

Communication Strategies and Employee Motivation: A Case of the Cameroon General Certificate of Education (GCE) Board

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ABSTRACT

Communication is a vital instrument for people and organizations to connect with their dynamic environment in which they are inherently dependent for accomplishing organizational goals. Prosperous internal communication strategies bring about positive perceptions around organizational communication, which serves as a lubricant for mutual understanding amongst workers and organizations' smooth functioning. This study seeks to evaluate the influence of internal communication strategies or practices on employee motivation levels in an organization by examining certain internal communication elements. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 70 respondents out of a sample population of 84, leading to a triangulation of the results. The findings reveal that internal communication practices have significant effects on motivation and overall productivity of employees. Written communication in the form of memos, circulars and manuals was the most common medium of communication. The study also reveals that communication was ineffective because of the "ivory-tower" structure evidenced in its top-bottom communication pattern. The research recommends improvement in the quality of communication resources and the designing of an effective communication strategy. It further suggests a study of interdepartmental communication within an organization with special focus on horizontal communication.

Keywords: Communication, effective, employee, motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The research's desire to understand the influence of internal communication strategies on employee motivation within an organizational setting forms this study's basis. More specifically, how certain elements of internal communication such as communication channel and quality of information are explored to have a better appraisal of the influence of

internal communication on employee motivation and job performance.

Communication is a vital instrument for people and organizations to connect to their dynamic environment in which they are inherently dependent for accomplishing organizational goals. Communication, in the words of George R. Terry, "serves as a lubricant, fostering the smooth operations of the management process" (Parthasarathy, 2010). Efficient communication practices have become more important in all organizations because managing employees requires skillful handling of thoughts, feelings, and emotions to secure positive outcomes and achieve organizational goals and objectives. Positive perceptions around organizational communication serve both as a motivational factor to employees and foster employee advocacy (Rajhans, 2012).

Prosperous internal communication strategies contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives by supporting mutual understanding between different departments (Wimmer & Dominick, 2010). Information flow through several management levels of an institution needs to be developed since this aspect is one of the main cornerstones for effective communication in organizations. Today's leaders in business, government, and non-profit sectors agree that communication is essential, and even vital for the functioning of any kind of organization. Nowadays, it can be quite hard for medium and large enterprises to work effectively without well-developed and sustained communication strategies (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn & Ganesh, 2011).

Though most managers write to impress and not to express, communication in today's corporate world is a whole lot more than a person's ability to talk to his/her employees. Effective communication is the organization's blood. Therefore, it is a fundamental aspect of job performance and managerial effectiveness. That is, making sure everyone is on the same page to motivating employees towards better productivity. Managers who communicate effectively are better motivators and can more easily create a

collaborative atmosphere to achieve organizational objectives. Effective internal communication helps to create an overall positive attitude towards the company and work while increasing satisfaction, motivation and willingness to work. Besides, people deliver better results if they can effectively communicate and fully trust each other (Smith & Mounter, 2005). When properly managed, effective communication and employee motivation result in inefficiency. The role of communication in building relationships that are personally satisfying and engaging cannot be overlooked. Management has the responsibility to know the right motivation that makes each staff be at his/her best and be able to clarify organizational goals and expectations to employees to effectively and efficiently boost morale and performance.

Objectives of the Study

This study's primary purpose is to identify the internal communication strategies used and examine the effects on employee motivation at the Cameroon GCE Board.

Research Questions

(RQ1) What are the channels of communication used at the Cameroon GCE Board?

(RQ2) How are the operational channels of communication used in motivating employees at the Cameroon GCE Board?

(RQ3) Do internal communication strategies have an effect on employee motivation at the Cameroon GCE Board?

(RQ4) What are the challenges of effective internal communication strategies faced by employees of the Cameroon GCE Board?

Research Hypothesis

(H1) The operational channels of communication are not used in motivating employees at the Cameroon GCE Board.

(H2) The internal communication strategies do not affect employee motivation, the Cameroon GCE Board.

(H3) There are no challenges to internal communication strategies faced by employees of the Cameroon GCE Board.

Internal Communication and Employee Motivation

A challenge faced by today's corporate managers is to determine the type of communication channels they can use to ensure that whichever method of communication is chosen should be effective. According to Richards (2010), open channels of communication can lead to new ideas and innovation in a number of areas.

Employees who understand what is important to their companies can focus on making improvements and spotting opportunities for innovation that can help further success.

Pinder (1998) noted that formal communication channels transmit information such as the goals, policies, and procedures of an organization. Messages in this type of communication channel follow a chain of command. This means information flows from a manager to his subordinates, and they, in turn, pass on the information to the next level of staff. An example of a formal communication channel is a company's newsletter, which gives employees as well as the clients a clear idea of a company's goals and vision. It also includes the transfer of information with regard to memoranda, reports, directions, and scheduled meetings in the chain of command, a business plan, customer satisfaction survey, annual reports, employer's manual, review meetings are all formal communication channels.

According to White, Vance and Stafford (2010), internal communication satisfaction added a sense of community and gave employees a feeling of greater responsibility to advocate for the organization at a personal level. Given these findings, it is not surprising that companies are placing more emphasis on internal communication channels. They further reported that employees who were most satisfied with internal communications placed a high value on face-to-face communications with their leaders because hearing directly from their leaders gave them a sense of full disclosure and made them feel important, even if the information was not needed to perform their job.

Within a formal working environment, there always exists an informal communication network. The strict hierarchical web of communication cannot function efficiently on its own, and hence, there is a communication channel outside of this web (Karimi, 2013). An example of an informal communication channel is lunchtime at the organization's cafeteria/canteen. Here, in a relaxed atmosphere, discussions among employees are encouraged. Also, managers walking around and adopting a hands-on approach to handling employee queries are examples of an informal communication channel. Minutes of a meeting may be a topic of discussion among employees, sports, politics, and T.V. and share the floor (Pinder, 1998).

According to Dipboye (2007), as cited in Karimi (2011), the unofficial communication channel in an organization is the organization's 'grapevine.' It is through the grapevine that rumors circulate. Also, those engaging in grapevine discussions often form groups, translating into friendships outside of the organization. While the grapevine may have positive implications, more often than not, information circulating in the

grapevine is exaggerated and may cause unnecessary alarm to employees. Another example of an unofficial communication channel is social gatherings among employees. Sharing a drink, coffee, slices of soya (barbeque), or paying private visits to a manager/colleague/employee's home fall within this communication channel.

Nevertheless, Zondi, Cassim and Karodia (2015) identified the use of written documents such as memos as the leanest communication channel because it requires little interaction and exchange of information within employees and often involves operational information about the organization and not about critical decisions under review. Thus, it is the reason for which employees normally attend to them when it is convenient and not as a priority to them (Byrne & LeMay, 2006). The channel with the highest degree of information being transferred is direct communication between two persons, due to its ability to allow immediate feedback.

Motivation has been defined as varied. Greenberg (2010), a behavioral scientist, describes it as the process of arousing, directing and maintaining behavior towards a goal. This means that motivation involves three components. The first component is arousal, which has to do with the drive or the energy behind an action. The second is the direction component, which involves the choice of behavior with respect to the arousal. The third component is maintenance, concerned with people's persistence and continued willingness to exert effort until a goal is met.

Employee motivation plays an important part in organizations. For instance, employee motivation can be a significant factor in employee performance. More motivated employees tend to perform better, such as doing more work in less time (Riketta, 2008). Employee performance is important because organizational success or failure is often dependent upon how much effort employees put forth when completing their job tasks. If employees do not perform well, the organization will produce less for the same costs of labor as motivated employees.

Lindner (1998) rated good wages as the second-highest motivator for workers. While good wages keep employees away from some degree of demotivation, there is little consensus between wages and motivation in that even though wages play a vital role in employee retention, it has no impact on employee motivation (Spears, 2013). Nevertheless, studies have shown that happiness and motivation are not necessarily all about money, but whether (employees) individual motivators are being met. Also, that money becomes less of a motivator as employee income increases (Kovach, 1987). No doubt, money can help employees from becoming less motivated but not more motivated.

The importance of employee motivation can also be understood through organizational culture (Dimitrios, Kastanioti, Maria, & Dimitris, 2014). Employee motivation and corporate culture are intertwined (Sokro, 2012). When employees feel a bond with other employees, such as through their organizational culture, they tend to be more motivated and satisfied with their job compared with employees who do not feel a connection with their organizational culture (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Corporate culture can communicate to employees what is important to the organization, such as employee motivation (Berry, 2011). Supervisors can help by creating an organizational cultural structure that encourages employee motivation (Janssen, & Van Yperen, 2004).

An individual's goals are often an influential factor in determining his or her level of motivation (Jang & Liu, 2012; Steele-Johnson, Beauregard, Hoover, & Schmidt, 2000). Eisenberger, Rhoades, and Cameron (1999) found that an individual's expectations of rewards or outcomes from performing a particular task had a positive relationship with their intrinsic motivation. For instance, individuals who thought they would receive more rewards for performing a particular task had higher intrinsic motivation levels than those who had lower reward expectations for performing the same job.

Feedback is one factor that can influence employee motivation in the organizational context (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012). Larson (1989) found negative feedback from managers to increase motivation for employees by examining the relationship between employees' motivation to perform particular behaviors to reduce the negative feedback from their manager.

Managers' positive feedback may be viewed as a reward that increases intrinsic motivation because it often creates positive emotional stimuli. The individual receives positive feedback and leads to employees enjoying performing the task.

The importance of communication can never be over-emphasized. Effective communication enhances employees' potential and acts as a motivating force for greater efficiency and productivity.

The first step in diagnosing motivation is determining what personal stake each employee will have within the company's broader goals. Employees respond more enthusiastically to leadership they feel confident in. Executives build employee confidence in leadership's capability by helping employees through communication to understand the company's general strategy and to identify their particular contribution to executing it.

An effective communication strategy with managers taking the lead fosters trust within the workforce. However, this leads to a more compelling exchange of ideas, helps staff embrace more

responsibility, and encourages management to stretch for higher targets. Managers must communicate effectively to enable opinions and comments, and encourage staff to generate ideas, reach decisions or even make mistakes (Karimi, 2013).

In conclusion, Mikoluk (2013) asserts that internal communication strategies have a significant effect on employee motivation level and an organization's overall productivity. He suggests that communication is motivating, and it is a life force. Mikoluk (2013) further asserts that if employees know where they stand in the workplace and feel comfortable in that environment, they will be motivated to do good work. Solid communication skills are not just right for the company's life, but they help you understand how everything is going within the company.

Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on two theories, namely Social Network Theory and Two-Factor Theory. Network analysis (Social Network Theory) is how the social structure of relationships around a person, group, or organization affects beliefs or behaviors. Causal pressures are inherent in a social structure. Network analysis is a set of methods for detecting and measuring the magnitude of the pressures. The axiom of every network approach is that reality should be primarily conceived and investigated from the view of the properties of relations between and within units instead of these units' properties. It is a relational approach. In social and communication science, these units are social units, individuals, groups/organizations and societies.

At the Cameroon GCE Board, there exist relationships in various departments as well as amongst employees. This helps to maintain a common focus. You will often find a manager relating to the customer care department, the sales and marketing team liaising with the transport department. These examples serve to indicate existing inevitable relationship patterns. These patterns create a network where somehow each department relates to another either directly or indirectly. In general, network analysis focuses on the relationships between people and not on the characteristics of people.

By mapping these relationships, network analysis helps uncover the emergent and informal communication patterns present in an organization, which may then be compared to the formal communication structures. These emergent patterns can be used to explain several organizational phenomena. For instance, the place employees have in the communication network, as described by their relationships, influences their exposure to and control over information (Haythornthwaite, 1996).

Tietjen and Myers (1998) note that there are two distinct lists of factors that influence employees'

attitudes. One set of factors cause happy feelings or the right attitude within the worker, and these factors, on the whole, were task-related. This intrinsic set of elements is called motivators, and these include recognition, achievement, growth or possibility of change, advancement, responsibility and the work itself (Tietjen & Myers, 1998).

Motivators are the intrinsic factors within the work itself as the recognition of a task completed. This means that motivators pertain to the job content, and their absence doesn't prove highly dissatisfying (Vaughn, Baumann & Klemann, 2008). According to Tietjen and Myers (1998), the other groupings are called hygiene factors and are extrinsic entities and are not directly related to the job itself but to the conditions surrounding it. These to an employee would include salary, company policies, management style, working conditions, factors in personal life, status, and job security and interpersonal relations between supervisor, subordinates and peers. Vaughn, Baumann and Klemann (2008) also posit that hygiene factors pertain to the job context, and their presence does not motivate, but their absence results in dissatisfaction.

Background of the Study Area

The Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board (CGCEB) is a Para-public institution of an administrative nature created by Cameroon Presidential Decree N° 93/172 of 1st July 1993 and amended by Decree N° 07/45 of 5th March 1997. It is located in Buea, South-West Region of Cameroon, in Central Africa. It is placed under the tutelage of the Minister of Secondary Education. The mission of the CGCE Board, as provided in Article 3 of Decree N° 93/172, amended by Decree N° 97/45 and completed by Prime Ministerial Order N° 112/CAB/PM of 12th October 1993 is to organize all end of secondary and high school examinations in the English language and to award certificates comparable to those of equivalent examining authorities internationally.

By implication, the CGCE Board's objectives are to assist in the development of sound education, ensure that educational standards are maintained, and give the people of English-speaking (Anglophone) Cameroon a vision of the great potentials that lie beyond examinations.

As concerns the organizational structure, the *Council* of the CGCE Board is the supreme governing organ of the Board charged with the general control and superintendence of policy, finance and property of the Board. Headed by a Chairperson who is also the Chairperson of the Board, Council has seventeen statutory members, including the Registrar (the Chief Executive Officer) and representatives of the Presidency, Prime Ministers Office Chancellor of the University of Buea and several ministerial departments.

The *Examination Executive Committee* (EEC) is the second-highest decision-making organ of the Board charged with all academic matters of the Board – the organization, quality control and development of examinations organized by the Board. The Chairperson of EEC is the Registrar, who is the Chief Executive Officer, and represents the Board in all academic, civil and legal matters. EEC reports its activities to the Council.

The Cameroon GCE Board is organized into three broad divisions: *The General Administration, the Division of Examinations and the Division of Technical Services*: It is headed by a Deputy Registrar and responsible for the technical examination processes. It comprises four services: Computer, Printing; Research and Publication; and Library and Documentation.

With its goal of bringing its services nearer its stakeholders, the Board offices located in Buea in the South West Region of Cameroon operate a *Regional Office* in Bamenda in the North West region and headed by an Examination Officer. It is responsible for the coordination of activities of the Board in the North West Region. Besides, there are Liaison Officers throughout the national territory charged with the supervision of the Board's actions in their respective areas.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method design to evaluate the effects of internal communication strategies on employee motivation at the Cameroon GCE Board. Survey data and data from focus groups and interviews were collected, analyzed and integrated. The use of qualitative and quantitative methods gave the researchers a better and an in-depth understanding and corroboration while addressing the weaknesses inherent in using either and not both. The results were then triangulated.

This study's target population consisted of all employees of the Cameroon GCE Board at the Headquarters in Buea, South West Region and the Regional Office in Bamenda, North West Region of Cameroon. There are eighty-seven (87) employees at the Cameroon GCE Board, with 81 concentrated in the headquarters in Buea and 6 in the Regional Office in Bamenda.

The study population of eighty-seven (87) workers was classified into three different management levels, namely Administrative or Top Level, Executive or Middle Level, and Supervisory or Lower Level. However, in collecting data and gathering information in relation to this study's theme, preference was given to staff that has put in at least 2 years of service at the Cameroon GCE Board.

The sample size for the survey was 87 employees selected by the use of proportional stratified

random sampling from the middle and lower management team of the Cameroon GCE Board. This technique was chosen in order to select a sufficient number of subjects in each stratum that is representative of the sample population. 70 employees, making a total of 83.3% of the sample population, was considered adequate to make inferences about the entire population. At the executive or middle level 18 were selected while at the supervisory or lower level 66 were selected.

The other three employees (Administrative or Top Level) were selected for the interview by use of a simple random sampling.

A semi-structured questionnaire (containing both open-ended and close-ended questions) and an unstructured interview guide (exclusively open-ended questions) were used in collecting constituted the main research instruments.

Out of the 84 questionnaires administered to staff of the middle and lower levels of management, 70 were returned. This process lasted for two weeks.

The interview guide comprised seven (7) open-ended questions directed to the three top level or administrative executives. The same guide was used to conduct a focus group discussion where seven (7) employees from both middle and lower management levels participated. Respondents were given a chance to talk about the construct in their own words with little or no prompting from the researchers.

A tape recorder was used to record the responses of the participants alongside a notebook to take down points deemed relevant to the study. The interviews of the top level managers took place in their respective offices while the focus group was held in one of the conference rooms at the CGCE Board, all on three different days within another week. The participants for the focus group were assigned codes such as letters of the alphabet (A-H) to use as identification during the discussion. Two of the three administrative or top management staff participated in the interview.

On the demographic representation of the sample 46 respondents were male while 24 were female. In terms of age the range was between 25 and 60 with a majority (28.6%) between 50 and 54 years. Most of the respondents also have a minimum of a first degree.

The data collected through the questionnaires was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 30 and Microsoft Excel.

Findings and Analysis of Findings

I. Operational Channels of Communication at the Cameroon GCE Board

The presentation of data from respondents began with the identification of the operational

channels of communication at the Cameroon GCE Board in relation to the regularity, accuracy and reliability, and the most preferred channel. 71.6% of the respondents identified written communication (memos, circulars, manuals) as the most regular channel of communication. The other channels were verbal (face-to-face meetings, phone calls) (14.9%), intercom (6.0%), notice/led board (4.5%), and social media (3.0%). This implies that the regular or most used channel of communication at the Cameroon GCE Board is the written channel while the least used is social media (WhatsApp).

In considering which operational channel of communication was accurate and reliable in the dissemination of information among employees 55.2% suggested it was written communication. It can thus, be considered that written communication was chosen as the most regular channel of communication at the Board because of its accurate and reliable nature – once written, the information can be retrieved – thereby, making it suitable for records keeping.

Besides being the most accurate and reliable channel of communication, written communication (memos, circulars, manuals) was further identified as the most preferred and effective channel of information dissemination at the GCE Board.

This study also sought to find out the channels of communication within the CGCE Board that could be improved upon in order to strengthen internal communication.

The data was not very significant. Intercom (26.0 %), written communication (26.0 %), and verbal communication (24.7 %) were selected as channels through which communication for employee motivation can be guaranteed if they are improved upon or developed. Email (7.5 %), WhatsApp (5.5 %) and short messages (SMS - 4.1 %) were relatively low may be due to the absence of the facilities while Notice/Led Board (6.2 %) was low may be due to its positioning within the organization.

II. Operational Channels of Communication and Employee Motivation

In seeking to know how the operational channels of communication are used to boost employee morale, the researchers had to bring out the characteristics of the channels that were considered to be a plus to staff motivation. They included sharing confidential information, providing urgent and important information needed for the accomplishment of tasks; providing clear and adequate information needed in accomplishing tasks; and providing feedback and input to the organization.

The data revealed that written communication (43.5%) and verbal communication (41.9%) were the channels of communication through which confidential

information is shared within the Board. Texting (SMS - 8.1%), the notice board (3.2%) and intercom and email with 1 respondent (1.6%) each were insignificant.

The data also revealed that verbal (56.1%) and written (36.4%) communication respectively are the channels used in providing urgent and important information needed in executing/accomplishing tasks at the Cameroon GCE Board.

The data further suggested that written (68.1%) and verbal (24.6%) communication were the channels through which clear and adequate information were provided in tasks accomplishment.

Moreover, the data revealed that written and verbal channels of communication were channels that give workers the opportunity to provide both feedback and input to the organization. This can be explained by the fact that intercom is found only in the offices of the three top managers, at the reception and at the gatepost. Thus, it can be considered to be a managerial strategy to control the free-flow of information among employees. This is a reflection of the style of communication (one-way, top-bottom approach) practiced within the organization.

III. Effects of Internal Communication Strategies on Employee Motivation

One of the objectives pursued in this study was to evaluate the effects of internal communication strategies on employee motivation at the CGCE Board.

The researchers sought to know whether communication at the CGCE Board follows a top-down approach. The data reveals that 73.1% of the respondents agreed that communication at the CGCE Board follows a top-down approach. This suggests that the opinions of middle and lower management staff of the Board are often not considered in making decisions, even those affecting the execution of their daily tasks. However, the data also showed that the top management of the CGCE Board values open and honest communication with workers. This implies that even though management values open and honest communication with employees, management does not consider their opinions in making decisions affecting their day-to-day jobs. It can therefore be considered that management is more concerned about creating relationships rather than building or harnessing the feeling/sense of belonging with its employees. Ironically, employees are likely to feel the sense of belonging when their opinions or needs and concerns are taken into consideration.

The researchers further sought to know whether a good understanding of the information and expectations of a given task enhance the speed and accuracy of staff in accomplishing assigned tasks. It was noticed that only 2.8% of the respondents disagreed while 92.9% of the sample agreed. This implies that

workers get motivated and perform well when they understand the various tasks, which they are supposed to carry out. Therefore, the understanding of information and the clarity of expectations for assigned tasks are relevant to staff motivation at the Cameroon GCE Board.

In the same light, it was found that an understanding of the organizational culture gave workers a sense of belonging and makes them to respond more enthusiastically to their daily tasks. 84.2% of the sample supported the suggestion that the culture of their organization gave them a sense of belonging and this motivates them in doing their jobs. This implies that organizational culture plays a significant role in employee motivation at the CGCE Board.

In addition, the researchers also observed from the data collected that management of the CGCE Board disseminates vital and time sensitive information about changes in activity focus or planned changes in the workforce. 47.1% of the sample supported that assertion. The implication here is that, when employees get timely information about assigned tasks, they are most likely to prepare both psychologically and physically in advance and feel motivated to work. This can increase efficiency and productivity.

On another note the findings revealed that management rarely informs the workers about opportunities, capacity building, and career development programmes and services for their professional and personal development. Only 39.1% agreed to the assertion. This is an indication that information distribution at the Cameroon GCE Board is unstructured and does not consider the individual needs and concerns of the employees.

The study also sought to find out whether the management of the Board communicates the mission, vision and values of the Board in clear terms to its employees. 65.2% of the respondents were positive. Besides, 79.7% of the respondents were of the opinion that positive verbal and nonverbal feedbacks from top management enhance their performance.

Findings and Analysis of Findings from Qualitative Data

Though the researchers' main study sample was employees of the middle and lower levels of management, it was necessary to complement data collected from the questionnaire with that from in-depth interviews with top management and a focus group discussion with middle and lower management.

Top management acknowledged that written communication (in the form of circulars and memos) and the strict use of verbal communication (in the form of personal contacts or face-to-face meetings and phone calls) are used to get work related information to staff

of the GCE Board. One further identified intercom, which "is available just for the receptionist, the gate men and top management," the other identified texting (SMS) as other existing channels of communication used at the Board. Written communication (circulars and memos) was identified to be the most used, preferred and successful medium of communication as justified by one of the top managers who asserted that, "we still depend on written documents because you can track whatever you are doing, and justify yourself".

Similarly, participants of the focus group acknowledged the communication channels used by top management as mentioned above, but expressed worry over having "pieces of written documents in various departments but sometimes they overlap". They further identified WhatsApp, though "informal" as another means of communication at the Board.

Staff at all levels asserted that communication is an important aspect of organizational/personnel management. They however, differed with respect to the nature of communication at the Board, which forms the area of departure for this analysis. While top management adheres strongly to the top-bottom approach (vertical communication), junior management (middle and lower) prefer horizontal communication that places all staff at almost the same level of information dissemination and reception for organizational efficiency.

Participants were asked to assess the effectiveness of internal communication at the CGCE Board. Top management did not agree whether internal communication at the GCE Board is effective or not. While one of them acknowledged "free interaction" with all staff not considering the rank of the staff, another asserted that effective internal communication for all staff at the Board is yet to be realized:

"...It does not work. There is dire need for change and improvement on the system. There is no reason why all the offices should not have an intercom; a wireless intercom where you can communicate with the key people without necessarily moving out of your office".

The same participant acknowledged that if social media platforms like WhatsApp are well integrated into the internal communication structure of the GCE Board, "many people will exchange ideas easily and in a very useful way". Top management both agreed that much has to be done to develop the internal communication platforms at the GCE Board.

Besides, all members of the focus group equally expressed frustration over the operational channels of communication in relation to staff motivation. Though an important medium of communication, "regular meetings are very lacking" and "...there is very limited room for communication between the staff and management" during such meetings.

Another participant regretted that communication is not all-inclusive since some workers are “left out. Information at times reaches people late. Sometimes people are taken unaware”. This brings in the idea of an uncoordinated internal communication structure at the GCE Board. All the focus group participants also agreed that the internal communication at the GCE Board “hasn’t been really effective”...and it is “old school.”

Interviewees were asked to give their opinions on the extent to which internal communication strategies affect employee motivation at the Cameroon GCE Board.

Top management was of the opinion that internal communication does have an effect on employee motivation. They pointed out that if employees were ignorant of a piece of information, they would be unable to act on it. Therefore, ignorance can affect the output of the employees. One of the top managers stated that, “a notice from the Registrar, before it gets to the other workers, they might have left the office, ignorant of what is happening until the following day.” Thus, for employees to yield better output, they have to receive information on time and through an effective medium.

The two top managers equally shared a similar view on the role of communication in job execution. While one highlighted the importance of communication in “assigning people to do something”, the other articulated that better communication can ensure output optimization (“... if you optimize communication, you will equally optimize your output”), job satisfaction when provided with appropriate communication facilities through which employees can disseminate information, as well as they will “feel as part of the house.”

Similarly, all participants of the focus group were of the opinion that the absence of a corporate policy regarding communication, together with the poor communication structure at the Cameroon GCE Board has tremendous effect on staff motivation and output. One participant asserted that “... If the objectives and details of activities are known before time, the staff would be more empowered and more efficient”. He further stated that when communication is considered as “dictums from hierarchy...”

Administration dishes out instructions with little room for interaction and scare people from expressing their views...” it will not enhance performance.

The researchers went an extra mile to find out from the interviewees, other elements that could enhance employee motivation at the GCE Board. Staff trainings (both internal and external) and staff recognition (letters of appreciation and awards to outstanding personnel) were the most recurrent responses from both groups interviewed. The provision

of working equipment / services (like intercom, intranet, internet, official WhatsApp forum, and telephones in major offices) besides comfortable office spaces were rated second.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was in a larger picture to examine the internal communication strategies at the Cameroon GCE Board and their effects on employee motivation. The study suggests that elements such as organizational structure, leadership and decision making, employee commitment, communication channels and strategies, discretionary effort, just to mention a few, all have one common element which is internal communication.

The literature on the phenomenon under study reveals that in order to have efficient employees who contribute to overall organizational success and growth, internal communication must be viewed as a strategic tool towards achieving that goal. The overall result shows that there is a significant positive effect of effective internal communication on employee motivation and so organizations could utilize effective internal communication strategies to boost employee enthusiasm and performance levels.

The effects of internal communication strategies on employee motivation are of such great significance that the CGCE Board and other organizations have to see the need to develop and elevate communication between management and employees and amongst employees themselves.

It is therefore, apparent that internal communication strategies have a significant effect on employee motivation level and the overall productivity of an organization as asserted by Mikoluk (2013).

Recommendations

The research thus recommends the organization of training programmes that enhance communication skills of both management and employees.

It is also recommended that organizations should design and implement an effective communication plan and strategy that will enable management determine the effectiveness of employees. Both the management and employees should realize that communication is not just an operational tool. It is a strategic function in managing an organization like the CGCE Board where reputation is the organization’s most valuable asset.

There is a need to enhance the decision-making and consultative process in the organization so that all employees can participate in issues that concern them.

The organizational communication structure needs to be revisited such that the decision making process can incorporate ideas and opinions from

employees.

The findings of this study show that internal communication is a fairly large subject, with diverse and multifaceted areas that need to be further exploited.

Another possible area for future research could be to study interdepartmental communication within an organization with special focus on horizontal communication amongst employees of the same hierarchical levels and within various departments.

It may be of interest to study the phenomenon within a larger organization having many departments and employees or a comparative study between a Parapublic and a public institution.

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