the business process of an organisation and it involves all the stakeholders of an organisation.

Total quality management is defined as an approach to improving the competitiveness, effectiveness, and flexibility of a whole organisation. It is essentially a way of planning, organizing and understanding each activity, and depends on each individual at each level (Oakland, 1993, P. 98).

TQM, a relatively new management technique emphasize collectivity as against individuality, participation as against autocracy, giving people a sense of

belonging as opposed to alienation and apathy which are assuming a pattern in our organisational behaviour. TQM takes a holistic view of organisation and it is mindful of its environment by trying to look at the extent to which the company's strategy matches, or does not match its environment. It tries to monitor what other sister companies or firms are doing in terms of competition, product quality and development, personnel quality, pricing policies and strategies, welfare services, etc, with a view to doing better. (Bowman & Asch 1987, p. 4). Total quality management principles are anchored on customer satisfaction, management by facts (often referred to as speaking with facts) and mutual respect. The core concepts of TQM include:

- Achieving quality in everything (people processes, productions/ services).
- Doing the right things right, the right things first, and every time.
- Continuously striving for improvement in all sphere.
- Having visceral commitment to and obsession for customers who may be both internal and external.
- Strengthening the supplier- customer chain
- Managing organisations through team building and team work.
- Flattening hierarchies and having stable structures. Emphasis on delegation by functions.
- Reducing the cost of bad quality by investing substantially in the cost of good quality.
- Using a structured process when solving business/organisational problems, which should be tacked proactively.
- Using total quality apparatus to generate hard facts to manage business/organisations rather than depend on opinion or whims, and
- Providing quality leadership and motivation to enable all employees to be committed to the total quality process.

Total quality management insists on quality standard of 100%. According to Natalie (1991, p. 12), 99.9% is not good enough. However the author disagreed with the common assertion that since nobody is perfect, 100% quality standard is unattainable. In the united states of America for example, many American businesses have learned the idea of an “acceptable” level of mistakes, errors, waste, spoilage and consequently a corresponding level of disgruntled customers is a trap that can lure an otherwise well intentioned company into the kind of corporate situation where size and strength become liability instead of an advantage. Therefore, the only acceptable quality level for those who value excellence is 100%. The rational is based on the consequences of an “almost but not quite” for example, if we accept 199.9% to be good enough, the one million mails may be lost by Nigerian postal services in one year alone. In the same vein, one baby born in Jos University Teaching Hospital (Juth) will be given to a wrong parent each day. The consequences of these “almost but not quite” situations are obvious.

TQM as a management technique may not achieve the desired results if management lacks commitment to the programme. A lack of vision and planning can be an impediment. Other bottle-necks include, conflict between culture change and project approach, the word "change" becoming a constraining factor, bureaucratizing quality management, management not changing its behaviour, situations where people were not really involved, and a lack of business standard to measure TQM.

Productivity And Effective Communication

Improving productivity as a result of TQM activities is an issue that has a communication aspect. In order to have a high level of productivity, organisations need to focus on effective communication. According to a survey, made by Lull, Frank, and Piersol, among presidents of the biggest 100 U.S corporations 96 percent believe in "a definite relationship" between communication and productivity. Another investigation was conducted in two business organisations and the results showed that "effective communication was perceived to have an impact on productivity that varied in both kind and magnitude. As a result, effective communication is a vital issue in this area, as well, thus it needs to be treated as such. (Bounds, 1994, P. 6)

Conditions For Successful Communication

The processes of communication are always freighted with one problem or the other. The communicator, the recipient and the channels are no exception. According to handy (1978, p. 353), if there is one general law of communication it is that we never communicate as effectively as we think we do. This position was first amplified by Sayles and Strauss *(1960)*

> *To the effect that human sensory apparatus does not transmit an exact duplicate of reality from the outside world into the minds of the observer. Rather our needs and experiences tend to colour what we see or hear and even what we say. (P.288)*

Communication will be successful when the communicator and the recipient agree on a need for one or two- way communication based on common needs. This author agreed with Mead (1990) that conditions necessary for a successful communication would include:

> *The sender and the receiver must be appropriate, the message must be transmitted at the right time, in the right place and circumstance by an appropriate channel or model, for an appropriate reason. Sender and receiver must share a common language; the message must be of common interest to the parties involved. A sense of common interest must be created if managers take their time to provide useful explorations with respect to that action or proposal. They can also elicit the participation of the subordinates*. (p. 119).

Other conditions for successful communication include mutual respect for one another (in other words, respect for each other's opinion without prejudices) openness and willingness to change grounds. That is introducing flexibility which is predicated upon situations and circumstance under consideration.

Theoretical Framework

The symbolic interactionism theory looks at communication as a continual process of using language and gestures in anticipation of how others will respond. In other words the feedback of the listener is influenced by how they think the speaker will react. George Herbert Mead, a major contributor to this theory, held that, it is through communication our thought, self concept, and our community are created.

Core principles of symbolic interactionism include:
Meaning: The major premise of this theory is that human's act towards people or thing based on the meaning they assign to them.
Language: Meaning is brought through social interaction and language is the vehicle through which we convey this meaning. We negotiate meaning through symbols, words /symbols are arbitrary signs. In other words it is only through talking with others/ symbols interaction that we give meaning to words.
Thinking: A person's interpretation of symbols is modified by their own thought processes. For the symbolic integrationists thinking is an inner conversation and according to mead this is called minding. Symbolic interactionism implies that without communication there would be no self concept.

Tqm And Communication Technology

Effective integration of information technology in to an organisation's business processes has become increasingly crucial to prosperity. It includes such items as the systems software, application software, computer hardware, networks and databases associated with managing an organisation's information. When it comes to implementing quality standards in the IT realm, most CIOs face so many pressures to deliver systems and technologies which meet the organisation's ever changing needs that quality falls by the way side.
Organisation as a whole has fallen short of delivering technology that people understand and can use. Many of the problems occur because of the complexity of technology and the rapid pace of change. Neither of these conditions are likely to abate, in fact, they are accelerating at an alarming rate, if flow less execution was an elusive in the past; it is even more so today (Douglas, Richard, & Jean, 2017).

Nevertheless, performance can be substantially improved by ensuring that tactical decisions to develop and support IT emphasize quality. Experience tells us that quality improvement in IT delivery and service support can be achieved by introducing such considerations as user satisfaction, integration and flexibility early on in the decision process and reinforcing them throughout the review processes.

Although there are no perfect solutions, there are standards in these areas which an application and its support cannot be allowed to fall. Quality management means ensuring that these standards are rigorously enforced and embedded into the thinking of the organisation's entire IT community. Organisations that want to survive the competitive milieu must take advantage of the modern communication technology. IT is very useful in automating business, so also it is very applicable to both service and manufacturing industries. Communication technology is designed to improve the general functioning and process of an organisation by concentrating on "doing the right things in the right way". This is done by applying the concept of business process, re-engineering which tend to increase business efficiency and performance. The main objective of this type of system is to control and manage process. The emphasis here is on quality management which is a basis framework within the TQM. The standard organisation of Nigeria (SON) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC) are operating within this framework, needless to say that they are all control mechanisms by which the right information is passed to the right people or organisation at the right time.

The critical element of TQM is teamwork, collaboration, delegation, openness, participation, consultation, and lateral communication, flatness of structures, flexibility and customer orientation. All these elements have one thing in common, that is "involvement". True involvement is realizable through effective communication. It is pertinent to note that involvement leads to motivation. As simmerman (1994, P. 16) observed, motivation comes from seeing one's ideas implemented, and from seeing the leaders trying to improve the organisation. Employee at every level has ideas for improving organisations, but they might not share them because of perceived risk or the feeling that nobody listened in the past. Organisational leaders must therefore generate opportunities for active involvement and improvement through effective communication techniques.

Conclusion

This study drew attention to the importance of effective communication in any organisational relationship using TQM approach. This approach is to ensure quality standard in people, processes, products and services.

It emphasizes that effective communication can be achieved through modern information technology (IT). It was noted that if the instrument of communication are properly used, they are likely to result in employee motivation and the attendant high productivity. The aggregate effect of this is organizational growth and well-being. On the other hand, partial or ineffective communication leaves organisational members standard and isolated.

Effective communication pre-supposes relevance and appropriateness of channels through which pieces of information are conveyed. The role of communication in collective bargaining and conflict resolution was also highlighted. We concluded that organisational leaders should listen to employee's ideas at any level since ideas are aimed at improving the organisation.

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