USE OF DOWNWARD AND UPWARD COMMUNICATION ROUTES AS CORRELATES OF MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ABUJA AND NASARAWA STATE

BY

ABA ARCHIBONG EMMANUEL Ph.D *AEMPP, NAEAP*

FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY ADMINISTRATION (FCTA)

emmarchis2015@gmail, emmarchis@yahoo

08036284255, 09053067792, 08124666339, 08078930692

Abstract

This study investigated the use of downward and upward communication routes as correlates of management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State. Two research questions guided the study; two hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A correlational survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 2,467 academic staff in 3 public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa state with a sample of 370 (15%) academic staff. Structured questionnaire titled "Downward and Upward Communication routes as correlates with Management of Academic Staff in Public Universities (UDUCRQ) and Management of Academic Staff Questionnaire (MASQ)" were used to collect data. The findings of the study showed that there is a strong positive correlation of the use of downward and upward communication routes and the management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa state. The study concluded that there is a strong positive correlation between the use of downward and upward communication with the management of academic staff in public universities. The study recommended, amongst others, that public universities should strengthen the use of downward and upward communication routes to enable effective dissemination of information concerning policies, interpreting and clarifying goals, data on performance, feedback and expression of feelings in public universities. This will improve understanding, service delivery and achievement of goals in public universities.

Keywords: Academic Staff**,** Communication, Management

Introduction

Management of academic staff is one

of the significant responsibilities of leaders of higher education. This may be due to the fundamental role that academic staff play in ensuring effective teaching and learning in higher institutions of learning, especially universities. Universities are higher institutions after post-primary schools, offering correspondence courses for the award of bachelor's degrees, postgraduate diploma certificates, master's degrees, doctorates, and post-doctorate degrees. (The Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN 2014).

Across the world, the management of academic staff seems to be a challenge for many university authorities. In Nigeria, it is an issue that many university administrators contend with daily. The study observed that in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria, the issue of management of academic staff has received increasing concern among relevant stakeholders such as the government and university managements. A careful observation and available data from the National Universities Commission NUC, (2024) indicate that Abuja and Nasarawa State have a good number of universities with many academic staff. However, they appear to be experiencing poor management.

Achieving university goals largely depends on the effective management of staff who have the competencies and skills to perform various functions. This could be established in their responsibilities for teaching various courses and other functions assigned to them. Academic staff of universities refer to a group of lecturers or teachers statutorily employed in universities to foster effective teaching and learning to produce quality graduates (Okwori & Ede, 2012). Management generally is a process that is concerned with the execution of plans, policies and programmes. Therefore, management of academic staff involves planning and formulating personnel policies or programmes with a view of ensuring proper staffing of academic professionals to achieve the objectives of universities. University activities cannot take place effectively without communication. This is because communication serves as the life wire of any organization as it passes information within and across or from one person to another to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Bua, 2020). It is considered to be the most important and most effective ingredient of the management process in education because all functions of management involve some forms of direction and feedback. Many educational programmes seem to fail because of poor communication, misunderstood messages, and unclear instructions.

Communication is a meaningful interaction amongst educational personnel where thoughts are transferred from one person to another in a manner such that the meaning and value of such thought is same in the minds of both the sender and the receiver (Bua, 2020). Management of academic staff takes various forms in schools. School administrators may use various forms of communication such as downward and upward communication routes to pass information among academic staff. It is from these forms of communication that this study based its investigation to establish correlation between the use of downward, upward communication and management of academic staff in universities.

Downward communication is a form of communication where information flows from top management to the subordinates in an organization (Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter & Ward, 2015). This communication can take place among different groups of senders and receivers, including administrators and staff in the university. This communication route may affect management of academic staff in universities positively or negatively depending on how information flows. It is important for university administrators to use downward communication effectively to avoid confusion among staff. If there is

effective use of downward communication, there may be smooth exchange of information because the subordinates may also be required to pass information to top management through upward communication.

Upward communication is seen as a channel from which information flows from the lower levels to the upper levels of a hierarchy in an organization, that is, information from the subordinate to the superior (Wrench et al, 2015). This mode of communication is becoming more popular in universities in recent times because the voices of academic staff at this level need to be heard for proper decision making. It keeps leaders on their toes in executing their roles and also enlightens them about subordinates' intended actions and treating them as important assets by giving them that sense of belonging to perform effectively. If well integrated, it will facilitate effective communication. It is based on this backdrop that this study is carried out using these variables.

The study of relationship between downward communication and management of secondary schools in Port-Harcourt Metropolis, Onyeka (2010) used two hypotheses, two research questions, correlational survey design, a population of

3,746 and sample of 480 teachers, PPMC and tested hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, and found out that communication has significant positive relationship with management of secondary. Similarly, a study by Akiri (2011), on relationship between upward communication and management of university staff in Delta State used two hypotheses, two research questions, stratified random sampling, a population of 873 and sample of 260 teachers, PPMC and tested hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance and revealed that there is positive relationship between upward communication and management of university staff,

Communication Model propounded by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1948) is relevant and can be used to explain the role of the managers of public universities as originators and initiators of information, facilitators of communication and who must ensure that information sent, is received through proper channels such as downward and upward communication channels. Shannon and Weaver's Model holds that a sender initiates communication and is the source of information. It is relayed from the brain through the lips in form of signal, mixed with other distractions and sounds and received by the recipient. The components are: information source selects desired message, transmitter changes the message into signal, the receiver is a sort of inverse transmitter changing signal back to message, the message is sent to destination and while transmitting there could be added unintended signal.

Statement of the Problem

It is fundamental that universities function effectively when there is proper management of its resources especially the human resource who perform various academic and administrative duties. The management of academic staff seems to be the paramount concern among educational stakeholders such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), Ministry of Education and university authorities due to their pivotal role in facilitating teaching, research and management of students in universities. However, the researcher observed that public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State may be having issues of poor management of academic staff in terms of issuing clear instruction, proper coordination of activities, interpreting policies and goals, delegation of responsibilities with clear guidelines, getting feedback and grievances, meeting the needs of academic staff and enhancing their commitment to improve school productivity.

Observation also indicates that most times, academic staff get confused and helpless on what to do, where to do it and when to do it. Inadequate information through various communication routes such as downward and upward communications seem to affect management decision in universities. Some university administrators seem to fail in their role to pass down information to their subordinates using downward communication route and subordinates on their part sometimes appear to fail in relaying information to the management for proper decision making through upward channel of communication. All these appear to create problems of poor service delivery among academic staff. It is against this backdrop that investigation into the use of downward and upward communication routes as correlates of management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nassarawa State is being undertaken.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the use of downward and upward communication routes as correlates of management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study specifically sought to:

1   examine   use   of

downward communication route as a correlate with management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nassarawa State, Nigeria.

2   ascertain use of upward communication route as a correlate with management of academic staff in public universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1   What is the correlation between the use of downward communication route and management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State?

2   What is the correlation between the use of upward communication route and management of

academic staff in public universities?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1   The use of downward communication route has no significant correlation with management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State.

2   The use of upward communication route has no significant correlation with management of academic staff in public universities.

Relationship of the Use of Downward Communication Route and Management of Academic Staff in Public Universities

Downward communication is a communication route through which key messages flow from upper management down to lower-level employees. Educational institutions such as public universities tend to use downward communication. According to Bua (2020), when downward communication is largely centered on organizational structure

with respect to the line of authority, it neglects the strategic importance of information source resulting in ineffective use of other communication channels. In some cases, the communication gap that exist between supervisors and employees makes them perceive a foul play or lack of trust, respect or value to be responsible in their field of work. Based on this, some superiors seem not to believe in the competence of their subordinates and making any suggestions from subordinates seem irrelevant which negatively affect management of academic staff in public universities.

Scholars like Canary (2011) and Jones (2011) have stressed that traditional communication process in school organizations has been dominated by downward communication flows. Such flows transmit information from higher to lower levels of the school organization. Jones (2011) argues that downward communication is necessary to help clarify the educational institution's goals, provide a sense of mission, assist in inducting new academic staff, inform academic staff about new changes and provide them with data concerning their performance.

Establishing effective communication systems could create a well-informed and productive work environment.

Downward communication is a way to effectively transmit information about major policy changes or important knowledge to reach employees at all levels. Educational organizations often use this route to clearly define policy reforms, delegate important tasks or inform employees about certain changes to functions or responsibilities and why they are occurring. It is one-directional in most cases, allowing university executives to relay instructions to academic staff without inviting a response to the information. However, how effective downward communication is and employees' understanding of the relayed material could often directly influence an organization's efficiency and success.

Relationship of the Use of Upward Communication Route and Management of Academic Staff in Public Universities

Upward communication route is seen as a channel through which information flows from the lower levels to the upper levels of a hierarchy. It is a means by which employees communicate and share their thoughts and feedback with higher level management (Bua, 2020). It travels from staff members to leaders. This is necessary not only to determine if staff members have understood information sent downward but also to meet the ego needs of staff. Five types of information communicated upward in a school organization according to Canary (2011:78) are: problems and exceptions, suggestions for improvement, performance reports, grievances and disputes, financial and accounting information.

Through upward communication, it is derived that superiors get the chance to know how their subordinates feel about their work, relationship with customers, colleagues and the organization generally. This helps to identify talents or skillful and productive employee and enhances performance. It is important because suggestions and opinions of employees are needed for decision making and this improves the chances of participation from the subordinates. More so, timely feedback is very crucial to ensure understanding and to identify the actors in organizational environment for competitive reasons in the service sector. It tends to promote peaceful atmosphere and relationship among subordinates and managements of universities.

Information at the grassroots level can make and unmake the chances of survival of an organization. Thus, organizational staff must be effectively managed with the use of

upward communication to avoid disharmony. It makes the difference between a communication strategy that is a conversation as opposed to one that's simply a broadcast, they create space for employee feedback, idea sharing, and the addressing of concerns. Upward flow of communication in a university is intended to provide channels for the feedback of information up the university hierarchy. Some deterrents may prevent a good return flow, but there are ways to promote more effective administrator-teaching staff communications. Thus, university administrators need to allow the free flow of information through various routes.

Communication Routes

Communication is a form of interaction in which messages are transmitted or exchanged. It is an interactive process between at least two people, the transmitter and the receiver. Communication is a complex process that presupposes the existence of basic structural elements that determine its effectiveness (Merchant, 2012). These structural elements include: the source of the information or transmitter of the message, codification, message transmission, decoding, message response, and feedback. The feedback process fulfils the communication purpose in which the sender

knows that the recipient has received the message and understands in a way that responds to the sender's intention, proving that real communication is reciprocal.

Communication is seen as the most important and most effective ingredient of the management process in education. It appears to be fundamental and inevitable in all managerial activities aimed at success in educational organizations. Akpakwu (2012: 58) states that the objectives of communication in education should be as to; develop information and understanding among all staff, foster any attitude which is necessary for motivation, cooperation and job satisfaction, discourage misinformation, ambiguity and rumours, prepare workers for a change in methods or environment in giving them the necessary information in advance, encourage subordinates to supply ideas and suggestions for improving upon the product or work environment and taking these suggestions seriously, improve trade-union management relationships by keeping the communication channels open; and to encourage social relations among educational workers by encouraging inter-personal communication. Good communication helps educational managers including university leaderships in setting objectives, organizing tasks, motivating staff and students,

reviewing results, and making decisions.

Although, communication is highly beneficial to organizations including educational organizations like the university, its effectiveness may be hindered by barriers like frame of reference, : (barrier of interpretation and perception of ideas by different people in different ways), Information Filtering (when the sender sifts the information with-holding, interpreting and altering of facts to be transmitted), Organizational Structure (arranging people and functions into groups to clarify channels of information flow accountability), Information Overload (emerging as a result of overloading the message to be sent), Semantics (when the same words seem to have different meanings to different people), Status Difference (different levels of hierarchy). Despite these barriers, the centrality of communication to the overall effectiveness of the organization may be evident when considering how much time managers spend communicating with the members of staff to achieve the objectives.

Management of Academic Staff

Management occurs in every organization be it schools, hospitals, banks amongst others. There are three major resources to be managed for the realization of its goals and objectives. These are human,

material and financial resources. Of these three, the human resource seems to be the most important and most complex to manage. According to Zwalchir (2008), the reasons are that every human is born unique and therefore is bound to have different characteristics. That is; the way they think, feel, reason and act, cannot be the same. Secondly, human beings control and coordinate the other resources. They constitute the workforce of an organization and are being referred to as personnel. Academic staff management according to Okwori and Ede (2012) is the coherent approach to the management of an educational organization's most valued asset, the people working in the organization, who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the organization. Management entails doing things through others to achieve a set goal. In the university, there are academic and non-academic staff who have to be properly managed to achieve its set objectives

Management of academic staff is a key ingredient that could affect any university and its ability to fulfill its mission. In educational organizations, staffing is an aspect of personnel management and it is the traditional management function of attracting and selecting the best people and putting

them on jobs where their talents and skills can best be utilized. Akpakwu, 2013). Akpakwu asserted that management of academic staff is the practice directed mainly at formulating and implementing policies affecting the teaching workforce of an educational institution. These policies include finding and training the workers, arranging them to be paid, explaining management's actions, satisfying the teaching workforce needs, dealing with their problems and seeking to modify management's actions that could produce an unwelcome employees' response.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational survey design.   The population of the study comprised of 2,467 academic staff of 3 Public Universities, University of Abuja: 947, Federal University of Lafia: 801 and Nasarawa State University, Keffi: 719 academic staff (National Universities Commission, (2024). The sample size consisted 370 representing (15%) of the total of 2,467 academic staff in the 3 Public Universities: University of Abuja and Federal University of Lafia had a sample of 262 while, Nasarawa State University, Keffi had a sample of 108. Hence, a moderate number of people are adequate to give information for generalization because information gathered

is the same.

The study adopted the multi-stage sampling procedure. At stage one, purposive random sampling technique was used to select two public universities out of three public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State. At stage two, proportionate stratified random sampling was used to stratify the two public universities on the basis of Federal and State Universities and proportionately selected 370 respondents randomly out of the three public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State. At stage three which is the last stage, the simple random sampling technique was adopted using 15% of the total population of academic staff from the federal and state universities to sample 370 respondents for the study.

Two structured questionnaire instruments were used for data collection for the study, titled "Use of Downward and Upward Communication Routes Questionnaire (UDUCRQ) and Management of Academic Staff Questionnaire (MASQ)". The questionnaires consisted sections; 'A' which elicited information on personal data of the respondents. Section 'B' consisted two (2) clusters. Each cluster contained five (5) items on each of the two variables giving a total of ten (10) items. Section C contained five (5) items on management of academic

staff which was correlated with use of Downward and upward communication routes in each of the clusters. In all, the questionnaires contained fifteen (15) items. A four-point rating scale was used to establish the disparity in the respondents' opinions.

The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to answer the research questions and test of hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. This was used because it enabled the study to

determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The decision rule is that, if the r value is greater than p value of 0.05 there is positive correlation.

Analysis of Results

Research Question 1:

What is the correlation between the use of downward communication route and management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

Table 1:

Correlation between Use of Downward Communication Route and Management of Academic Staff in Public Universities in FCT Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Variables		$\overline{X}$	**SD**	Use of Downward Communication	Management of Academic Staff
Use of Downward Communication	Pearson Correlation	2.97	0.85	1	.979[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
	N			366	366
Management of Academic Staff	Pearson Correlation	2.96	0.85	.979[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
	N			366	366

 * Correlation coefficient at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Results (2025).

The result in table 1 shows correlation

between use of downward communication

route and management of academic staff, the mean response score of use of downward communication route is 2.97 above that of management of academic staff which is 2.96 and the standard deviation scores are both 0.85 indicating a close relationship. The result revealed that (r = 0.979) and n=336. Since the value of 0.979 is greater than 0.05, there is positive correlation between use of

downward communication routes and management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2:

What is the correlation between the use of upward communication route and management of academic staff in public universities?

Table 2:

Correlation between Use of Upward Communication Route and Management of Academic Staff in Public Universities

Variables		$\overline{X}$	**SD**	Use of Upward Communication	Management of Academic Staff
Use of Upward Communication	Pearson Correlation	2.95	0.88	1	.971**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
	N			366	366
Management of Academic Staff	Pearson Correlation	2.91	0.93	.971**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
	N			366	366

 * Correlation coefficient at p < 0.05; **. Correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Results (2025).

The result in table 2 shows correlation between use of upward communication route and management of academic staff, the mean response score of use of upward communication route is 2.95 above that of

management of academic staff which is 2.91 and the standard deviation scores are 0.88 and 0.93 respectively indicating a close relationship. The result revealed that (r = 0.971) and n=336. Since the value of 0.971 is

greater than 0.05, there is positive correlation between use of upward communication routes and management of academic staff in public universities.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance thus:

Table 3:

Significant Correlation between Use of Downward Communication Route and Management of Academic Staff in Public Universities in FCT-Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Variables		Use of Downward Communication	Management of Academic Staff
Use of Downward Communication	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.979** .000
	N	366	366
Management of Academic Staff	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.979** .000	1
	N	366	366

 * Correlation coefficient at p < 0.05; **. Correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Results (2025).

The result in table 3 shows significant correlation between use of downward communication route and management of academic staff. The result revealed that ($r = 0.979$) and n=366. Since p <0.05, the null hypothesis which states that the use of downward communication route has no significant correlation with management of

Hypothesis 1:

The use of downward communication route has no significant correlation with management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria

academic staff in public universities in the Federal Capital Territory FCT-Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria is rejected. This indicates that there is positive significant correlation between use of downward communication route and management of academic staff in public universities in the Federal Capital Territory FCT-Abuja and

Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2:

The use of upward communication route has no significant correlation with management of academic staff in public universities.

Table 4:

Significant Correlation between Use of Upward Communication Route and Management of Academic Staff in Public Universities

Variables		Use of Upward Communication	Management of Academic Staff
Use of Upward Communication	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.971** .000
	N	366	366
Management of Academic Staff	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.971** .000	1
	N	366	366

* Correlation coefficient at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2025).

The result in table 4 shows significant correlation of use of upward communication route and management of academic staff. The result revealed that (r = 0.971) and n=366. Since p <0.05, the null hypothesis which states that the use of upward communication route has no significant correlation with management of academic staff in public universities is rejected. This indicates that there is positive significant correlation of use of upward communication route and management of academic staff in public universities

Discussion of Findings

The first finding showed that there is positive significant correlation of use of downward communication route and management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This means that improvement in downward communication route will lead to improvement in management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State. This agrees with the finding of Onyeka (2010) which revealed that communication has significant positive relationship with management of secondary schools in Port-Harcourt Metropolis. The study concluded that there is positive significant correlation of use of downward communication and management of

academic staff because the use of downward communication route enables the management of public universities to disseminate information effectively, interpreting and clarifying school goals, making them understand their duties and the school's mission. It has significant influence in providing data on their performance, policy changes and delegating tasks to academic staff.

The second finding showed that there is positive significant correlation of use of upward communication route and management of academic staff in public universities. This means that improvement in upward communication route will lead to improvement in management of academic staff in public universities. This is in line with the finding of Akiri (2011), which revealed positive relationship between upward communication and management of university staff, helping university managements to know how university staff feels about management. The study concluded that there is positive significant correlation of use of upward communication and management of academic staff. This is because the use of upward communication routes could enable academic staff to effectively send feedbacks and let the management of public universities know

about their feelings and grievances.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is positive significant correlation of use of downward and upward communication routes and management of academic staff in public universities in Abuja and Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This could be justified by the result of the test of hypotheses which indicated that there is a strong positive significant correlation of use of downward communication and upward communication routes and management of academic staff in public universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Public universities should strengthen the use of downward communication routes through a formal chain of command for effective dissemination of information concerning the policies, procedures, plans and programmes. This will provide them with up-to-date and undiluted information relevant for the attainment of assigned duties and responsibilities.

2. The management of public universities should encourage the use of upward communication through suggestion boxes to collate complaints, proposals, progress report and suggestions. This will improve employer-employee relationship and the attainment of goals and objectives of public universities.

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