

# Effective Communication and Productivity in Nigerian Agricultural Research Institute using Lake Chad Basin Research Institute as a Case-Study

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## Abstract

The study looked at effective communication and productivity in Nigerian Agricultural Research Institute using Lake Chad Basin Research Institute as a case-study. All the staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute numbering 272 were administered with questionnaire. A total of 267 questionnaires were completed and returned. The study found out that, majority 135 (50.56%) of the respondents said they used both the written and verbal communication in the Institute. Majority 186 (69.66%) of the respondents said they preferred upward communication, while minority 81 (30.34%) of the respondents said they preferred horizontal communication. A total of 143 (53.56%) of the respondents said instructions from supervisors were the type of information communicated through the communication channels. Another 129 (48.32%) of the respondents agreed there is a relationship between effective communication and job performance. The study also revealed that, unclear statements, omissions, language difference, gender difference, lack of organization idea and awkward sentence structure were barriers to communication among staff of the institute. Also respondents said listening, wandering around, use of e-mail communication, following due process, trust between managers and subordinates and provision of telephone would minimized barriers to communication among staff of the Institute. The study among other things recommended the use of meetings on a regular basis between supervisors and subordinates, to promote understanding between the supervisors and subordinates. The study then concluded that, Lake Chad Basin Research Institute management must ensure that communication between supervisors and subordinates is concise, precise and without distortion if their objectives are to be realized.

**Keywords:** Effective communication, Lake Chad Research Institute, Management, Productivity, Organizational Communication

## 1. INTRODUCTION

No organization can succeed without communication. Communication is an essential component of managing an organization. For any organization to succeed, the management of such an organization must communicate their objectives to all her workers without ambiguity. Therefore communication in an organization is meant to influence the entire work force to accomplish set goals and objectives. Communication then, can be said to be the transmission of messages from the sender (the boss) to the receiver (the subordinates), and vice versa. Cole (2004:220) defines communication as “the process of creating, transmitting and interpreting ideas, opinions and feeling”. There are three communication network systems designed by management, namely downward, upward and horizontal communication, to show who should talk to whom to get a job or task accomplished. According to Adler and Elmhurst (2002:19) “downward communication occurs whenever superiors initiate message to their subordinates”. Upward communication takes place when “messages flow from subordinates to superiors”. Adler and Elmhurst further said, “Upward communication can convey four types of messages; what subordinates are doing, unsolved work problems, suggestions for improvement and how subordinates feel about each other and the job. A third type of organization interaction is horizontal communication (sometimes called lateral communication). It consists of messages between members of an organization with equal power. The most obvious type of horizontal communication goes between members of the same division of an organization, office workers in the same department...” This kind of communication networks are designed by management to ensure productivity in their organizations. Only an effective communication can make people productive. According to Drucker, (1970:59) communication plays a major role in determining how effectively people work to achieve organizational objectives. Drucker added that, there is direct relationship between, communication and productivity, and that, employees work more effectively with greater satisfaction when their group and the total organization objectives and not only their work objectives are met.

In the light of the above therefore, this paper intends to examine how effective communication can bring about

productivity in Nigerian Agricultural Institutes using the Lake Chad Basin Research Institute as a case study.

## **2. BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Lake Chad Research Institute, Maiduguri, was established in 1975, during General Yakubu Gowon's administration by Decree No. 35 (Research Institutes Establishment, etc Order 1975), but did not start operation until 1976. The pioneer Director of the institute was late Mr. P. Chinuwuba. He was director of the institute between 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1976 and 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1979. The physical existence began with the location of its headquarters at Maiduguri in 1976, 5km along Gambora/Ngala Road, Maiduguri, Borno State. The institute has the following research departments, these are; Cereals research, Farming systems research and Agricultural Economics and Extension, with the following programme of activities. These are wheat, barley, millet, farming systems research, agro-forestry and agricultural economics and extension programmes. Lake Chad Research Institute has collaboration and linkages with both local and international organizations.

## **3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The Lake Chad Basin institute is known for research in wheat and other cereals. It is a well known fact that the research institute has produced large quantity of wheat in recent years. However a lot of the wheat was lost due to poor communication among workers. Also communication among the researchers, field workers and the local farmers is sometimes difficult, especially where there are no interpreters to translate English into local dialect (Kanuri) and vice versa.

## **4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

To identify the types of communication used among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research institute  
To find out the pattern of communication preferred by staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute  
To find out the most effective channels of communication used by staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute  
To find out the types of information communicated to staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute through the channels  
To identify the barrier to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute  
Whether these barriers to communication can be minimized among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute

## **5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What are the types of communication used by staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute?  
What pattern of communication do staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute Preferred?  
How effective are the communication channels used by staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute?  
What are the different types of information communicated to staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute through the communication channels?  
What are the barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Research Institute?  
How can these barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute be minimized?

## **6. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Informal communication takes place between people in an organization whose relationship to one another is not dependent on lines of authority and job functions. Informal communication may either be lateral or diagonal (Ilesanmi, 1997:107)

Murphy; Hildebrandt & Thomas (1997:4) were of the view that "an organization is a group of people associated for business, political, professional, religious, athletic, social, or other purposes. Its activities require human beings to interact and react, that is, to communicate. They exchange information, ideas, plans; order needed supplies; make decisions, rules, proposals, contracts and agreements. Communication is the "lifeblood" of every organization. They then went further to say that, "a vital means of attending to company concerns is through effective internal communication-downward, upward, and horizontal. It helps to increase job satisfaction, safety, productivity, and profits and decreases absenteeism, grievances and turnover."

Edler&Elmhorst (2005:18) opined that "upward communication is especially important for women. According to Edler & Elmhorst, "Females who engage in more interacts with the supervisors advance in the organizational hierarchy faster than those who do not spend as much time communicating upward. A probable explanation for this fact is that women have fewer informal connections with powerful decision makers in some organization."

Scott, (1997:51) defines communication as "a system of coordinated activities of a group of people working cooperatively towards a common goal under authority and leadership." Krizan, Merrier & Jones, (2002:12) remarked that "there are two types of communication: verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication uses words; non-verbal communication does not. Verbal communication is

commonly subdivided into two categories- written and oral.” Krizan, Merrier & Jones, further said, “all communications travel from sender to their receiver (s) through channels. Written message channels include memos, letters, e-mail, notes, reports, telegrams, newsletters, and news releases. These items may include diagrams, drawings, charts, and tables. Oral message channel take many forms including face-to-face conversions, telephone conversations, voice mail, in-person conferences, video conferences, and speeches.”

Lucker and Kaczmarek, (2004:6) say “oral, non verbal and written- goes to both internal and external audiences. Internal audiences are other people in the same organization: subordinates, superiors, peers. External audiences are people outside the organization; customers, suppliers, unions, shareholders, potential employees, government agencies, the press, and the general public.”

Giles, (1991:84)describes communication ...takes place in variety of ways: meetings, memos, conversations in the hallway, one-on-one discussions at the city desk, telephone calls, bulletin-board postings, talking shop lunch or after work- are all part of the communication mix in the newsroom.”

Daft, (2005:658) also defines communication as “the process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate or influence behaviour. According to Daft, communication is not just sending information. Management communication is a two way street that includes listening and other forms of feedback.”

Bratton & Gold, (2004:307) explained that, “the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning is the very essence of work organizations. Information about the organization-its production, its products and services, its external environment and its people- is essential to management and employees.”

Mullins, (2005:527) reported that a “lack of direction and clear information flow within the formal structure can give rise to uncertainty and suspicious. In the absence of specific knowledge, the grapevine takes on an important role, rumours start and the informal part of the organization is highlighted, often with negative results.”

Ivens, (1963:95) says, “the way to approach industrial communication is not to see it as a simple matter of imprinting a message on the tabula rosa of the worker’s mind, nor should it be a form of propaganda or hidden persuasion. If it is to have practical results in terms of production and human satisfaction, it must be seen as a sharing and participating in the situations, problems and policies of the organization.”Payne, (2001:22) sees communication as “ongoing because it is a process. According to Payne, ”even when we stop talking, we are communicating with our silence. For human beings, the process of communication never stops.”Glueck, (1980) was of the opinion that “almost every aspect of management involves communication. Glueck said further that “planning and controlling which are the two principal responsibilities of management are essentially information processing activities. The two processes can only work through the use of communication.”

Nelson, (2009:261) said “a review of the research on manager-employee communication identified five communication skills that distinguish “good” from bad superiors. According to Nelson, these skills include being expressive speakers, emphatic listeners, persuasive leaders, sensitive people and information managers”

Griffin,(2008:393) observed that “effective communication is the process of sending a message in such a way that the message received is as close in meaning as possible to the message intended”

Robbins & Coulter (2005:266) stressed that “communication within an organization is often described as formal or informal. Formal communication refers to communication that follows the official chain of command or is part of the communication required to do one’s job. For example when a manager asks an employee to complete a desk, he or she is communicating formally. So is the employee who brings a problem to the attention of his or her manager. Any communication that takes place within prescribed organizational work arrangements would be classified as formal.”

Nwankwo & Lulseggged (1985:12) also stressed that modern management depends on effective communication. While Brown (1973:53) says an organizational survival depends on the effectiveness of the communication in use among its members.

Daft & Marcic, (2001:443) opine that “communication is not only to convey information, but to persuade and influence people. According to Daft & Marcic, managers use communication to sell employees on the vision for the organization and influence them to behave in such a way as to accomplish the vision.”

Hambagda (1996) states that lack of clarity and precision in the encoded message can constitute an obstacle to effective communication.

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the survey research method, with questionnaire as instrument for collecting the data. Questionnaires were distributed to managers, researchers and field workers totaling 272 staff of the institute. A total of 267 questionnaires were completed and returned, which represent 98.2% of the respondents. The questionnaires were then analyzed using frequency and simple percentage.

## 8. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

8.1. Research Question 1: What are the types of communication used by Lake Chad Basin Research Institute?

Table 1: Types of Communication used at the institute

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Verbal	24	8.99
Written	108	40.45
All of the above	135	50.56
Others	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 135 (50.56%) of the respondents said they used both the written and verbal communication in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. 108 (40.45%) of the respondents said they used written communication in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. Minority 24 (8.99%) of the respondents said they only used verbal communication in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute.

8.2. Research Question 2: What pattern of communication do staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute preferred?

Table 2: Pattern of communication preferred by staff

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Upward communication(from top to bottom)	186	69.66
Downward communication(from bottom to top)	-	-
Horizontal communication(outside chain of command)	81	30.34
Others if any	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 186 (69.66%) of the respondents said they preferred upward communication. While minority 81 (30.34%) of the respondents said they preferred downward communication.

8.3. Research Question 3: How effective are the communication channels used by staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute?

Table 3: Effectiveness of communication channels used

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	54	20.22
Effective	107	40.08
Some what effective	98	36.70
Ineffective	8	3.00
Quite ineffective	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 107 (40.08%) of the respondents said the communication channels they used in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute were effective. 98 (36.70%) of the respondents said the communication channels they used in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute were some what effective. Another 54 (20.22%) of the respondents said the communication channels they used in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute were very effective, while the least 8 (3.00%) of the respondents said the communication channels they used in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute were in effective.

8.4. Research Question 4: What are the different types of information communicated to staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute through the communication channels?

**8.4.1.** Table 4a: Different types of information communicated through the communication channels.

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Instructions from supervisors	143	53.56
Assignment of duties	87	32.58
Job description	17	6.37
Management policies	10	3.75
Reprimands	4	1.50
Commendations	3	1.12
Queries	3	1.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 143 (53.56%) of the respondents said instructions from supervisors were the type of information communicated through the communication channels. 87 (32.58%) of the respondents said assignment of duties were the type of information communicated through the communication channels. Another 17 (6.37%) of the respondents said job description was the type of information communicated through the communication channels. 10 (3.75%) of the respondents said management policies were the type of information communicated through the communication channels. 4 (1.50%) of these respondents said reprimands were the information communicated through the communication channels. While minority 3 (1.12%) of the respondents said commendations and queries respectively were information communicated through the communication channels

**8.4.2.** :Table4b:Effective communication leads to job performance

Relationship between Effective Communication and Job Performance	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	27	10.11
Undecided	-	-
Agree	129	48.32
Strongly agree	111	41.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 129 (48.32%) of the respondents agree that there is relationship between effective communication and job performance. Another 111 (41.57%) of the respondents strongly agree that there is relationship between effective communication and job performance. While minority 27 (10.11%) of the respondents disagree that there is relationship between effective communication and job performance.

**8.5 Research Question 5: What the barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute?**

Table 5: Barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Unclear statements	110	41.20
Omissions	-	-
Gender difference	-	-
Lack of organization idea	-	-
Language difference	-	-
Awkward sentence structure	-	-
All of the above	157	58.80
Others	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 157 (58.80%) of the respondents said unclear statements were barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. Minority 110 (41.20%) of the respondents said omissions, gender difference, lack of organization idea, language difference and awkward sentence structure were barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute.

**8.6. Research Question 6: How can these barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute be minimized?**

Table 6: Minimizing barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Wandering around	56	20.97
Listening	70	26.22
Use of e-mail communication	67	25.09
Following due process	43	16.11
Trust between managers and subordinates	23	8.61
Provision of telephones	8	3.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 70 (26.22%) of the respondents said listening to instructions would minimized barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. 67 (25.09%) of the respondents said the use of e-mail communication would minimized barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. 56(20.97%) of the respondents said managers wandering around the subordinates would minimized barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. Another 43(16.11%0 of the respondents said following due process would minimized barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Research Institute. While 23(8.61%) of the respondents said trust between managers and subordinates would minimized barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. Minority 8(3.00%) of the respondents said provision of telephones on the desk of every employee would minimized barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute.

## 9. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that, majority 135 (50.56%) of the respondents said they used both the written and verbal communication in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. This agrees with Robbins & Coulter (2005) that organizational communication consists of both the verbal and written. While minority 24 (8.99%) of the respondents said they used only verbal communication in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute.

Table 2 shows that, majority 186 (69.66%) of the respondents said they preferred upward communication (from top to bottom), while minority 81 (30.34%) of the respondents said they preferred horizontal communication (outside chain of command).

Table 3 shows that, majority 98 (36.70%) of the respondents said the communication channels they used in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute were effective. Minority 8 (3.00%) of the respondents said the communication channels they used in Lake Chad Basin Research Institute were ineffective.

Table 4a, shows that, majority 143 (53.56%) of the respondents said instructions from supervisors were the type of information communicated through the communication channels. Minority 3 (1.2%) of the respondents said commendations and queries respectively were the information communicated through the communication channels.

Tale 4b shows, that majority 129 (48.32%) of the respondents agree that there is relationship between effective communication and job performance. Minority 27 (10.11%) of the respondents disagree there is relationship between effective communication and job performance. This supported the position of Drucker (1973) that there is a relationship between effective communication and productivity.

Table 5 shows that, majority 157 (58.80%) of the respondents said omissions, language differences, gender difference and lack of organization were barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. While minority 110 (41.20%) of the respondents said, unclear statements were barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. This agrees with Akinsola (2001) and Hambagda (1996) that superiors do not pass clear information to subordinates, therefore making communication difficult.

Table 6 shows that, majority 70 (26.22%) of the respondents said listening would minimize barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute. This agrees with Daft & Macic (2001) who said listening helps the receiver to ask questions to clarify unclear statement, thus making feedback easier for the sender. Minority 8(3.00%) of the respondents said provision of telephone would minimize barriers to communication among staff of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute.

## 10. RECOMMENDATION

The use of meetings between the superiors and subordinates should be encouraged in Lake Chad Research Institute. This is will promote understanding superiors and subordinates.

Communication audit should be carried out on a regular basis. This way problems associated with communication in the institute would be detected and dealt with promptly.

Training and retraining of staff should be organized on a regularly basis to help increase communication skills

among staff.

All communication whether verbal or written should be clear, precise and without ambiguity.

Supervisors should not only send messages from the comfort of their offices but should also mingle with their subordinates during office hours and break periods. For example eating with subordinates in their cafeteria, will help the supervisor know how they are feeling about their job and this will assist the supervisor on the best way to communicate with them.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Communication is a key component of modern management. The survival or success of any organization therefore hinges on how effective the managers are able to communicate the organizational goals and objectives to their subordinates. In conclusion therefore, the management of Lake Chad Basin Research Institute must ensure that communication between managers and subordinates is concise, precise and without any form of distortion if their objectives are to be realized.

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