Communication Problems in Organizations – Contributory Factors and Solutions: The Case of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana

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Abstract:
This research examined communication problems in organizations with particular reference to Cape Coast Polytechnic. The objectives of the research were (a) to identify the tools of communication existing in the polytechnic; (b) to evaluate the frequency of use of the various tools of communication in the polytechnic; (c) to identify the factors hindering effective communication at the polytechnic; and (d) to suggest what must be done to improve communication at the polytechnic. The subjects of the study were 65 students randomly drawn from the thirteen academic departments of the Cape Coast Polytechnic, 20 teachers randomly drawn from the thirteen academic departments of the polytechnic, and 20 non academic workers randomly drawn from the various administrative offices of the polytechnic. For data collection, four separate instruments were used including three sets of questionnaires and a follow-up questionnaire. Three broad categories of communication tools were identified by the researchers: (a) most frequently used tools; (b) fairly frequently used tools; and (c) infrequently used tools. The researchers identified four groups of communication barriers militating against effective communication in the polytechnic. These are (1) organizational blocks (2) physical blocks (3) semantic blocksand (4) human relations blocks. Based on the findings, some useful solutions to the communication problems were recommended. The recommendations include improvement in communication skills, effective means of communication, good timing, good human relations, avoidance of informal communication, provision of machinery for adequate upward communication, improvement of communication equipment, face-to-face communication, sincerity of the superiors, and follow up communication. By bringing out the causes of poor communication at the Cape Coast Polytechnic, the research alerts the polytechnic authorities on what must be done to ensure effective communication and hence improve workers' morale, the polytechnic's public image and competitive edge and its student enrollment.

Keywords: Communication, communication channels, vertical communication, upward communication, downward communication, horizontal communication, communication barriers.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of Study

Truly, the world and humanity cannot exist without information and communication. The effectiveness of a manager does not depend only on his ability to make good decisions, prepare sound plans, establish an effective organization structure, work hard to motivate his subordinates and earn the admiration of his peers, superiors and subordinates, but also on his ability to communicate effectively. It will be vain for him to carry out all these activities effectively if he does not communicate effectively. Norbet Wiener (1948) viewed information and communication as primary elements in man's efforts to control himself and his environment. Communication is a two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning (Web Finance Inc (2015). It is the process by which information and feelings are shared by people through an exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages (author STREAM, 2014).Perhaps the definition given by Dance(1970) will be the most comprehensive, communication as "the process by which people seek to share meaning via the transmission of symbolic messages." According to Porter and Roberts (1983), Dance's definition gives three essential elements of true communication: (1) that communication involves people and that understanding communication therefore involves trying to understand how people relate to each other; (2) that communication involves shared meaning which suggests that in order for people to communicate, they must agree on the definitions of the terms they are using; and (3) that communication involves symbols – gestures, sounds, letters, numbers, and words can only represent or approximate the idea that they are meant to communicate.

The work of communication is to transmit information and meaning from one person (or persons) to another person (or persons) to achieve various objectives such as (1) to inform or become informed; (2) to influence others or be influenced; (3) to evaluate action; (4) to direct others; (5) to maintain relationship; (6) to facilitate the organizing function; (7) to negotiate matters; and (8) to share ideas. Effective communication is vital for job performance and managerial effectiveness (Senge P., 1990).

1.2. Subjects of Communication at Cape Coast Polytechnic
All things constituting the subject of communication in the polytechnic are of vital importance. These include, among others, the organization structure of the polytechnic, vision and mission of the polytechnic, scheduled meetings, election matters, financial performance over three months' period, conditions and schemes of service, regulations pertaining to workers' health, welfare and safety, matters concerning academic departments, staff and associations, staff matters including appointments, promotions, bereavements and funerals, change of name, and marriages, lectures, seminars and workshops, examination matters, withdrawal of students, admission issues, matriculations and congregation matters, students' activities including social activities, sports, and industrial attachments.

1.3. Structure of Communication at Cape Coast Polytechnic
Figure 1 below shows the structure of communication at Cape Coast Polytechnic. Two main channels of communication exist at the polytechnic. These are vertical and horizontal channels.
Vertical communication is the flow of information up and down the Polytechnic. Communication here will usually be made along the lines of authority, for example, between the Rector and the Vice Rector, Registrar, Finance Officer, Planning Officer or Internal Autitor, or between Deans of School and Heads of Department or between Heads of Department and lecturers or between lecturers and students. There are therefore two main types of vertical communication namely (a) Downward Communication, and (b) Upward Communication. These are the authority channels of communication. Porter and Roberts in "Communication in Organisations" have proven that two-thirds of a manager's communication takes place with higher-ranking and lower-ranking people in the organization.
Downward communication is where information flows from the top to the lower levels of the polytechnic's structure. The major purpose are (i) to direct the affairs of subordinate i.e. instructing them or evaluating their work, (ii) to provide information about the polytechnic, its goals and purpose and policies, (iii) to give subordinates advice, (iv) to discuss ideas. *Upward communication* is where information moves from the bottom layers of the polytechnic to the top, usually from subordinates to supervisors. Its purposes are: (1) to report on progress of students, particular projects or assignments; (2) to give ideas and suggestions for improvement, opinions on existing system of communication and techniques, explanations, grievances and recommendations; (3) to discuss potential problems which may hinder progress of students and staff; and (4) to discuss job and students performance. Together with downward communication, upward communication ensures that the communication circuit between superiors and subordinates is complete (Rogers E. M. & Agarwala-Rogers R., 1976).
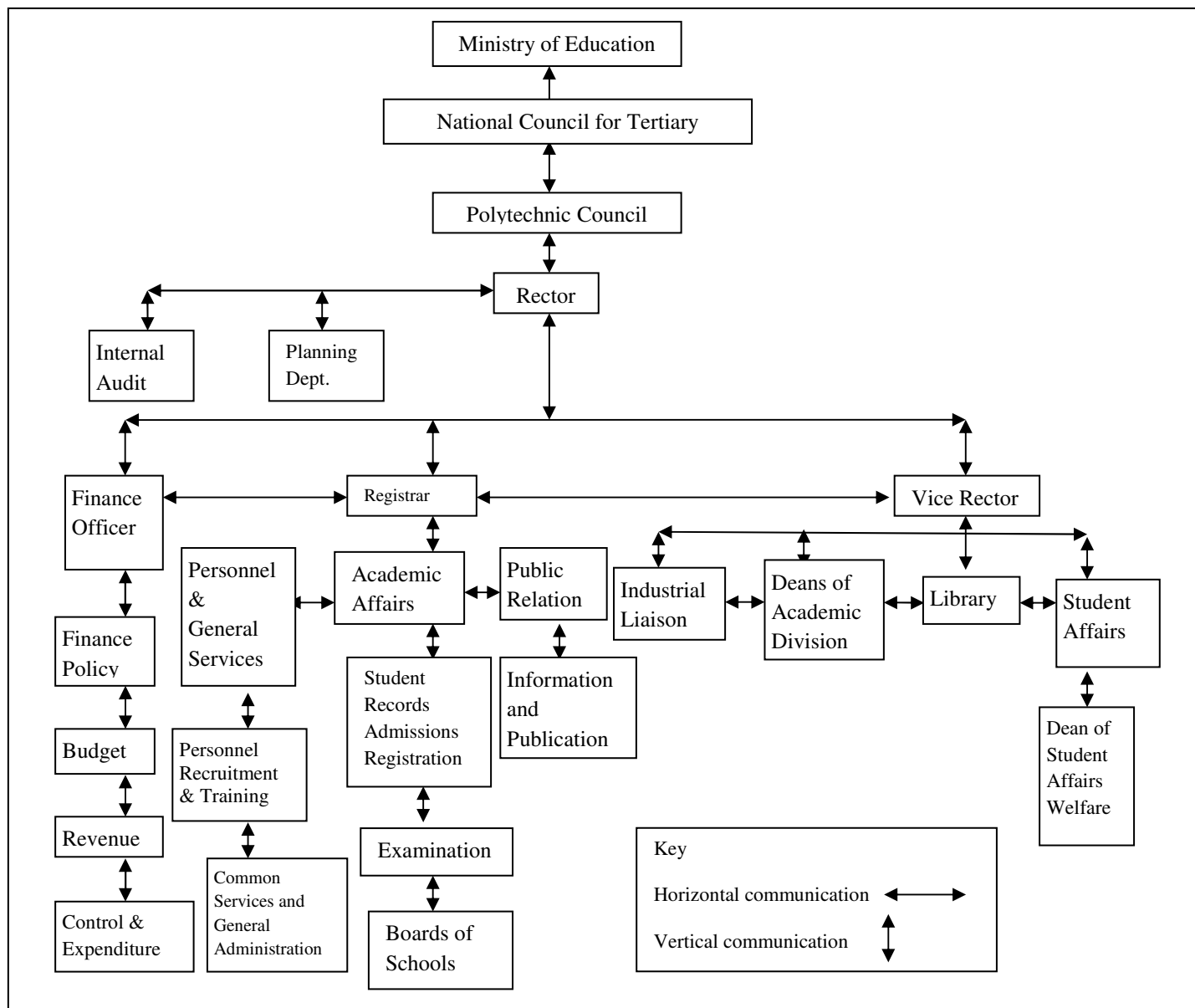
Figure 1: Organization and Communication structure of Cape Coast Polytechnic

Horizontal / lateral communication is communication between departments/sections or equals at various levels, i.e. from Head to Head across the same and different departments/divisions, and from subordinate to subordinate across the same and different departments/divisions. Examples of formal communication which might take place horizontally are: (1) From Dean of School to Dean of School or from Head of Department to Head of Department for discussion of the progress of a students performance in a School; sharing ideas regarding the implementation of strategic issues; discussion of student enrollment; and examination malpractice meetings; (2) From subordinate to subordinate concerning students' discussion of the progress of their academic work and group studies among students.

1.4. The Problem
Many a time, messages sent to departments, subordinate staff or students are misunderstood due to poor communication in the polytechnic. There are usually overlapping spheres of authority among various heads of department or sectional heads resulting in friction, overburdening and poor performance of superiors, confusion and disorganisation. This is due to the fact that a great number of the employees misunderstand messages concerning their duties, responsibilities, spheres of authority, and organizational relationships. Students and some staff perform in the wrong manner, or do not perform at all because of lack of effective communication. Consequently, a lot of academic and administrative work is left undone or performed poorly because specific instructions are poorly given or no instructions are given. Uncoordinated or disorganized activity is a common feature in the polytechnic.

Lack of understanding among teaching ad non-teaching staff in the polytechnic is the result of poor communication. Many workers of the polytechnic cannot appreciate the policy, aims and statutes of the polytechnic owing to inaccessibility of these documents. As they

do not understand the overall direction of the polytechnic, it is very difficult to mobilize them towards the objects of the institution as an academic tertiary institution because they often show displeasure through grumpiness, negativism, carelessness, lateness and absenteeism, and evidences of sabotage.

The polytechnic's workers want to know and understand almost everything about what is going on in the institution for which they work. Some of the things they want to understand are grievance procedure, disciplinary procedure, extra teaching allowances, marked script allowances, overwork allowances, accommodation, leave, sabbatical leave, re-imbursement of medical expenses, ill-health procedure, benefits on retirement, health and safety, and death benefits. Because of lack of adequate systems of communication to address the needs of the workers, most of the workers rely on the "grapevine"; and some of the answers they get to their questions are based on rumours and misinformation. Lack of adequate communication means management cannot know what is displeasing the employees and no attempt can be made to correct a situation that is causing low morale.

The results of all these problems at the polytechnic include low morale of the workers of the polytechnic, loss of the polytechnic's competitive edge, and persistent decline in student enrollment. The inappropriate internal communication in the polytechnic has resulted in workers' ill will and lack of interest in their jobs and other activities of the polytechnic. Some of the teachers have left for other educational institutions. Due to lack of good communication with its public including lack of adverts for demand stimulation, poor and unattractive congregation and admission brochures, the polytechnic is failing to enhance its public image and is losing competitive edge and business. This is evidenced by the persistent decline of the student enrollment. This paper was carried out essentially to address the problems of poor communication at the Cape Coast Polytechnic.

1.5. Research Objectives
The objectives of the research include the following:
1. To identify the tools of communication existing in the polytechnic.
2. To evaluate the frequency of use of the various tools of communication in the polytechnic
3. To identify the factors hindering effective communication at the polytechnic
4. To suggest ways to improve communication at the polytechnic

1.6. Basic Research Questions
The research questions in this study are mentioned below:
1. What tools of communication exist at the polytechnic?
2. How frequently are the various tools of communication used at the polytechnic?
3. What factors hinder effective communication at the polytechnic?

2. Literature Review
It is not always that what is communicated "gets across" to the receiver. If one thinks there is a perfect correlation between what is said and what is heard, one is operating under an illusion (McCormack M., July 1990). A lot of barriers exist within the process of communication in organizations which undermine effective communication. These barriers exist between the mind and will of the sender and the mind and will of the recipient. They arise first in the sender's own mind, secondly in the stage of transmission, and finally in the recipient's own mind. Figure 2 illustrates the communication barriers. These barriers create a communication breakdown. Communication breakdown means either the sender fails to communicate, or the sender communicates but the two sides of the *communication coin* differ – that is, the message sent and the message received are not the same; in other words, the meaning of the message as perceived by the receiver does not agree with the meaning of the message as transmitted by the sender; and this is due to a noise of some sort. The result is that the receiver of the communication does not respond in the required manner, in which case we can say that the communication has failed.
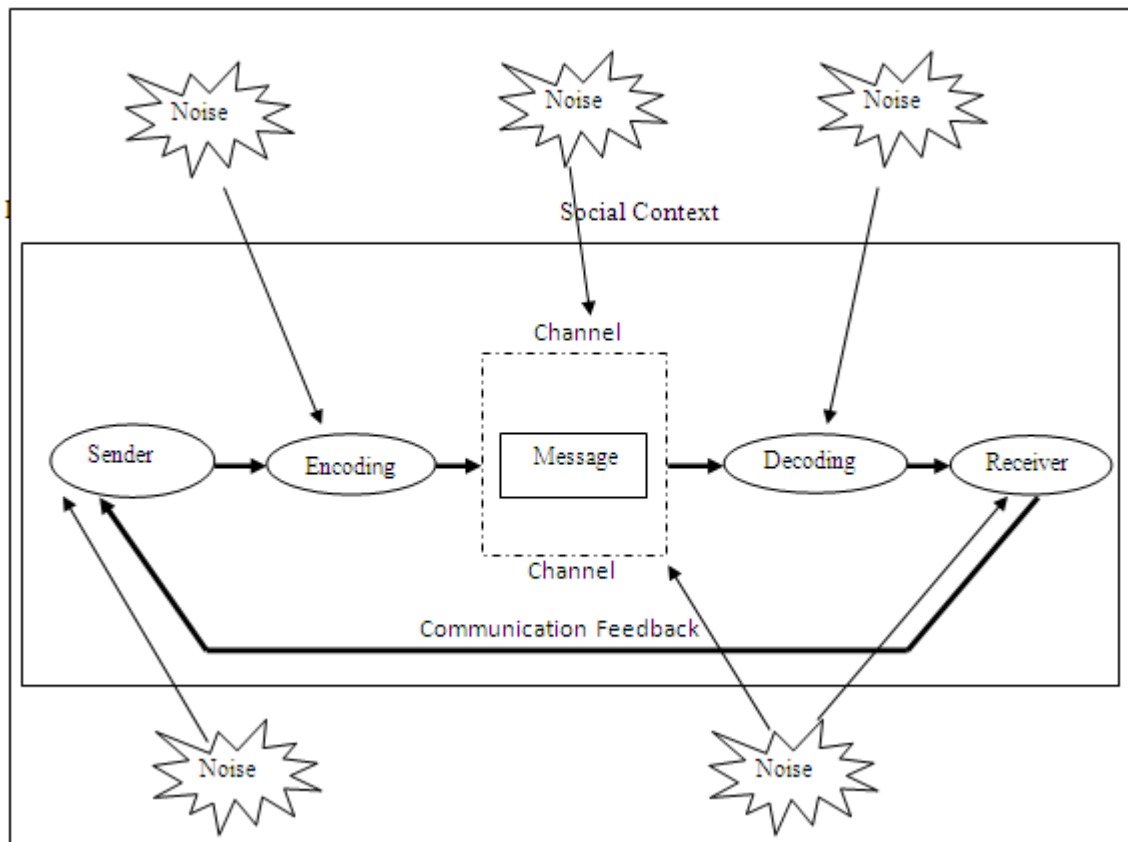
Figure 2: Barriers in the communication process

To Daft (2006) communication barriers may be categorized into individual barriers and organizational barriers. The individual barriers include (a) interpersonal barriers such as problems with emotions and perceptions held by employees; (b) selecting the wrong channel or medium; (c) semantics, and (d) sending inconsistent cues. The organizational barriers to effective communication include (a) the problem of status and power differences; (b) differences across departments in terms of needs and goals; (c) absence of formal channels – lack of adequate upward, downward and horizontal communication; (d) communication flow may not fit the organization's task; (e) poor co-ordination. Daft maintains that if a centralized communication structure is used for non-routine tasks, there will not be enough information circulated to solve problems. Daft adds that in organizations where different parts are working in isolation without knowing and understanding what other parts are doing, and where top executives are out of touch with lower levels or departments, and divisions are poorly coordinated, effective communication is hindered making it difficult for that people to understand how the system works together as a whole.

In the view of Garry (1998) the two categories of communication barriers are organizational barriers and interpersonal barriers. Garry outlines six organizational barriers as distortions, rumours and the grapevine, information overload, narrow viewpoints, status differences among members of the organization, organizational culture, structural restrictions, diversity issues and boundary differences. Garry (1998) explains that in many organizations, messages are often filtered or distorted as they move from person to person. Rumours are usually spread by the organizational grapevine with alarming rapidity (Smith, 1996). Research has shown that employees hear news first by grapevine, second from supervisors and third from official memos (Walton, 1961).Due to lack of information, insecurity and conflicts, rumours get started (Davies (1975).

Garry (1998) again maintains that supervisors can jungle only so many problems and make so many decisions before they become overloaded and incapable of handling any more messages. He adds that narrow viewpoints carried by persons from different departments make it more difficult for individual organizational members to accept other persons' viewpoints, thus undermining organizational communication. Again some people are reluctant to communicate problems to their bosses due to status differences. Some status-conscious bosses feel too high to communicate with those down the line. An organization's culture – shared values and traditional ways of doing things – can also hinder effective communication. For example, in some organizations, lower-level employees are not allowed to speak their minds. Structural restrictions are another organizational barrier. Garry (1998) argues that an organization's chart restricts communication to formal sanctioned routine. To him "sticking to the chain of communication – following procedures, filling out the necessary paperwork, and so on – can slow the flow of communication". In organizations where people are made to work together, due to differences in ethnicity, and culture, diverse interpretations are likely to be given to messages and this can undermine effective communication. Finally boundary differences hinder communication. These include authority, task, political and identity boundaries. This may differentiate subordinates from their superiors and the subordinates may be reluctant to tell them what their feelings are or they may withhold important information from them (Garry, 1998).

Interpersonal communication, to Garry (1998), distorts messages and inhibits communication to agree to the views of Pace and Faules (1989) and Geddie (1994). Garry mentioned interpersonal barriers to include problem arising from different perceptions, semantics, and non-verbal communication and ambiguity of meaning. He argues that different perceptions among different people lead to different interpretations to the same message. He continues that the manner of speaking, facial expression, bodily posture, and so on affect the meanings that people attach to communication. Pace and Faules (1989) have stated that non-verbal communication accounts for 65% of the social meaning of a message. McNeil (1992) has added that gesture alone may make up as much as 70% of communication. Ambiguity of meaning is created by distortions and lack of precision.

Kreitner (1995) categorizes communication barriers in organizations as (a) process barriers including sender barriers, encoding barriers, medium barriers, decoding barriers, receiver barriers and feedback barriers; (b) physical barriers – distance; and (c) semantic barriers. Semantic barriers, to Yates and Orlikorowski (1992), are psychosocial barriers responsible for more blocked communication than any other types of barrier.

According to Farrington J., (2013), nothing puts you in the 'bad manager' category more than poor communications skills. Farrington J. (2013) advises that "managers should resolve to communicate:

- Using appropriate methods (memo or meeting, e-mail or notice-board)
- From the right perspective (talk about we, not I, and put things personally – "You will find rather than "This is the case")
- Using good communication principles (keep it simple, make it clear, and be precise and succinct)
- Explaining both the what and the why of things"

To solve individual barriers to effective communication in organizations, Daft (2006) suggests active listening. Without this messages cannot be understood. Daft agrees with Carl R. Rogers and Richard E. Farson who outlined five rules for effective listening –

(i) listen for message content: Try to hear exactly what content is being conveyed in the message;
(ii) listen for feelings: Try to identify how the source feels about the content in the message;
(iii) Respond to feelings: Let the source know that her or his feelings are being recognized; (iv)
(iv) Note all cues: Be sensitive to non-verbal and verbal message; be alert for mixed messages;
(v) Paraphrase and restore: State back to the source what you think you are hearing.

Daft (2006) again suggested appropriate channels for the message and management by wandering around whereby managers deal directly with subordinates by regularly spending time walking around and talking with them about work-related matters. Schermerhorn J. R. Jnr. (2006), in support, also emphasized interactive management through management by (a) wandering around (MBWA), whereby managers get out of their offices and interact with those down the line as a means of encouraging the subordinates to share with them certain information which they may not be able to communicate through the formal structure of the organization;(b) communication consultants to conduct interviews and surveys of employees on behalf of management; (c) open office hours – managers setting aside time in their calendar to welcome walk-in visits during certain hours each week; and (d) 360-degree feedback whereby upward appraisals are done through a manager's subordinates as well as additional feedback from peers, internal and external customers, and higher-ups. For the organizational problems, Daft (2006) suggests (a) creation of climate of trust and openness'; (b) developing and using formal information channels in all directions; (c) encouraging the use of multiple channels; and (d) providing adequate feedback. John J. Gabarro and Linda A. Hill have also suggested that constructive feedback must be given to the subordinates to show how they feel about their performance. This calls for regular evaluations and appraisals. Performance criticism can be used to good advantage by the receiver.

Garry (1998) suggested the need to provide methods to enable employees to communicate their feelings and opinions upward such as (a) social gathering; (b) union publications; (c) scheduled meetings; (d) performance appraisal meetings; (e) grievance monitoring; (f) attitude surveys; (g) a formal suggestion system; (h) open door policy; and indirect means, e.g. monitoring absences, turnover rates and safety records. To solve interpersonal barriers, Garry (1998) has suggested the need for one to be an active listener and the need to clarify one's ideas before communicating. Plenty and Machaner (1977) have stated that "by far the most effective way of tapping the ideas of subordinates is sympathetic listening in the many day-to-day, informal contacts within the departments and outside the workplace."

According to Gaborro and Hill feedback in communication will enable the superiors to check the subordinates' understanding of the communicated messages in order to secure appropriate responses from them. This calls for regular evaluations and appraisals. Performance criticisms can be used to good advantage by the supervisors. As Anderson (1976) states, the feedback must be valid, limited to things the receiver can be expected to do something about. Managers must thus accept a reasonable degree of hostility and bitterness without getting angry in return in order to encourage subordinates to communicate to them. (Eisenbeg E. M. & Witten M. G., July, 1987)

3. Research Methods

3.1. Subjects

The study was done between January and June 2015. The subjects of the study were:

1. 65 students randomly drawn from the thirteen academic departments of the Cape Coast Polytechnic
2. 20 teachers randomly drawn from the thirteen academic departments of the polytechnic
3. 20 non academic workers randomly drawn from the various administrative offices of the polytechnic

3.2. Instruments
For data collection, four separate instruments were used including three sets of questionnaires and a follow-up questionnaire. The researcher collected data from students, teachers, administrative staff and labourers in the polytechnic. The information sought was used to determine the tools of communication existing in the polytechnic arranged in the order of frequency of use, their frequency of use, and the causes of communication failure in the polytechnic. All the instruments were administered three times to the same subjects of this study. The researcher retained only the items with the highest rating by the respondents in the final version of the instruments. Each questionnaire was made up of 20 forced-choice items and 5 open-choice items. The research assistants helped the researcher to administer the questionnaires and retrieve them from the respondents within the five-month period of data collection. With the aid of the research assistants, the researcher also interviewed the respondents to obtain additional information.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results
The data obtained from the three research questions that this study deals with are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.
TABLE 1: Communication tools and their frequency of use at Cape Coast Polytechnic

Frequency of Use	Category of Communication Tools
Most frequently used communication tools	Memos, application for admission forms, result slips, testimonials, attestations, examination questions, moderated reports from external examiners, marked answer booklets, publication of examination results, students handbooks, lecture time tables, lectures and lecture notes, course manuals and handouts, student assessment reports, examination time tables, meetings, attendance sheets at meetings, minutes, agenda, gossiping, intercoms, ordinary mail, personal conversations, notices and notice boards, on-going dialogue shared by workers and students as part of the daily activities.
Fairly frequently used communication tools	Appraisal reports, employment application forms, staff attendance records, leave roster, ordinary mail, email, MOUs, financial statements, pay slips, posters, statutes and conditions and schemes of service, seminars and workshops, students forums, staff forums, orientation programmes for fresh students, congregation, convocation meetings, Academic Board meetings, Statutory committee meetings, circulating Files
Infrequently used communication tools	Codes of conduct, sexual harassment policy, strategic plans, organisation charts, fax, bells and buzzers, air waves (FM Stations including the Eagle FM), proxy forms, personnel records updating forms, committee reports, public address system

Table 1: shows that there are three groups of communication tools used at Cape Coast Polytechnic based on their frequency of use.

These are:
1. Most frequently used tools. These include memos, application for admission forms, result slips, testimonials, attestations, examination questions, moderated reports from external examiners, meetings; attendance sheets at meetings, minutes, agenda, lectures and lecture notes; course manuals and handouts; student assessment reports; marked answer booklets; publication of examination results gossip, intercoms, ordinary mail and personal conversations, students handbooks, lecture time tables; examination time tables; notices and notice boards; On-going dialogue shared by workers and students as part of the daily activities.

2. Fairly frequently used tools. These include appraisal reports, employment application forms, staff attendance records, leave roster, ordinary mail, email, MOUs, financial statements, pay slips, posters, statutes and conditions and schemes of service, seminars and workshops; students forums; staff forums; orientation programmes for fresh students; and congregation; Convocation meetings; Academic Board meetings; Statutory committee meetings; and circulating Files

3. Infrequently used tools. These include codes of conduct, sexual harassment policy, strategic plans; organisation charts, fax, bells and buzzers, air waves, proxy forms, personnel records updating forms, reports.

Categories of Factors	Factors Hindering Effective Communication
1. Organizational blocks	• excessive informal communication, • delay in communicating information • inadequate upward communication and lack of respect for official communication structure • a rigid restriction to formal channels.
2. Physical blocks	• defective communication equipment • lack of competent telephone switchboard operators.
3. Semantic blocks	• Too much use of technical jargons • Lack of precision
4. Human relations blocks	• reluctance to communicate • fear • negative emotions • wrong timing of communication • poor relationships

Table 2: Factors militating against effective communication at the Cape Coast Polytechnic

Table 2 shows that three main groups of factors militate against effective communication at Cape Coast Polytechnic. These are:
1. Organizational blocks. Included in this are excessive informal communication, delay in communicating information, inadequate upward communication, and rigid restriction to formal channels.
2. Physical blocks. These include defective communication equipment, and lack of competent telephone switchboard operators.
3. Semantic blocks. These are Too much use of technical jargons and lack of precision
4. Human relations blocks. These include reluctance to communicate, fear, negative emotions, wrong timing of communication, and poor relationships in the polytechnic.

4.2. Discussion of Results

4.2.1. Communication Tools
A large number of tools are used to communicate information at Cape Coast Polytechnic. Some of them are of everyday use and are classified as most frequently used tools. These are needed for the day-to-day operations of the polytechnic and include inter-departmental memos, application for admission forms, application blanks, result slips, testimonials, attestations, examination questions, moderated reports from external examiners, meetings; attendance sheets at meetings, minutes, agenda, lectures and lecture notes; course manuals and handouts; student assessment reports; marked answer booklets; publication of examination results gossip, intercoms, ordinary mail and personal conversations, students handbooks, lecture time tables; examination time tables; notices and notice boards; and on-going dialogue shared by workers and students as part of the daily activities.
Other tools of communication are used less frequently. Common among these are appraisal reports, employment application forms, staff attendance records, leave roster, email, MOUs, financial statements, pay slips of workers received every month, posters to advertise important programmes; statutes serving as internal rules for governing internal matters such as functions of principal staff, resignation, retirement and termination of appointment of staff, dismissal of staff, vacation of post, disciplinary matters, students affairs, appointments and promotions, associations, departments, schools, and directorates, statutory committees and elections. Other less frequently communication tools are conditions and schemes of service documents, seminars and workshops organized for students and workers for educational purposes, students forums, staff forums, orientation and matriculation programmes for fresh students, congregation for graduating students, Convocation meetings, and Academic Board and other board/ committee meetings.
There are communication tools which, though they exist, are sparsely used. Many workers of the polytechnic are even not aware of their existence. These infrequently used communication tools include codes of conduct, sexual harassment policy, strategic plans, organistion charts, fax, bells and buzzers, air waves, proxy forms, and personnel records updating forms.

4.2.2. Contributory Factors to Communication Problems at Cape Cost Polytechnic
The communication problems at the Polytechnic confirm the findings of other researchers and authors including Daft (2006), Garry (1998) and Kreitner (1995) discussed in the literature review.
The first category of factors creating communication problems at the Cape Coast Polytechnic can be described as organizational blocks. Firstly, wrong channels are used. As asserted by Lengel and Daft, (1988) good managers choose the right communication channel, or combination of channels, to accomplish their intended purposes in a given situation. In the polytechnic however, thereis, very often, excessive informal communication. The various departments and units are poorly coordinated. This according to Daft (2006), makes it difficult for many people to understand how the system works together as a whole. Many members of the polytechnic

are more interested in communicating informally because informal communication is faster. Information is often transmitted through the grapevine, stretching throughout the polytechnic in all directions without respect for the formal levels of authority, and usually it is distorted or modified and is very much misunderstood. Gossiping and rumours mongering are common features in the polytechnic. This may be explained by lack of information, insecurity and conflicts (Davies, 1975). Rumours very often lead to rampant distortions of information (Garry, 1998).Through the grapevine rumours spread very rapidly (Smith, 1996).

Secondly, delay in communicating information is rampant. Written communication including promotion letters, meeting notices, withdrawal letters to students, students' handbooks, lecture time tables, lecture notes, course outlines and handouts, student assessment reports, and examination time tables and admission letters are often delayed. This coupled with the delayed responses to grievances of workers and students are a major cause of low morale among students and workers.

Inadequate upward communication and lack of respect for official communication structure constitute the third organizational block to effective communication at the polytechnic. The upward communication systems (e.g. grievance investigations, joint consultations, suggestion schemes, etc.) are not adequate. Subordinate workers and students find it difficult to pass their ideas and feeling upward. Most of them resort to bypassing immediate superiors and some of them do not respect the formal communication structure. Very often letters go to the Chief Executive without passing through the immediate bosses and letters go to subordinates without passing through the Deans or Heads of Department/section. All these contribute to disorder and lack of trust among the members of the polytechnic. The final organizational block is rigid restriction to formal channels. Some information can only be passed through the official lines of communication. For example, all letters going to the Polytechnic Council are required to pass through the Rector before receiving attention. All memos/letters going to the Rector from the academic departments must pass through the appropriate Deans of School before they can be attended to. These restrictions slow the flow of communication (Garry 1998) and lead to dependence on informal communication.

The second category of factors creating communication problems at the Cape Coast Polytechnicis physical blocks. The first of these is defective communication equipment. Most of the internal telephone connections are faulty or broken down. Many computers being used in the offices and typewriters being used by secretarial students have broken down. Faxes, and postal services, are ineffective. Letters received are dispatched late or kept for a long time before they are released to the addresses. The rampant electric power outages in Ghana also hinder effective communication in the polytechnic as most of offices and lecture halls have to be left in the dark at night making it difficult for students to study at nights and lectures to be held after six pm. The polytechnic has to depend so much on diesel-driven generators to produce power at high costs, even just for a small part of the campus. Lecturers' flats and students' hostels are most of the time in darkness at nights when the lights are off. Again, fire alarms are absent. Most of the offices and floors have no fire alarms. Finally, projectors and other equipment to promote teaching and learning are inadequate. The second physical block is lack of competent telephone switchboard operators. Very often, telephone switchboard operators are changed. Lack of experience of some of these operators leads to their incompetence. At times one receives no response after calling the central reception several times. And usually calls are misdirected by the incompetent switchboard operators.

The third category of factors creating communication problems at the Cape Coast Polytechnic can be referred to as semantic blocks. Yates and Orlikorowski (1992) state that, semantic blocks are psychosocial barriers responsible for more blocked communication than any other types of barrier. Firstly there is too much use of technical jargons and abbreviations. Many technical persons in the polytechnic like using technical jargons. This also hinders understanding of messages. Some members often use abbreviation to save space and time, and money, but these have no specific meaning if not attached to the actual word in the first instance. For example it is common to hear on the campus "Prof" when the addressee is not a Professor, "Chief" when he is not a chief, and "Senior" or "Boss" when he is, in fact, a subordinate. The second semantic block is lack of precision. For lack of communication skills, some members and students often communicate without precision making it difficult for recipients to understand the messages. Very often memos are not dated or are not captioned properly.

The final category of factors creating communication problems at the Cape Coast Polytechnic constitute human relations blocks. Reluctance to communicate is the first of human relations blocks. Some departmental/sectional heads are status-conscious. This confirms the findings of Garry (1998) that some status-conscious bosses feel too high to communicate with those down the line. Due to their personality, some of the Heads of department and sections are not easily approachable. This coupled with their reluctance to let subordinates know their intentions make them reluctant to communicate with the subordinates. Subordinates including students find it difficult to approach them and communicate to them freely. Some of the junior staff find it difficult to communicate information which seems to criticize the principal officers and other officers and therefore filter the information, deliberately distorting it to make it appear favourable to the them. They always try to tell them what they want to hear for reasons of desire to obtain favour from them. Peters and Austin (1985) have described this information filtering as "Management's Enemy Number 1". Again, many workers are afraid to communicate freely with others on campus due to the problem of polarization in the polytechnic. Some of the workers do not want to communicate because they do not want to be branded as belonging to a rival group. Negative emotions constitute the second example of human relations blocks in the polytechnic. Some workers complained that their superiors reacted to their communications with wrong emotions – anger, lack of attention, or cheerlessness. An angry or cheerless communicator is likely to communicate with negative emotions which can affect the meaning the receivers of the message may attach to it. Negative emotions can prevent people from sharing ideas with the superiors. Again, due to poor conditions of service and low salaries of polytechnic workers, and discrimination from superiors, most of the workers are unhappy and this affects their communications as most of them are not motivated to communicate.

The third case of human relations blocks is wrong timing of communication. Usually messages are not communicated at the right time. Delay in delivering admission letters has been identified as one of the causes of declining student enrollments. Again, very often many members of the polytechnic have to attend meetings unprepared due to inadequate notices of meetings given to them. Very often, meeting notices are given two days or even a day to the day of the meeting. Because of the delays communication responses are not encouraging. The final example of human relations blocks is poor relationships. Polarization is a common feature at the polytechnic. Many members of the polytechnic are afraid or unwilling to communicate to a person who seems to belong to 'rival' group. They either will not communicate to him at all or communicate to him but filter essential parts of the message or even distort the message so that the he will not get the true picture of the situation.

4.2.3. Recommendations to Solve Communication Problems in the Polytechnic
To improve communication at Cape Coast Polytechnic, the researcher suggests the following solutions.
1. Improvement in communication skills. The communicator's words, expressions, statements, etc, should be clear, simple and concise. All workers must learn to communicate well. Too much use of technical jargons must be avoided. They should remember that in communicating, they are expected to communicate understanding also. Workshops and seminars must be organized regularly by the polytechnic leadership to educate members of the polytechnic in communication skills.
2. Effective medium of communication. The most appropriate medium of communication must be used considering such factors as type of message, how long it will take to reach the recipient of the message, need for secrecy, need for recording the message, and cost of means of communication. Lectures must be organized in lecture halls equipped with modern communication gadgets such as P.A. systems, projectors and screens
3. Good timing. The transmission of the message should be correctly timed. That is, information should be sent at the right time. Admission letters, withdrawal letters, mail and other postal packets must be quickly delivered to the addressees. The polytechnic should ensure that materials that enhance effective communication are made available early enough to facilitate early responses and actions. For example, examination questions and results; moderated reports from external examiners; marked answer booklets; students handbooks; lecture time tables; lectures and lecture notes; course manuals and handouts; student assessment reports; examination time tables.
4. Good human relation. Good human relations in the polytechnic can produce confidence and trust and this is vital for ensuring good inter-personal communication among members of the polytechnic. Superiors must exhibit fairness, concern for others, and must avoid all forms of discrimination in dealing with subordinates. The Authorities must take all necessary steps to arrest polarization in the polytechnic.
5. Informal communication must be avoided. As much as possible, dependence on the "grapevine" form of communication must be minimized to prevent distortion of the message. Members of the polytechnic must be encouraged to make use of the formal channels of communication.
6. Provision of machinery for adequate upward communication. The machinery that enables subordinates to communicate their ideas and feeling upwards must be put in place. These include joint consultation, suggestion schemes, opinion polls, etc. The Rector and other administrative officers must as much as possible, encourage free consultation with his subordinates.
7. Improvement of communication equipment. The polytechnic must purchase new communication equipment to replace those that have broken down. Computers must be repaired or new and modern ones must be purchased. New typewriters, telephones, fax machines and other equipment must be acquired. Switchboard operators must be trained before using the equipment. Projectors and public address systems must be provided to enhance teaching and learning.
8. Encouraging face-to-face communication. To obtain a good feedback from subordinates, the superiors must encourage face-to-face communication. Face-to-face communication is very high in channel richness. It enables the superiors not only to listen but also to observe the recipient's mannerisms, thus enabling two-way interaction and real-time feedback (Schermerhorn (2006). Durbars and conferences that enable workers to freely express their concerns must be encouraged. These afford the subordinates the ease to express themselves freely.
9. Sincerity of the superior. The sincerity of those in authority attracts the respect of the subordinates. This is likely to raise workers' morale leading to their paying attention to their instructions and acting in consonance with them. Superior should, as sincerely as possible, communicate information about the polytechnic and any other issues that can change the fortunes of the workers. Ignorance must be avoided as much as possible by communicating relevant information to put the staff in the picture about issues that affect them.
10. Accessibility of organizational documents. The organistion charts and policy documents including statutes, personnel policy, sexual harassment policy, codes of conduct, strategic plans must be made assessable to all workers of the institution.
11. Regular organization of student staff forums. Forums which facilitate the dissemination of relevant information must be regularly organized such as seminars and workshops; students forums; staff meetings; orientation programmes for fresh students; congregation; convocation meetings; Academic Board meetings; Statutory committee meetings; school board meetings and departmental meetings.
12. Follow up of communication. It is important for those in authority to follow up their communications to secure the feedback. Feedback obtained from subordinates will help to unearth how they feel about their performance. Subordinate staff must be encouraged to air their grievances and make suggestions through the provision of suggestion boxes and means of investigating grievances.

13. Management by wandering around. The various administrative officers including the Rector, Deans of faculty, Heads of department and the Registrar should not always be glued to their seats. They should get out of their offices and interact with those down the line. This will encourage the subordinates to share with them certain information which they may not be able to communicate through the formal structure of the polytechnic.

5. Conclusion

Communication barriers are a major problem militating against efficient and effective functioning and hence growth of Cape Coast Polytechnic. The Polytechnic's Authorities must therefore strive to eliminate or reduce these barriers if they expect the polytechnic to survive and grow in this present competitive academic environment. This research was carried out essentially to address the problems of poor communication at the Cape Coast Polytechnic. Its objectives were to identify the tools of communication existing in the polytechnic, to evaluate the frequency of use of the various tools of communication in the polytechnic, to identify the factors hindering effective communication at the polytechnic, and to suggest what must be done to improve communication at the polytechnic.

The significance of this research work lies in the fact that, by bringing out the causes of poor communication at the Cape Coast Polytechnic, it alerts the polytechnic authorities on what must be done to ensure effective communication and hence improve workers' morale, the public image and competitive edge of the polytechnic and its student enrollment. There is, no doubt however, that some avenues still remain open for further investigation to improve communication in educational institutions. It is therefore suggested that similar studies be undertaken into the problems of communication in other educational institutions in Ghana including primary, junior high, and senior high schools, universities, research institutes, and other polytechnics so as to establish a national pattern.

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