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**COMMUNICATION BARRIERS THAT AFFECT THE SMOOTH
MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
STAREHE DIVISION, NAIROBI**

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E54/0048/03

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

2005

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DECLARATION

This Research Project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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To my parents, the late Hannington O. Wanekaya and Tabitha A. Wanekaya

This Research Project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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Muka, Joyce amule
Communication
barriers that affect



2007/299673

DEDICATION

To my beloved husband Ben Muka, children Kevin, Brian and Tony

and

To my parents, the late Hannington O. Wanekaya and Tabitha A. Wanekaya

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Samuel N. Waweru for his selfless effort in guiding and constructively advising me at the various stages of this research project. Many thanks also to my colleagues, Betty Gaya Teyie, Joan Mwachi and Emily Bomett for the stimulating discussions I had with them and also for their moral support.

Special tribute goes to the head teachers who allowed me access to their schools and also made it possible for me to administer the research instruments to them, their teachers and their students. I received invaluable support from all the four head teachers of the public schools I visited. I also appreciate the co-operation of the teachers and the students in the four schools I visited.

To my sister, Susannah Munyiri Ochieng, I thank you for your encouragement and support. You were always there for me.

I am also greatly indebted to Ricalda and Winfred for typing the research projects. There are times when they would work up to very late at night. I appreciate their sacrifice.

Finally, I would like to record my deep appreciation to my family whose support made this work possible. My husband's support, counsel and encouragement helped me through the difficult moments when I felt like giving up. Invaluable support, assistance and understanding also came from my children. Thank you very much.

ABSTRACT

It is widely recognized that communication is an essential part of management. The school is a communicating organism whose success is achieved and judged by its communication system. This then makes communication barriers that affect the smooth management of secondary schools a center of interest in research. The purpose of this study was two-fold; to investigate the prevalent communication channels in secondary schools and to investigate the communication barriers that affect the smooth management of secondary schools.

The population considered was composed of four headteachers of four public secondary schools in Starehe Division, Nairobi. Teachers and students were also used. They were selected using simple random sampling. The students were samples from the Forms Two, Three and Four classes as the Form Ones were still too new to have grasped the nature of the problems.

Data was collected using questionnaires for the head teacher, teachers and students. Since communication is a continuous process, the researcher used observation forms to record aspects of communication that occurred during the visits to the schools. A combination of these categories of items helped to gather high quality data from the respondents, which were easier to analyze. The data was analyzed using frequency tables and percentages. The findings were used to generate conclusions and recommendations.

The study revealed communication barriers that exist in secondary schools. These are; use of one way communication, infrequent staff meetings, lack of cohesion among teachers, misinterpretation of information received and use of intimidating language and tone by the head teacher.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA	-	Bachelor of Arts
B. ED	-	Bachelor of Education
BOG	-	Board of Governors
Dip. ED.	-	Diploma in Education
HoD	-	Head of Department
KCSE	-	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KESI	-	Kenya Educational Staff Institute
MOEST	-	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NCCK	-	National Council of Churches of Kenya
PGDE	-	Post Graduate Diploma of Education
POSDCORB	-	Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting
PTA	-	Parents Teachers Association
SPSS	-	Statistical Package For Social Sciences
TSC	-	Teachers' Service Commission

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The current age is usually referred to as the information age. Information and knowledge are a mighty source of power and a lot of resources are expended on gathering, managing and disseminating of information. Without communication, information is dead and it is therefore the process of communication that breathes life into it. Communication permeates all aspects of life, social and personal and in fact, it is safe, to say that all life is communication.

It is no exaggeration to say that the communication function is the means by which organized activity is unified. It may be looked upon as the means by which social inputs are fed into social systems. It is also the means by which behaviour is modified, change is effected, information is made productive, and goals are achieved. Whether we are considered as a church, a family, a school or a business enterprise, the transfer of information from one individual to another is absolutely essential (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988).

Over the years, the importance of communication in organized effort has been recognized. Communication is viewed as the means by which people are linked together in an organization to achieve a common purpose. Indeed, group activity is impossible without communication because coordination and change cannot be effected. No group can exist without communication. It is only through transmitting meaning from one person to another that information and ideas can be conveyed. Communication however is more than merely imparting meaning. It must also be understood. It is therefore

important that anyone involved in supervision should have a good understanding of what is involved in interpersonal communication.

In its broadest sense, the purpose of communication in an enterprise is to effect change-to influence action towards the welfare of the enterprise. Communication is essential for the internal functioning of enterprises because it integrates the managerial functions.

Communication is especially needed to:

- Establish and disseminate goals of an enterprise
- Develop plans for their achievement
- Organize human and other resources in the most effective and efficient way
- Select, develop, and appraise members of the organization
- Lead, direct, motivate, and create a climate in which people want to contribute, and
- Control performance (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988)

Not only does communication facilitate the managerial functions but it also relates an enterprise to its external environment. It is through information exchange that managers become aware of the needs of customers, the availability of suppliers, the claims of stakeholders, the regulations of governments, and the concerns of a community. It is through communication that any organization becomes an open system interacting with its environment (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988).

The school is a communicating organization whose success is achieved through and judged by its communicating system. It is therefore crucial to develop good communication as a learning and also as a management tool.

School management receives educational plans and objectives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology through the Provincial Director of Education. Planning is important as it forms the basic principle of school management (Okumbe, 1998). These plans have to be communicated to the various members of the school community through the school management. Ineffective communication of school plans can lead to the disruption of educational programmes in the school (Dean, 1995). Poor communication in schools has led to low academic achievement, high levels of indiscipline, riots and strikes (Dean, 1995).

The quality that distinguishes one school from another is called "school climate" Hoy and Miskel (1991) define organizational climate as "A set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviour of people". The head teacher and the teachers' behaviour are important dimensions. In social interaction, Silver (1983) argues that the climate of the school is related to the quality of instructions students receive. This is because the head teacher either hinders or fosters communication within the school.

Many schools agree that management entails planning, organizing, staffing, directing, co-ordinating, reporting and budgeting (POSD CORB). When one looks at reporting critically, it is actually communication. Communication is therefore a very powerful tool in the school setting. Any communication barriers may interfere with the expected relationship within the school.

It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the barriers that affect the smooth management of secondary schools so that they can be removed or minimized

if not eliminated in order for the school to run smoothly and effectively in its mission to achieve its goals.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Effective communication is important in school management. It is through it that information is passed from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to the school management and then to the students and parents. Communication is also used to control students' behaviour and motivate them by emphasizing rules and regulations and this results into good discipline. Therefore lack of effective communication is the greatest single factor causing students' unrests.

The findings of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) on students' unrest in schools and colleges (1994:6) support the view that lack of communication between the head teacher, teachers, prefects and students breed suspicion and tension which explodes into violence.

The report says:

...breakdown in communication hampers dialogue between students and the school management, that is the heads and teachers. The lack of communication means that students' views are not listened to. This leads to anger and violence.

Nzuve (1999:53) says:

Communication controls behaviour, fosters motivation by clarifying what is to be done and how it is done. It expresses feelings and in this way, provides a release for the emotional expressions and fulfillment of social goals.

From the above findings, students' and even teaching and non-teaching staff unrest could be avoided if the school management established effective communication with straight forwardness on matters affecting the students' and members of staff welfare. This could promote understanding as grievances would be sorted out. This means that barriers of communication need to be overcome if the goals and objectives of education are to be achieved.

The study therefore investigated the communication barriers that affect the smooth management of public secondary schools in Starehe Division, Nairobi.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the communication barriers that affect the smooth management of public secondary schools in Starehe Division of Nairobi. The research further endeavored to find out how communication can be improved in secondary schools in order to improve administration and performance.

1.3 Objectives of the study

To achieve the broad aim, the study had the following objectives:

1. To find out the modes of communication frequently used by headteachers in secondary schools in Starehe Division.
2. To find out the barriers to effective communication between headteachers and the students in Starehe Division.
3. To determine whether school administrators address all the students' problems.
4. To find out how communication can be improved in secondary schools in order to improve administration and performance.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to address the problems the following research questions were posed.

1. What are the channels of communication that are prevalent in the school?
2. What factors hinder effective communication in the management of secondary schools in Starehe Division?
3. Does the school administration address all the students' problems?
4. How can communication be improved in secondary schools in order to improve administration and performance?

1.5 Basic Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed that:

Communication barriers exist among head teachers and the teachers, students, non-teaching staff, parents and other interested parties in secondary schools and this affects the smooth management of schools.

Most head teachers would like to receive some training so as to communicate effectively in schools.

1.6 Significance of the Study

It was hoped that the findings of this study would be significant in the following ways:

- The information will be of significant importance to the Kenya Educational Staff Institute (KESI) as a body charged with the responsibility of organizing in-service training programmes for head teachers.

- The headteacher, education officials and members of the Board of Governors will be made aware of communication barriers that interfere with the smooth management of schools.
- The information gathered will be very useful reference for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), head teachers and BOGs in re-examining or re-appraising their communication systems.
- The study will form a basis for further research and the findings will add to the world of knowledge as very little has been done on communication.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There is inadequate research done on this area of communication in schools in Kenya. It was not possible to use related literature adequately to provide support or otherwise for this work. However, a look at researches done elsewhere were done to minimize the problem.

Due to inadequate time and funds, the study only covered those public secondary schools in Starehe Division of Nairobi. The BOG, parents and the non-teaching staff were excluded from the study due to limited time and funds. However, it was recognized that their input could give valuable information.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was limited to the headteachers, teachers and students of public secondary schools in Starehe Division, Nairobi. Other parts of the district/province and the country at large were excluded because of costs and time.

The findings were not generalized for the whole country but shed some light on the communication barriers prevailing in secondary schools and their effects on the smooth management of these schools.

The study covered public schools only. Private schools may have different factors that affect the way in which the headteachers communicate.

1.9 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework for this study was derived from the systems theory. A system is defined as a sum total of individual but inter-related parts (sub-systems) and is put together according to a specific scheme or plan, to achieve the pre-stated objectives. A system can also be defined as deliberately designed synthetic organisms, comprised of interrelated and interacting components, which are employed to function in an integrated fashion to attain predetermined purposes. In short a system functions towards achieving a set goal.

It is important to note that all systems have something in common on the basis of which they all fall into one category "a system". A system has the following components:-

- A number of parts of sub-systems which when put together in a specific manner form a whole system.
- They have boundaries within which they exist/operate.
- They have specific goals or goal. This goal is expressed in terms of an output, which is achieved by receiving input and processing it to form the output.
- There are close inter-relationship and interdependency amongst the various sub-systems.

There are two types of systems. These are the Closed System and the Open System. Closed Systems are the self-sufficient and self-regulatory and have no interaction with the environment in which they exist. An open system is one, which interacts with the environment on which it relies for essential inputs for the discharge of its system output. Social Systems (e.g. organizations) are always open systems (Ayot and Patel 1992).

Below is a basic model of an open system:

Figure 1.1 Simple model of an open system

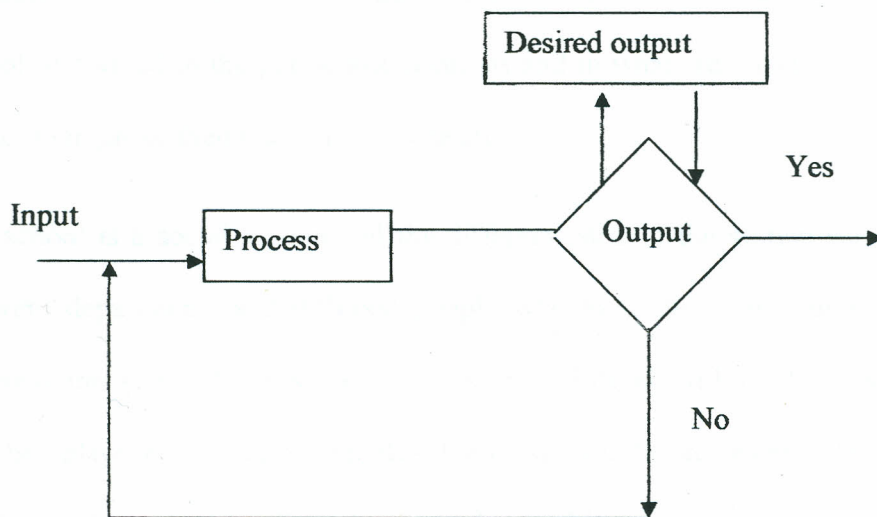


Source: Ayot H.O. and Patel M. M. **Instructional Methods** Pg.39

The above model can be improved by adding some more elements such as, specification of the desired output, checking actual output against expected output and reprocessing the unexpected.

An improved model should look like the one given below:

Figure 1.2 An Improved Model of Open System



Source: Ayot H.O. and Patel M.M.(1992). **Instructional Methods** Pg.40

A school organization is a very good example of an Open Social System. The school receives students from the environment (society) and must also accept teachers and some financial resources in order to function.

Open Systems import matter and energy from the environment, process these into something new and finally export the finished product back into the environment. A school, for example, takes in students, teachers and financial support. Within the school some work gets done by way of teaching. Completing the circle, students go out as graduates having acquired knowledge and skills, which they use for themselves and for the community.

Open Systems by their very nature import not only matter and energy but information as well. Input of information furnishes the system with signals about the environment and about the systems own functioning in relation to that environment. Information, which

regards the deviations of the system from its course, enables it to correct these deviations and keep to its course. This kind of information is what is referred to as negative feedback. For example, information regarding how poorly the students in any given school performed in the public examinations and in what areas can help teachers in that school to improve their teaching in those areas.

The school is a social system and the different parts in the system can be seen as the different departments and different people who form the entire community. All the different members of the school are assigned different roles. It is only when each member plays his/her role well that harmony will be achieved. The head teacher, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and the neighbouring community are all parts of the whole system. Every sub-system has a function and all parts of the structure have to work co-operatively in order to achieve the function, which in the case of a school is good performance.

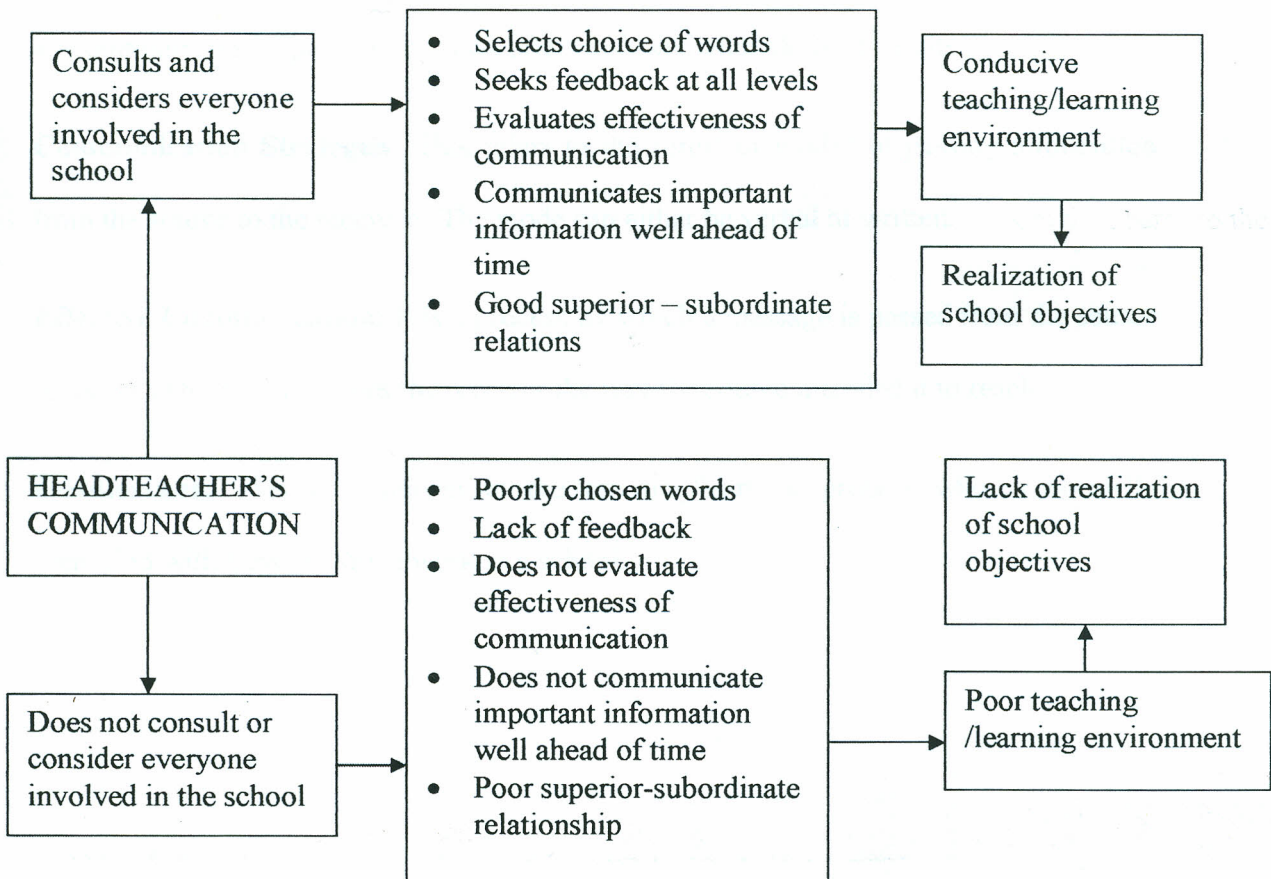
As a social system, the school has different people playing different roles. Communication is therefore very important in a school setting. Any barriers will definitely have a negative effect on the expected relationship within the school and this in turn, affects the objectives of a school. A breakdown of communication in a school system could lead to misunderstanding, confusion and low morale among the staff and the students (Wanga, 1987). She further says that the head teacher must therefore give some priority to being "available". He/she must establish regular contact when necessary with teachers, students, the non-teaching staff and the neighbouring community. The head teachers stand or fall by the quality of their communication. They have therefore no choice but to be the nerve-centre of the communication network situated in their

schools, as they are the center of their own internal organization and also the link between the school and the outside world.

1.10 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1.3 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study. It brings out the head teacher as the nerve-centre of the internal organization and the link between the school and the outside world.

Figure 1.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study



1.11 Definition of Significant Terms

Communication: It is a process by which messages or information are passed from the source to the receiver through a channel and feedback is expected. Organization communication further refers to all verbal, written and non-verbal aspects that are found within the school situation and these aspects relate different individuals within the school setting.

Communication Barriers: These are aspects of communication that make it difficult for a communicator to pass information effectively and elicit defined results.

Communication Strategies: This refers to the forms or modes of passing information from the source to the receiver. The mode can either be verbal or written.

Effective Communication: It is a process by which a message is passed from the source to the receiver and it reaches the receiver the way the source intended it to reach.

Headteacher: This is a person in the teaching/learning process who is normally identified with administrative work in a school.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature concerned with the significant writings of authorities in the area of communication barriers and their effects on school management.

The review of literature includes:

- The concept of communication
- Management tasks in schools
- Role of communication in school management
- Communication barriers that affect the management of secondary schools
- Possible solutions to communication barriers that affect the management of secondary schools

2.1 The Concept of Communication

Mbiti (1974) defined communication as a method used to let another person know what is taking place and when such a thing is taking place. He goes further and says that communication is the life-long blood of any organization and asserts that without it, it is impossible to run any activities of an organization. An education system would therefore collapse without communication.

The Commonwealth secretariat (1993) states that communication is the process by which information is exchanged in order to initiate action or solve a problem.

In a school, this may be giving notices about activities, events, decisions and tasks which affect the individuals or groups-students, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, visitors to the school and others. It also suggests the sharing of opinions and ideas openly and freely, being mindful of others' views and encouraging individuals to seek for information and advice.

According to Fielding (1997), communication is defined as the process of interchanging thoughts, feelings and information. Communication is a chameleon of a word changing the colour of its meaning with a change of speaker (or listener) more often than most. Communication is the process by which information is passed between individuals and/or organizations by means of prevailing agreed symbols.

According to Ayot and Patel (1992), communication may be defined as an attempt to establish commonness with somebody. They go on further to state that communication is a process by which messages or information are passed from one person to another.

Every communication has one of the following purposes:

- To inform - explain, instruct, define, classify, demonstrate, teach, etc.
- To persuade - influence, convince, motivate, sell, preach and stimulate action.
- To evoke – entertain, inspire, help, relieve, celebrate, commemorate.

The Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) has listed the following as the process of communication:

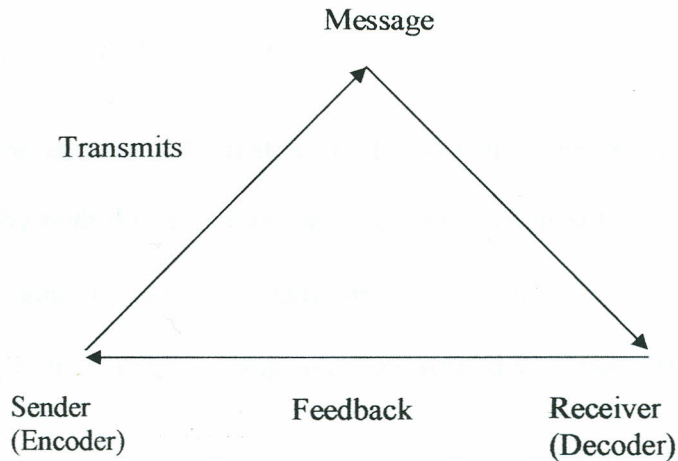
- Source of the message – the sender: writer, speaker, encoder
- Format of the message and media for transmitting the message – letter, memo, report, speech, chart, etc.

- Time factor – messages may take time to reach their destinations
- Receiver of the message – seeing, hearing, feeling, imagining, etc by the recipient, reader, listener, perceiver, decoder
- Feedback – acknowledgement from the receiver to indicate that there has been total communication.

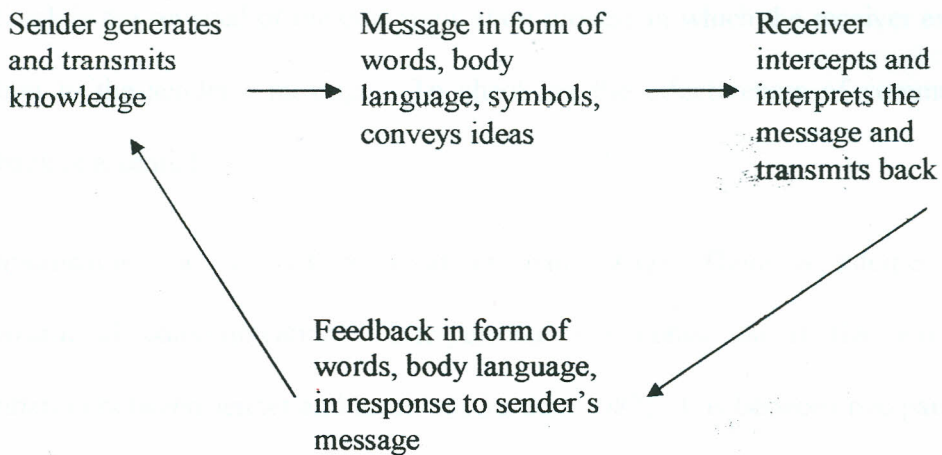
Communication is regarded as a process because it is dynamic rather than static with messages constantly moving up, down and across the organization. Hicks et al (1975) observed that communication is a process and it must be considered as a whole dynamic interaction.

Hiar et al (1998) stated that people exchange messages to accomplish goals and objectives. People bring different goals, backgrounds, styles, habits and preferences in the process of communication. Effective communication is interactive. Each person taking part in the communication process listens and responds to the others. Each element of the communication process contributes to make communication interactive.

In its simplest form communication can be seen as involving sender, message and receiver. This is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Process of Communication

The above model, however, can be expanded as follows:

Figure 2.2 Expanded Process of Communication

Source: Ministry of Education (1999): National Policy on Appointment, Deployment and Training of School Administrators in Kenya (Unpublished)

Simply stated, the communication process involves the sender who transmits a message through a selected channel to the receiver.

The sender of the message has a thought or an idea, which is then encoded in a way that can be understood by both the sender and the receiver. We usually think of encoding a message into the English language but there are many other ways of encoding, such as translating the thought into computer language (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988).

The receiver has to be ready for the message so that it can be decoded into thought. Accurate communication can occur only when both the sender and receiver attach the same or at least similar meaning to the symbols that compose the message (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988).

Feedback is the reversal of the communication process in which the receiver expresses a reaction to the sender's message. To check on the effectiveness of communication, feedback is essential.

Communication can be differentiated in many ways. There is interpersonal and organizational communication. Interpersonal communication is that exchange of information between sender and receiver (Gordon, 1987). It is between two parties. This communication promotes the interaction between different persons in the organization. It has basic elements such as sender, message, channel and the receiver.

Organizational communication refers to that which takes place among groups of people in the organization (Okumbe, 1998). This is the communication pattern, which is improved by the organizational rules and practice. Three main patterns are identified: downward, upward and horizontal communication. Downward communication refers to

the transfer of messages from those in the higher positions to those below. Okumbe (1998) has suggested that a combination of oral and written media be used in disseminating information so as to achieve effective downward communication. This research will also determine the factors that affect the use of downward communication in school management.

Upward communication is that which emanates from those in lower positions. It is directed to those in higher hierarchy (Robbins, 1996). This communication provides the manager with much needed information and feedback from the juniors.

Horizontal communication is that which takes place between persons of the same level in the organization (Okumbe, 1998). It is interactive communication as it involves different people regardless of their status.

Whether interpersonal or organizational, the communication process assumes varied forms. There is oral communication, which is the use of spoken words in a face-to-face expression (Campbell, 1971). It is faster and allows the use of gestures. Its serious limitations are that it is less permanent and more prone to distortion (Robbins, 1996).

Written communication is more permanent, tangible and verifiable. It is argued that it is more logical, clear and thought-out than oral. Robbins (1996) notes that a serious drawback of written communication is that it is time-consuming and has no in-built feedback. Unlike the oral communication, the receiver cannot gauge the non-verbal cues (Campbell 1971).

Communication can also be categorized as verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication is essentially oral. Non-verbal communication is the non-word human responses such as gestures, facial expressions and the perceived characteristics of the environment through

which the human verbal and non-verbal messages are transmitted. This kind of communication is enhanced by actions such as the dress of the sender, time or season, space and physical appearance of the persons involved.

Bell (1981) brings the different forms/types of communication into three categories:

- Verbal, including planned and unplanned decisions, one-to-one encounters, small or large meetings and using telephones or tannoys
- Written, including notes, memos, reports, letters, portion papers and notices.
- Visual, including posters, diagrams, flow-charts and photographs.

Mbiti (1974) has added another category and this is communication by use of electronic devices-telephone, radio, television and computer.

Formal communication is basically the official structure of communication in the organization. It is defined as communication that occurs through the established organizational hierarchy of authority (Koech, 1994). It includes the Chain Wheel, Y Circle and All Channels. Robbins (1984) has made very outstanding observations about the networks.

In the chain network, communication flows upwards or downward only. It is found in the formal organizations where direct line-authority exists. In this set-up, communication follows an arranged hierarchy.

The Y network represents situations where two superiors give directions to one office that relays it to those below him/her. It is slow and ineffective.

The wheel network represents a situation where there exists one supervisor with several subordinates below his position. It does not allow interaction between the subordinates. The senior officer disseminates all the required information to each junior officer. It is quick and accurate although it leads to domination of the source.

The circle network allows members to interact only with the adjoining members. It is slow and noisy.

All-Channel network allows each member to interact freely with others in the organization. This is the fastest network and promotes higher human relations in the firm.

Whereas the Y, Wheel and Chain are rated as the most effective in terms of job performance, they produce the least employee satisfaction. The Circle and All-channel are the fastest for more complex problems.

Informal communication occurs through the structures without following the chain of command. It thrives among the unofficial groups in the organization. Okumbe (1998) says that the "grapevine" is an informal communication system in an organization. He further concludes that rumours and gossip, which are all aspects of "grapevine", can be minimized if the administrators eliminate ambiguity in the organizational communication. Robbins (1996) says that up to 75% of information passed through grapevine is accurate. The rumours are aroused by uncertainty in the organization. The main advantage of grapevine is that it translates formal communication to the group's own jargon. The message forms part of what employees consider important and their own.

2.2 Management Tasks In Schools

Campbell (1971) indicates that the school management tasks may be grouped into six operational areas of management as follows:

- Curriculum and instruction
- Staff community relations
- Staff personnel
- Student personnel
- Physical facilities
- Finance and Business Administration

Organization and treatment of these tasks should in no way imply that one person can or should do them alone. Others in the organization are almost always involved. They may be the members of the public, Parents Teachers Association, members of the non-teaching staff etc. In some cases, the tasks are achieved under the assistance of these people, in other cases, entirely by them and still in other cases, these people advise the head teacher as regards these tasks. It should be clear, however, that the responsibility of seeing these tasks are performed rests with the head teacher. The school management has the responsibility of coordinating all the activities in and outside the school that contribute towards the attainment of educational goals. This can be achieved by developing confidence and understanding amongst all members of the school community through establishing and maintaining effective communication network (Mbugua, 1987). At this point, it would help to examine the nature of each of these major operational areas.

2.2.1 Curriculum and Instruction

In most cases, the head teacher is seen to have succeeded when his/her students' have done well in the national examinations; that is to say, the head teachers are evaluated by the community on the basis of how well their schools perform in curriculum and instruction. Campbell (1971) emphasizes the fact that all school managers must ensure that there is improvement in instruction by developing effective instructional leadership on the part of the head teacher. According to Olembo (1989) the head teacher must ensure that the educational objectives of their schools and the means of achieving them are clearly spelt out by the professional staff. The head teacher must ensure that effective teaching and learning is observed and he must keep abreast of any changes in the curriculum so that he can communicate to the other members of the school community.

2.2.2 School Community Relations

A school is part of the community in which it is situated. Members of the school community engaged themselves in financing the school development projects through building funds and harambee fund raising meetings. At other times, they physically take part in the construction work in schools. Above all these, students are members of the community.

The head teacher should therefore, make a special consideration and create harmonious relations with his school community and be able to work with it towards a common goal.

In the works of Mbiti (1974), he states: -

The head teacher must get to know the community well enough to be able to make the members of his community interested in what their children are doing. On the other hand, most of what is taught in the classroom should be put into practice in improving living standards in the community. (Pg 15)

Indeed the school and the community are inter-dependent. The inter- independence became even stronger with the introduction of the 8:4:4 education system in which the parents have to provide school buildings and the teachers and other students have to involve a number of resource people and other school – community related facilities in their school work. Olemba (1989) emphasizes that unless the head teacher establishes effective communication with the community leadership, he will not be successful in promoting new innovations in the school. This is particularly true in Kenya where most of the new projects such as construction of laboratories and libraries undertaken by schools are carried out in harambee spirit.

2.2.3 Student Personnel

Schools exist because of students. They are the core of the educational programmes. The head teacher should organize, plan and coordinate the school activities with the learner at the center. Students should be given due considerations as human beings and their grievances should be listened to. Mbiti (1974) highlights this further by saying that there are some headmasters and class teachers who still dictate to their pupils rather than allowing them freedom of expression. In such schools, the pupils have no voice in anything relating to their school life. The headmaster and the staff make all school

decisions without consulting the pupils. It is as if pupils are things to be worked on and not thinking beings.

Head teachers should set clear rules and regulations that govern students' behaviour to avoid conflict with the students and their parents/guardians. They should also guide members of staff on how to work towards the achievement of educational objectives (Campbell, 1971). All these need effective communication.

2.2.4 Staff Personnel

Managing the human resources available in a school is probably one of the most challenging tasks of a school head. The success, therefore, of any school programme depends on how efficiently the school head can deploy this important resource for the best use of the school. The staff personnel of the school includes the academic and the non-academic staff.

The head teacher should be aware that there are school needs that need the attention of teachers and there are also personal needs of each of his teachers to be met. He should be skilled in such things as official procedure, delegation of duties, communication, human relations and modern educational techniques to such an extent that he can head the staff successfully in both curriculum and other school matters. He should also realize that he is the leader of the non-teaching staff and should be considerate when dealing with their problems. All these call for effective communication.

2.2.5 Finance and Management

This is a very sensitive area. The success of any school programme depends very much on the way the financial inputs are managed and this, in turn, affects the overall performance of each school (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1993). Poor financial management can easily disrupt other school activities. It is an activity that is instrumental to the achievement of the school (Olembo et al, 1992).

The head teacher should involve other teachers in budget building, in suggesting what is necessary by way of working conditions, equipment supplies, books and other items to make instructions most effective. Non-teaching personnel who clean floors, repair roofs and perform other auxiliary services should also have a say. This also calls for effective communication.

2.2.6 Material and Physical Resources

It is the role of the head teacher to plan for the acquisition of the material resources, purchase of the resources, supply of the resources, use and maintenance of the resources. He should also determine space requirements e.g. the number of classrooms required, ensure the structures required are provided and also ensure proper use and maintenance of these facilities. This will be effectively done with proper communication.

2.3 The Role of Communication in Secondary School Management

In order to achieve their objectives, organizations demand that leadership be exercised, people be motivated, decisions be made and conflicts be resolved as the activities are coordinated. Each of these functions involves communication. Hicks and Gullet (1975)

observe that in any organization, top-level executive devote 60-80 per cent of their total working hours communicating. Communication is, therefore, the sole means by which any organization functions. Mbiti (1974) stresses the fact that successful communication of information to people is an essential part of the administrator's job.

The communication process links the headteacher, teachers, non-teaching staff and the students. Hicks and Gullet (1975) observed that data on production and communication compared showed that "high performance in organization tended to be positively correlated with openness of communication between the administration and the teachers, and the students and the teachers. Openness of communication channels makes interaction possible and with good interaction, atmosphere is created which is conducive to influence the transfer of information between parties concerned. Without communication, there would be no common aim of purposes, no co-ordination and no co-operation. This affects the governance of any organization.

Whitaker (1982) identified four major functions of communication in educational management. These are:

- It helps control the behaviour of teachers, students and the supporting staff. It is used to define the roles of all staff members in the school and the students are informed about the expected behaviour through rules and regulations.
- It is used to motivate all members of the school community by establishing proper communication channels and feedback mechanisms.
- It encourages social interaction within the institution as feelings, ideas and opinions about work, related activities and social aspects of their lives are expressed.

- It facilitates the decision making process. The school management needs to develop strategies to ensure that proper communication systems are put in place.

Fiedler (1998) further identified the functions of communication which include the following:

- It is used to pass information to the concerned parties about school policies.
- It facilitates decision making in the school whereby information reaches the concerned individual on time.
- It encourages social interaction within the organization as people express their feelings about work related activities and social aspects of their lives.
- It is used to pass information about specific situations and needs that arise in the school. This includes updating all stakeholders about the daily, weekly, monthly or yearly progress of the school.
- It helps to control the behaviour of teachers, students and other members of the institution.
- It enhances the sharing of school tasks and duties.
- It helps the head teacher in the process of management.

Communication is important to the management of secondary schools because most of the time, the head teacher talks to colleagues, participates in meetings, consults with parents and other community members, provides news releases and prepares reports for perusal by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology officials. For good management to exist, proper and effective communication must be installed. Bell (1981) indicated that the first duty of the school manager is to develop and maintain a system of

communication that provides for an upward flow to benefit implementation of policy and a horizontal flow to facilitate co-ordination of all parts of the organization.

A two-way communication system should be encouraged so that staff relations can be enhanced. For a harmonious working and peaceful co-existence based on acceptable conduct and behaviour amongst students, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and all stakeholders, proper communication skills need to be developed. Management is about working with human and material resources. In the words of Mbiti (1974), the head teacher must realize that his major task is to make the school's purpose clear to everyone: to see that necessary equipment and monetary resources are available for school use and to motivate a living spirit as well as excellence in work performance.

2.4 Communication Barriers that affect the Smooth Management of Secondary Schools

It is probably no surprise that managers frequently cite communication breakdowns as one of their most important problems (Koontz and Weihrich, 1988). Communication may be ineffective because of barriers that elicit negative reaction from the recipient. School Managers need to be aware of barriers of communication and be able to handle these barriers tactfully. Below are some of the communication barriers found in secondary schools:

2.4.1 Language Barriers

No matter how clear the idea is in the mind of the sender of communication, it may still be marked by poorly chosen words, omissions, lack of coherence, poor organization of ideas, awkward sentence structure, platitudes, unnecessary jargon and a failure to clarify

the implications of the message. This lack of clarity and precision, which can be costly, can be avoided through greater care in encoding the message (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988).

2.4.2 Social Distance

The social distance that exists between the management and the subordinate can create a barrier to communication. The lower status individual may allow higher status individual to approach him quite closely but not dare approach such high status person to the same degree of closeness. In schools, social distance may exist between the BOG, parents, head teacher, teachers, students and the support staff (Okumbe, 1998).

A poor superior-subordinate relation reduces the ability to communicate freely for the benefit of the institution. Artificial walls of silence are created in the minds of people in the organization because healthy dialogue and group effort are discouraged by the existence of social distance.

2.4.3 Semantic Distortion

This can be deliberate or accidental (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988). It occurs when a message is altered as it passes from one point to another. The elements of the message that may lead to distortion include the use of impressive language, misinterpretation of the message, social distance between the sender and the receiver, poor choice of symbols and channel of communication.

Any message or information should be conveyed in a language and a mode that can be absorbed well by the listeners (Fielding 1997).

2.4.4 Lack of Planning

Good communication seldom happens by chance. Too often people start talking and writing without first thinking, planning and stating the purpose of the message. Yet giving the reasons for a directive, selecting the most appropriate channel, and choosing proper timing can greatly improve understanding and reduce resistance to change (Koontz and Weihrich, 1988).

2.4.5 Perceptual Barrier

The attitude of the receiver towards the sender and the subject matter tends to affect communication. This creates a situation whereby the receiver lacks interest in the message or information and may also lead to poor retention (Herman et al, 1973). He also observed that every person brings to the communication process an accumulation of the past experiences, attitude and motives, individual difference and therefore bring perceptual barriers that affect the process of communication.

2.4.6 Information Overload

One might think that more and unrestricted information flow would help to overcome communication problems. But unrestricted flow may result in too much information. People respond to information overload in various ways. First, they may disregard certain information, make errors when processing it, delay processing it with the intention of catching up in the future or a person may filter the information (Koontz and Weihrich, 1988).

At times filtering occurs when positive messages get to the superiors while negative messages are left out. The sender manipulates the message so that it can be received

more favourably by the receiver (Fielding 1997). In a school the intensity of filtering is high because of the hierarchical levels of its management (Bowles et al, 1975). Feedback that reaches the management is filtered such that positive reports from the subordinates are received. This may affect the smooth management of the school because the managers may bask in the glow of positive reports while the school is having serious problems.

2.4.7 Body Language Barriers

These are non-verbal forms of communication. The way arms, hands, face, eyes, body angles and positions are used send messages to others. Nervous habits such as fingernail biting and hand wringing draw the attention of listeners away from the message. The mode of dress may distance the attention of the listeners. People need to dress moderately to reduce effects of communication barriers.

2.4.8 Physical Barriers

These include physical noise, the arrangement and comfort of chairs and the temperature in the room. All these affect effective listening and thus distract the attention of the receiver away from the message (Ayot and Patel, 1992).

2.4.9 Distrust, Threat and Fear

Distrust, threat and fear undermine communication. In a climate containing these forces, any message will be viewed with skepticism. Distrust can be the result of inconsistent behaviour by the superior, or it can be due to past experiences in which the subordinate was punished for honestly reporting unfavourable, but true, information to the boss. Similarly in the light of threats – whether real or imagined, people tend to tighten up,

become defensive, and distort information. What is needed is a climate of trust, which facilitates open and honest communication.

2.4.10 Lack of Feedback

Feedback is the acknowledgement by the receiver that the message has been received. Lack of it makes the communication process incomplete and less interpersonal (Robbins, 1996).

2.4.11 Noise

Noise is another barrier. It includes both physical or audible and inaudible noise. An example of inaudible noise is the presence of a silent third party (Gordon, 1987). Other factors that contribute to ineffective communication are culture, premature evaluation, age and gender (Roodman, 1975).

2.5 Possible Solutions to Communication Barriers that affect the Smooth Management of Secondary Schools

The school needs to work towards better communication. Mbiti (1974) identifies five factors that may help improve communication in a school.

- The language used must bear the same meaning for both sender and recipient.
- Communicate well ahead of time.
- Consult and consider everyone involved in the event.
- Do not release any official message prematurely.
- Wait for the receiver's report before taking action.

2.5.1 The Language Used Must Bear The Same Meaning for Both the Sender and Recipient

When communicating, it is important for the sender to use words and signs, which are familiar to the receiver. We must avoid technical terms, ambiguous words and colloquial phrases. Be simple, and straightforward in your language. Make sure that the words used are acceptable to the other person. Always choose your words carefully before you speak.

2.5.2 Communicate Well Ahead of Time

When you have the date for a certain event, it is a very good thing in administration to inform those who are going to be involved in it well ahead of time. This advance information gives them time to get ready for the event. Last minute communication causes a lot of inconvenience. Where circulars are to be used as a means of communication, for example, three weeks in advance should be the minimum time for such information to be released.

No headmaster should call a staff meeting for the same day. This is wrong administration, which overlooks the fact that the members of staff have their individual plans after the day's official duty.

The need for advance communication cannot be over-emphasized. It is the only way to ensure efficiency, avoid frustration and provide work satisfaction in administration.

2.5.3 Consult and Consider Everyone Involved in the Event

In an event where a group of people is involved, it is important to consult and to inform everyone about his respective duty or role well in advance. It is poor administration to assume that people will know about something before they are told. Failure to consult and communicate with everyone involved in the event may lead to a totally confused programme and disappointment for all the participants.

2.5.4 Do Not Release any Official Message Prematurely

Before releasing any official messages, it is a good practice to make sure that is the right time to release them. Transfer, promotions, term dates, or examination results are some of the official matters, which can cause embarrassment if they leak out before the right time.

2.5.5 Wait for the Receiver's Response before Taking Action

Communication is not complete before the receiver responds to the sender's request. Thus, if a head teacher has planned a school trip to visit a certain factory, it would be wrong for him/her to hire a bus and fix the date for the trip with the bus owner and the students before getting a positive reply from the factory manager that the date suggested is suitable.

Dean (1995) also identified three factors that can also help improve communication in a school. These are:

2.5.5.1 Ensuring that Communication Travels in All Directions

Communication should not only be a top-down arrangement but should also travel upwards and sideways. Members of the staff need to be encouraged to contribute their views. An opportunity should be created for the teachers to discuss freely and bring out individual ideas.

2.5.5.2 Seek Feedback from All Levels

The head teacher should establish the feelings of others in the school concerning various matters. He should establish rapport with all members of the school community. He should talk to parents frequently so that he can get to know their views about the school.

2.5.5.3 Evaluate the Effectiveness of Communication

Evaluate regularly the communication system by using a checklist. Kent (1989) acknowledges that communication remains the most important way in which we can make useful contact with our colleagues in school. He outlines the following factors that school head teachers must consider in order to attain effectiveness:

- The head teacher should try to get time and talk with each teacher informally almost daily.
- The head teacher should not discuss the workers behind their backs.
- The head teacher should try to be available at the common rooms to enable the workers to approach him/her. He/she should also vacate this place for a reasonable time to enable the junior members relax.

- Matters which are confidential in nature must not be relayed haphazardly. For instance, they must not be put on the notice boards. The administrator should operate open door policy that allows teachers to share their ideas with the management.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter has elaborated on the concept of communication management tasks in schools, role of communication in school management and the communication barriers that affect the management of secondary schools. It has also given possible solutions to communication barriers mentioned. The factors are referred from schools' perspectives. However, the literature reviewed is relatively united, as the area under study, has not been fully exhausted by the previous researchers. This therefore, calls for further researches on the same. Therefore, the gaps left out in this research, and those observed in the reviewed literature necessitates an in depth study leading to a deeper exploration into variables that bring up communication barriers in schools in the Starehe Division of Nairobi and the country at large. In light of such constraints, re-training of head teachers and outstanding co-operation of other stake holders ought to be cherished, if any meaningful management strategies need to be manifested in Kenya Secondary Schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The research methodology is discussed under the following sub-topics: research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, research instrument(s), validity and reliability of instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed the descriptive survey design. According to Best et al (1998) it is concerned with conditions of relationships that exist, practices that prevail, beliefs, points of view or attitudes that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are being felt or trends that are developing. It is from those characteristics that this study investigated the existing relationship, conditions, attitudes and process that affect effective communication in secondary schools.

Surveys serve the purpose of describing relationships between specific events. Wiersma (1995) explains that descriptive survey design has had an extensive use in education especially to measure attitude, opinions or achievements in natural school setting. Gujendra (1981) concurs with this view in his claim that description depicts the present position of a given situation and that it goes beyond mere collection and tabulation of factual data. He says that, it is not only a structural attempt to obtain facts and opinions from the respondent about the current conditions of things, but involves elements of comparison and of relationships of one kind or another. In view of this study, descriptive design enabled the researcher to obtain facts and opinions of the school's stakeholders on

communication strategies used by the head teacher and also gave alternative approaches on how to cope with the ever-increasing management challenges.

3.2 Location of the Study

The research was based in Starehe Division of Nairobi. The division falls within Nairobi Province. Starehe Division is situated in the central part of Nairobi and in fact was previously part of what was referred to as Central Division. It is one of the divisions that is very close to the City Centre.

3.3 Target Population

The target population consisted of all the public secondary schools in Starehe Division, Nairobi. The chosen division is within the access of the researcher. The division has a total number of five public secondary schools, 231 teachers employed by the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) and 3,743 students. One school in the division was used in the pilot study. This school has a total number of forty-five teachers employed by the TSC and 768 students. The target population therefore, consisted of the remaining four public secondary schools in the division, 186 teachers and 2,975 students.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The researcher used all the four headteachers in the study. Wiersma (1995) points out that an ideal sample should be large enough so that the investigator can with confidence within specified limit be certain that a different sample of the same size, if drawn using the same procedure, can give approximately similar results. The rationale for this was that the four schools were easily accessible to the researcher and it took care of the non-respondents.

The researcher used simple random sampling using the teachers' list, to select 50% of the total number of teachers in each school. This gave a total of 93 teachers from all the sampled schools. This is more than Gay's (1976) study, which states that ten percent sample is a representative of the total population.

For the students, the researcher used stratified sampling. The students were stratified into classes. Simple random sampling was then used using the class lists to select five percent of the total students from Forms Two to Four in each school. Form Ones were considered to be too new in the schools to have grasped the nature of the problems. Class lists were used to select the students randomly. Equal number of students was selected from each class. This means that schools with more streams had more students included in the sample. This gave a representative sample of students from all the schools.

3.5 Research Instruments

3.5.1 Questionnaires

This instrument was chosen because it helped the respondent to give issues even to very sensitive questions, as he/she was not required to give his/her name. It was also efficient in reaching a large group of respondents within a short time. According to Wiersma (1995), questionnaire studies were generally much less expensive and they did not consume a lot of time in their administration. Brevity in a questionnaire also encouraged response.

The questionnaires to be administered had both closed and open-ended items. Closed-ended questions allowed the generation of demographic information while the open-

ended ones generated specific responses from individuals. The questionnaires were sub-divided into sections to capture the responses and details required.

Three sets of questionnaires were used: a questionnaire for the headteachers, a questionnaire for the teachers and another for the students.

3.5.2 Observation Schedule

Since communication is a continuous process, observation forms were used to record aspects of communication that occurred during the visits to the schools by the researcher that recorded the nature of communication between the school administration and teachers together with students.

3.6 Validity of the Instruments

According to Nachimias and Nachimias (1996) validity is concerned with the question, "Am I measuring what I intend to measure?" It is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). To enhance validity, piloting was carried out to help the researcher in identification of items in the research instrument that were ambiguous in eliciting relevant information. Modification of the items were then made where necessary.

3.7 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability enhances the dependability, accuracy and adequacy of the instruments through piloting. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) say that reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yield consistent results or data after repeated trials. Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) stated that an instrument is reliable when it can measure

a variable accurately and consistently and obtain the same results under the same conditions over a time.

To ensure reliability of the study, the test-pre-test method was applied. This involved administering the same questionnaire at an interval of two weeks to the same group and then compare the two scores. This aimed at finding out if the results were consistent to determine the reliability of the instrument. Respondents conducted during the pre-test phase were deliberately excluded during the final administration of the instrument. This helped to control information required by the instrument.

3.8. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher applied for a permit from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST). After obtaining the permit, the researcher then got permission from the District Officer of the Starehe Division to carry out the research in her division.

A visit to the schools where the research was to be carried out was made to make appointments when the questionnaires could be administered in person. The researcher assured the respondents of the confidentiality of any information that they gave.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected from the field was coded and entered in to the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data analysis was carried out using frequencies and percentages and reported in summary form using tables.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter of the research report, the researcher presents the data collected from the field and the data analysis procedures employed to arrive at answers in the research questions of the study. The study hoped to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the channels of communication that are prevalent in secondary schools in Starehe Division, Nairobi?
2. What factors hinder effective communication in the management of secondary school in Starehe Division, Nairobi?
3. Does the school administrations address all the students' problems?
4. How can communication be improved in secondary schools in order to improve administration and performance?

The chapter is divided into five major sections. Section one presents the personal data of the study participants. The other four sections are each based on a research question as given above.

4.1 Demographic Data of Study Participants

The researcher collected data from four head teachers, 93 teachers and 150 students.

Below is a presentation of the demographic data of the study participants.

4.1.1 Headteachers Personal Data

The demographic data of the four head teachers in the study is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Demographic Data of Headteachers

Age in years	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Under 40 years	0	0	0
Over 40 years	2	2	4
Total	2	2	4
Period served as headteachers			
6 – 10 Years	0	2	2
Over 10 years	2	0	2
Total	2	2	4
Academic Qualifications			
B.ED	1	1	2
PGDE	0	1	1
Masters	1	0	1
Total	2	2	4

There were two male and two female head teachers. All of them were above 40 years of age. Two had served as head teachers for between 6 – 10 years while two had served for more than 10 years. There were 2 Bachelors of Education head teachers, one Post Graduate Diploma in Education, and one Master's degree head teacher.

4.1.2 Teachers' Personal Data

Table 4.2 presents the personal data of the sample teachers.

Table 4.2 Teachers' Demographic Data

Age in years	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Below 30	6	3	9
31 – 35	10	21	31
36 – 40	14	16	30
Over 40	8	15	23
Total	38	55	93
Professional Qualifications			
Diploma in education	9	8	17
B.ED	24	43	67
B.A	2	0	2
PGDE	3	1	4
M.ED	0	3	3
TOTAL	38	55	93

Of the 93 teachers who participated in the study, there were 38 males and 55 females.

Majority of them were between 31 and 40 years and had Bachelor of Education qualifications.

4.1.3 Students' Personal Data

Table 4.3 presents the demographic data of the student participants.

Table 4.3 Students' Personal Data

Age in years	Gender		Total
	Boys	Girls	
13	0	1	1
14	2	1	3
15	8	5	13
16	35	16	51
17	30	14	44
18	22	10	32
19	5	0	5
21	1	0	1
Total	103	47	150

Of the 150 students in the study, 103 were boys and 47 were girls. Their ages ranged between 13 and 21 years.

4.2 Channels of Communication Prevalent in Schools

The first question of the study asked: “What are the channels of communication that are prevalent in secondary schools in Starehe Division?”

The headteachers were asked to indicate the methods they frequently used to communicate to teachers, parents and BOG members. Their responses are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Methods of Communication in Schools

Method of communication	Method used with		
	Teachers	Parents	BOG Members
Letters	3	3	3
Reports	2	3	4
Manuals	1	1	1
Internal memos	1	1	1

The table shows that letters and reports were the most commonly used methods of communication, while manuals and internal memos were the least used. The head teachers’ were also asked to state how they ensured that staff members knew the assignments and the level of performance expected of them. They responded as below:

- Discussions during staff meetings
- Head teacher gives the school benchmark and asks the HODs to give their departments the benchmarks to guide the teachers.
- Through circulars
- The teachers prepare their work plans at the beginning of the year

Asked to state whether they involved the teachers in drawing term activities, all the head teachers reported that they did so, adding that they did this through the deputy or the HODs.

The teachers who participated in the study were asked to state the channels of communication used to pass information to teachers about:

- Duties and other activities
- Changes in curriculum
- Timetable
- School routine

They responded as shown in Table 4.5

Table 4.5 Communication Channels used in Schools: Teachers Responses

Information on	Communication channel used					
	Oral		Written		Both Oral and Written	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Duties and activities	14	15.1	56	60.2	21	22.6
Changes in curriculum	8	8.6	56	60.2	27	29.0
Time table	4	4.3	71	76.3	16	17.2
School routine	13	14.0	61	65.6	16	17.2

It is clear from the table that the most common channel of communication in the schools was written form for all the areas covered. This was followed by a combination of both oral and written while oral communication was the least used channel in the schools. The students who participated in the study were also asked to indicate the most frequently used channel of communication for various areas. Their responses are given in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Communication Channels Used in Schools: Students' Responses

Information on	Communication channel used					
	Oral		Written		Both Oral and Written	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
School routine	96	64.0	30	20.0	21	14.0
School activities	70	46.7	47	31.3	31	20.7
School rules	18	12.0	106	70.7	24	16.0
Time table	2	1.3	143	95.3	3	2.0
Duties / responsibilities	69	46.0	52	34.7	27	18.0

As can be seen in the table, oral communication was the most common in communicating to students regarding school routine, school activities, and duties and responsibilities. On the other hand, written communication was common in communicating to students regarding school rules and the timetable.

The head teachers were asked whether there existed the following facilities in their schools: organizational charts, notice boards, school magazines, and school vision. The responses are given in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Availability of Communication Resources

Resource	Available		Not Available		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Organizational charts	3	75.0	1	25.0	4	100.0
Notice boards	4	100.0	0	0.0	4	100.0
School magazine	2	50.0	2	50.0	4	100.0
School vision	3	75.0	1	25.0	4	100.0

All the schools had notice boards. Three schools had school visions and organizational charts while two schools had school magazines. The researcher also conducted and observed the communication resources in the four schools visited. She observed the following.

Table 4.8 Observed Communication Facilities

Facility	Available		Not available	
	F	%	F	%
Notice board	4	100	0	0.0
School magazine	1	25.0	3	75.0
Suggestion box	2	50.0	2	50.0
Student's newspaper	2	50.0	2	50.0
Assembly hall / ground	4	100.0	0	0.0
Departmental offices	2	50.0	2	50.0
Teacher's common room	1	25.0	3	75.0
Prefect's common room	1	25.0	3	75.0
Prefects' identity badge/dresses	4	100.0	0	0.0
Telephone network	1	25.0	3	75.0
Established filing system	4	100.0	0	0.0

Notice boards, assembly halls/grounds, prefects' identity badges/dress, and an established filing system were observed in all schools. School magazine, teachers common room, prefects' common room and telephone network between offices were observed in only one school.

4.3 Factors Hindering effective Communication in Management of Secondary Schools

The second research question asked: "What factors hinder effective communication in the management of secondary schools in Starehe Division?"

The head teachers, asked to state the rate at which members of their school complained of not getting information that was believed to have been sent, responded as given in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Rate of School Members not Getting Information

Rate of members not receiving information	F	%
Rarely	3	75.0
Never	1	25.0
Total	4	100.0

Three headteachers (75%) reported that this rarely happened in their schools while one (25%) reported that this never happened. The head teachers were further presented with various communication barriers and asked to indicate the ones that could have been resulting to complaints about failure of receiving information. They responded as below.

Table 4.10 Communication Barriers in Schools

Barrier	Does it lead to communication breakdown					
	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Language	0	0.0	4	100.0	4	100.0
Perception	0	0.0	4	100.0	4	100.0
Distribution of information	2	50.0	2	50.0	4	100.0
Physical discomfort	2	50.0	2	50.0	4	100.0
Gender of sender	0	0.0	4	100.0	4	100.0
Age of sender	0	0.0	4	100.0	4	100.0
Body language barriers	1	25.0	3	75.0	4	100.0

The table shows that the head teachers felt that most of the communication barriers presented were not a problem at the school. However, distribution of information and physical discomfort were endorsed as barriers by 50% of the head teachers each while body language barrier was endorsed by one headteacher (25%).

Asked to state whether teachers and students sometimes failed to take major problems to their attention, the head teachers responded as below.

Table 4.11 Failure of Teachers and Students to Bring Problems to the Headteachers

Do teachers/students fail to bring information	F	%
Yes	1	25.0
No	3	75.0
Total	4	100.0

As shown in the table, only one head teacher reported that teachers and students failed to bring problems to him, adding that this happened when the problem is personal.

Asked to rate the existing communication between their schools and the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, three headteachers reported it to be good while one reported it to be fair. The teachers were asked to state whether teachers in their schools interacted freely, to which they replied as shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Interaction between Teachers

Do teachers interact freely	F	%
Yes	71	76.3
No	22	23.7
Total	93	100.0

A total of 71 teachers (76.3%) reported that the teachers in their schools interacted freely. The rest (N = 22, 23.7%) reported that there was no free interaction of teachers in their schools. Further, the teachers were asked whether they had frequent staff meetings. Their responses are given in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Rate of Staff Meetings

Are staff meetings frequent?	F	%
Yes	44	47.3
No	49	52.7
Total	93	100.0

A total of 44 teachers (47.3%) reported that they had frequent staff meetings while slightly over 50% of them reported that, meetings were not frequent. Asked to state some of the problems they found affecting the passing of information to teachers from the school administration, the teachers gave the following:

- Most teachers do not check the notice boards
- Administration messengers may not reach all teachers on time.
- Lack of cohesion among staff members
- Lack of adequate time for meetings.
- One way communication where head teacher does not encourage feedback
- Misinterpretation of information
- Use of intimidating language and tone while in meetings.
- Fear of victimization leads to teachers keeping to themselves instead of airing their grievances.

4.4 Addressing of student's problems by the school administration

The third question of the study asked: "Does the school administration address all the students' problems?"

The head teachers were asked to state how often they had meetings with the students.

They responded as shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Rate of Meetings with Students

Rate of meetings	F	%
Always	1	25.0
Occasionally	3	75.0
Total	4	100.0

One headteacher (25%) always had meetings with students while the other three (75%) met with students occasionally. Further, the head teachers were asked whether they encouraged students to air their views freely during meetings. Three headteachers (75%) reported that they did this while one (25%) said he never encouraged them to freely air their views. The one who never encouraged students to air views reported that he used prefects and class teachers as their representatives.

The students in the study were asked to indicate how often they met with the headteacher, the deputy head teacher, class teacher, subject teacher, teacher on duty, dorm mistress/master, and guidance and counseling teacher. They responded as shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Rate of Students Meeting with Sources of Information

Source of information	Rate of meeting									
	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Head teacher	18	12.0	42	28.0	29	19.3	25	16.7	31	20.7
Deputy head teacher	13	8.7	57	38.0	28	18.7	24	16.0	24	16.0
Class teacher	32	21.3	57	38.0	40	26.7	12	8.0	4	2.7
Subject teacher	24	16.0	54	36.0	42	28.0	18	12.0	7	4.7
Teacher on duty	6	4.0	23	15.3	38	25.3	38	25.3	39	26.0
Dorm mistress	5	3.3	32	21.3	31	20.7	19	12.7	30	20.0
G & C. teacher	7	4.7	18	12.0	38	25.3	26	17.3	48	32.0

The most commonly met sources were class teachers and subject teachers followed by head teachers and deputy head teachers. The least met were teachers on duty, dorm mistress/master and guidance and counseling teachers.

Further, the students were asked whether they had suggestion boxes in their schools.

Their responses are shown in Table 4.16

Table 4.16 Availability of Suggestion Boxes

Are there suggestion boxes?	F	%
Yes	96	64.0
No	54	36.0
Total	150	100.0

Sixty four percent of the students reported that they were aware of suggestion boxes in their schools while 36% were not aware. Asked whether they thought the suggestion box was an important tool of sharing communication with teachers, they responded as show in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17 Importance of Suggestion Boxes

Is the suggestion box important	F	%
Yes	122	81.3
No	28	18.7
Total	150	100.0

Majority of the students (81.3%) reported that the suggestion box was an important tool for communication. The rest did not think so.

4.5 Possible Ways of Improving Communication in Schools

The fourth question of the study asked: "How can communication be improved in secondary schools in order to improve administration and performance?"

In answering this question, the headteachers were first asked to state what they thought was the relationship between communication strategies used in schools and academic performance. They replied that:

- Good communication strategies psyche up students to perform and
- Good strategies result in good performance.

Asked to state how they thought communication strategies in schools could be improved, the head teachers and teachers reported that:

- Senders of information should follow up to ensure the right information was delivered.
- Freedom of expression should be improved.

- The staff and students should be encouraged to interact more and freely.
- Teachers and students should be involved in decision making more where necessary.
- Information passed through suggestion boxes should be acted upon promptly but with necessary caution to encourage all members to use the facility.
- The administration should avoid victimizing those who air grievances
- The communication environment should be improved especially by head teachers not becoming defensive or aloof

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of this study and makes conclusions, which are drawn from the findings of the study. It also makes recommendations, which could possibly improve communication in schools if affected. The chapter also proposes further research.

5.2 Summary and Findings

The investigation of communication barriers that affect the smooth management of public secondary schools revealed that: -

- Both oral and written channels of communication are used in the schools. The written communication used is in the form of organizational charts, notice boards, filing systems, time table, the school vision, suggestion boxes, reports, letters and newspapers. The school assembly hall/ground, which was observed in all the schools, together with the meetings, for example, staff meetings, meetings between teachers and students and between head teachers and students showed that oral communication is also in use.
- The factors which hinder effective communication in the management of public secondary schools are: - not having frequent staff meetings, use of one way communication between the head teacher and the teachers, most teachers not checking on what is written on the notice board, lack of cohesion among teachers, misinterpretation of information received and use of intimidating language and tone

by the head teacher in meetings which leads to teachers keeping to themselves instead of airing their grievances.

- The school administration does not address all the students' problems. The study revealed that one head teacher (25%) always had meetings with students while the other three (75%) occasionally had meetings with students. The teachers who frequently had meetings with the students were the class teachers followed by subject teachers and deputy head teacher. The least met teachers by the students were the teachers on duty, dorm masters/mistresses and the guidance and counseling teachers.
- The headteachers and teachers gave the following recommendations as possible ways of improving communication in schools: -
 - Sender of information should make a follow up to ensure the right information was delivered.
 - Freedom of expression should be improved
 - The staff and students should be encouraged to interact freely
 - Teachers and students should be involved in decision making where necessary.
 - Information passed through suggestion boxes should be worked upon promptly but with necessary caution to encourage all members to use the facility.
 - The administration should avoid victimizing those who air grievances.
 - The communication environment should be improved especially by the head teachers not becoming defensive and aloof.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Channels of Communication That are Prevalent in Secondary Schools

All the head teachers and teachers have stressed on the importance of communication in their schools. For this communication to be effective, all the stakeholders in the school should strive to use effective communication channels because all of them have a role to play that will lead to the achievement of the educational objectives. Hiar et al (1998) stated that people exchange messages to accomplish goals and objectives.

The schools that have been sampled have set up communication systems that ensure effective management. Both oral and written communication is in use. Official messages are written and posted on the notice boards. This written communication is reinforced by oral communication. Non-verbal communication is also used for example; the prefects in all the sampled schools had identity badges/dresses to communicate the fact that they were prefects.

Campbell (1971) indicates that the oral communication, which is the use of spoken words in face-to-face expression, is faster. He is supported by Robbins (1996) who notes that, a serious drawback of written communication is that it is time consuming and has no in-built feedback. However, the latter, Robbins (1996) also states that written communication is more permanent, tangible and verifiable. Therefore, to make communication more effective both of them can be used where oral communication will reinforce the written communication and vice versa.

The communication facilities that are commonly used in schools are notice boards, organizational charts, school vision, assembly halls/grounds, prefects' identity

badges/dress, established filing system and letters and reports. Meetings are also held in the schools although the meetings between head teachers and students, teachers on duty and students, dorm masters/mistresses with students and the guidance and counseling teachers with students were rare. Frequent meetings between members of the school community are important in the management of secondary schools. These are forums where all management functions are discussed and harmonized for smooth operation purposes.

5.3.2 Factors that Hinder Effective Communication in the Management of Secondary Schools

In the study, communication barriers were cited that affect the management of public secondary schools. When communication is ineffective, it elicits negative reaction, resulting to management problems.

Staff meetings are not held frequently. Some teachers for example, teachers on duty, dorm masters/mistresses and the guidance and counseling teachers rarely meet students. Meetings between teachers and students, both formal and informal should be encouraged. These could act as forums in which students can interact freely with the teachers and be able to discuss problems with the school management.

The use of the suggestion box is not done effectively. Only 50% of the sampled schools had suggestion boxes. There is also evidence that the information passed through these suggestion boxes is not acted on promptly and therefore members of the school are not encouraged to use this facility.

The distribution of information system was endorsed by 50% of the teachers as a communication barrier. Administration messengers do not reach all the teachers with messages on time and most teachers do not check what is written on the notice boards. Failure to communicate with everyone involved in an event leads to a totally confused programme and disappointment (Mbiti, 1974).

Another communication barrier that was identified by 50% of the sampled teachers was physical discomfort. Social distance that may exist between the school management, teachers and students inhibit free flow of information through all ranks in the school. Teachers felt that the head teachers have distanced themselves hence making communication difficult. One-way communication where the head teacher does not encourage feedback inhibits effective communication. The head teachers' use of intimidating language and tone in meetings thereby making the teachers, because of fear of victimization, keep to themselves instead of airing their grievances also lead to ineffective communication. This is downward communication. In an effective organization, communication flows in various directions: downwards, upward and crosswise. There is evidence that if communication flows only downward, problems will develop (Koontz and Weihrich, 1988).

76.3% of the teachers reported that teachers in the sampled schools interact freely. Therefore, the schools have an All-Channel network of communication. Robbins (1984) states that the All-Channel network allows members to interact freely with others. However, it was observed by the researcher that only one school (25%) had a teachers' common room. One school (25%) of the sampled schools had a telephone network

between various offices. Therefore, the electronic communication devices that Mbiti (1974) emphasized are lacking.

5.3.3 Addressing of Students' Problems by the School Administration

It is clear that the administration does not meet all the students' problems. Although 75% of the head teachers indicated that students never fail to bring information to them, it is only 12% of the sampled students who indicated that their head teacher always had meetings with them. 20.7% indicated that they never had meetings with their head teacher. Key teachers for example, teachers on duty, dorm masters/mistresses and guidance and counseling teachers who are supposed to help students solve their problems rarely meet them. Students have shown that a teacher who is clearly concerned about his/her students' welfare both inside and outside the classroom will quickly own their respect.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

Communication should not only be a top-down arrangement but should travel upwards and sideways. Koontz and Weihrich (1988) emphasize the fact that if communication flows only downwards, problems will develop. Members of staff, therefore, need to be encouraged to contribute their views. This can be done if the administration encouraged freedom of expression and avoided victimizing those who air grievances.

Senders of information should make a follow up to ensure the right information is delivered and received. Therefore, feedback is essential for effective communication.

When feedback is received from all levels within the school, it will encourage open communication.

Teachers and students should be involved in decision making where necessary. Therefore, staff meetings and meetings between teachers and students should be frequent. Information passed through these meetings and other channels of communication should be acted upon promptly to encourage all members to use these channels.

Communication systems used in the school should be evaluated regularly on a checklist. Kent (1989) acknowledges that communication remains the most important way in which we make useful contact with our colleagues in school.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The following are suggestions for further research: -

- There is need to find out the views of teachers on the relationship between communication and academic performance in secondary schools.
- Further research needs to be conducted on whether effective communication influences observation of school rules and regulations by students.
- This study was conducted in only four schools in the Starehe Division, Nairobi. There is need for similar studies to be undertaken in other divisions of Nairobi.

5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the communication barriers that affect the smooth management of public secondary schools in the Starehe Division of Nairobi. The research instruments that were used to collect data were questionnaires and observation schedules.

The study reveals that both oral and written channels of communication are used in schools. Letters, reports, organizational charts, notice boards, proper filing systems, time table, the school vision and suggestion boxes are the examples of written communication while the school assembly hall/grounds and meetings indicate that oral communication is also in use.

It can also be concluded from the findings of the study that there are factors, which hinder effective communication in the management of public secondary schools. These are infrequent staff meetings, use of one-way communication between the head teachers and teachers, teachers not bothering to check for information on the notice boards, lack of cohesion among teachers, misinterpretation of information received and use of intimidating language and tone by the head teachers in meetings which makes teachers not air their views.

Another conclusion drawn from the study is that the school administration does not address all the students' problems. This was proved by the infrequent meetings between some of the key teachers and the students.

Though the study was conducted in a few schools, it however presents general information on common systems and barriers of communication that exist in public secondary schools. The findings and recommendations of the study will prove to be useful to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST), head teachers and Boards of Governors in re-examining and re-appraising their communication systems. The information will also be of significant importance to the Kenya Educational Staff Institute (KESI) as a body charged with the responsibility of organizing in-service training programmes for head teachers.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE HEADTEACHER

SECTION A: Tick (✓) the appropriate option

1. Age of the Headteacher

- a) Below 30 years ()
- b) 30 – 35 years ()
- c) 36 – 40 years ()
- d) Over 40 years ()

2. Sex

Male () Female ()

3. How long have you served as a Headteacher in the profession?

- a) 0 – 5 years ()
- b) 6 – 10 years ()
- c) Over 10 years ()

4. What are your academic qualifications?

- a) Diploma in Education
- b) Bachelor of Education
- c) BSc, PGDE
- d) BA, PGDE
- e) Master degree
- f) Any Other (Specify)

5. For how long have you been in this school

- a) 0 -2 years ()
- b) 2- 4 years ()
- c) Over 4 years ()

6. For how long have you been a secondary school Headteacher?

- a) Less than 2 years ()
- b) 2 – 8 years ()
- c) 9 – 14 years ()
- d) Over 14 years ()

7. What is the student population of your school?

- a) Below 200 ()
- b) 201 – 300 ()
- c) 301 – 400 ()
- d) 401 – 500 ()
- e) Over 500 ()

8. How many teachers do you have in your school?

- a) Below 10 ()
- b) 10 – 20 ()
- c) 21 – 30 ()
- d) 31 – 40 ()
- e) Over 40 ()

9. How many Non-teaching staff members are employed in your school?

- a) Less than 10 ()
- b) 11- 15 ()
- c) 16 – 20 ()
- d) 21 – 25 ()
- e) Over 25 ()

10. Is your school

- i) 1 Streamed? ()
- 2 Streamed? ()
- 3 Streamed? ()
- 4 Streamed? ()
- Over 4 Streamed? ()
- ii) Boarding? ()
- Day? ()
- Day / Boarding? ()
- iii) Mixed Boys and Girls? ()
- Boys? ()
- Girls? ()
- iv) National? ()
- Provincial? ()
- District? ()

SECTION B

Below is a list of administrative tasks that are performed by the Headteacher. By using a tick (✓) indicate how often you perform each task. Use the following letters Always (A), often (O), Sometimes (S) Rarely (R), Never (N)

Task	Frequency				
	A	O	S	R	N
1. Curriculum Implementation					
2. Management of School Finances					
3. Management of Material Resources					
4. Management of Staff and students					
5. Management of School/Community Relations					
6. Preparation of Schools Newsletters and documents for parents					
7. Staff development and appraisals					
8. Induction of New staff					
9. Maintenance of staff and students records					
10. Secondary statistical returns and reports to the MOEST					

1. Rank the managerial tasks in order of importance to you?

2 (i) In a school, planning for all activities is important. Do you involve the teachers in drawing term activities? _____

(ii) How do you ensure that staff members know the assignments and the level of performance expected of them?

(iii) Which systems do you put in place to ensure that the various departments in your school are harmonized?

3. (i) How often do you consult other heads of Secondary schools regarding management tasks in your school?

- Always ()
- Sometimes ()
- Rarely ()
- Never ()

(ii) Do you find such consultation important as a head teacher?

SECTION C: Communication System

1. How often do you have meetings with your students, teachers, parents and Board of Governors?

	Always	Occasionally	Once a term	Once a year
Student				
Teachers				
Parents				
B.O.G				

2. a) When you have meetings with students, do you encourage them to air their views freely?

Yes () No ()

If no, how do students pass information to you as the Headteacher?

b) Do a good number of B.O.G. members and parents attend all meetings you have invited them?

Yes () No ()

If No, what could be the possible reason for this?

3. Which of the following is used in your school frequently to pass current information to teachers, parents and B.O.G.?

- (i) Teachers ()
 Letters ()
 Reports ()
 Manuals ()
 Internal memos ()

Any other _____

(ii) Parents

Letters ()

Reports ()

Manuals ()

Internal memos ()

Any other _____

(iii) Board of Governors

Letters ()

Reports ()

Manuals ()

Internal memos ()

Any other _____

5. Do students communicate positively to verbal communication when free exchange of ideas is encouraged?

6. Do you have the following facilities in your school?

Organizational charts ()

Notice Boards ()

School Magazine ()

School vision ()

7. (a) Do you keep a record of all meetings held in your school?

Yes () No ()

(b) How important are these records to you as a school manager?

SECTION D: Communication Barriers

1. (i) How often do members of your school complain of not getting information that is believed to have been sent?

- a) Always ()
 b) Sometimes ()
 c) Rarely ()
 d) Never ()

(ii) By use of a tick (✓) indicates whether the following communications barriers can be attributed to the above problem

Barrier	Yes	No
Language		
Perception		
Distribution of information		
Body language barriers		
Physical discomfort		
Gender of sender		
Age		

2. Do teachers and students sometimes fail to bring major problems to your attention?

Yes () No ()

If yes, what are the reasons for this?

3. (i) Communication between the Ministry of Education and your office is important in school management. How do you rate the existing communication system used between secondary schools and the Ministry of Education Science and Technology?

- Excellent ()
 Good ()
 Fair ()
 Poor ()

(ii) If it is not effective, what are the possible reasons for this?

(iii) In your own opinion, what improvements can be made in communication between secondary schools and the various institutions of the ministry?

4. What needs to be done in order to make communication from your office to other members of the school community effective?

c) 35-40
d) Over 40

SECTION D

1. How would you rate the academic performance of your school?

- (i) Above average
- (ii) Average
- (iii) Below average

2. Give any comments on what you think is the relationship between communication strategies used in schools and academic performance.

5. What subjects do

7. To perform your duties, communication is very important,

(i) What channel of communication do you find effective in your school?

- a) Written
- b) Oral
- c) Any other _____

(ii) In your school which communication channel is used to pass information to the teachers about

- a) Duties and various activities? _____
- b) Changes in curriculum? _____
- c) Time table? _____
- d) School routine? _____

Indicate whether oral or written

(iii) In your opinion do you find these channels effective?

8. (i) Do teachers interact freely in your school? Yes ()
No ()

(ii) If no, what are the reasons for limited interaction among teachers of your school?

9. Do you have frequent staff meetings? Yes () No ()

If No what means of communication is used to pass information from the school administration to the teachers? _____

10. What are some of the problems that affect the passing of information to teachers from the school administration?

11. How can you describe the academic performance of your school as compared to others in the Province for the last 4 years?

Has held high position ()

Has held low position ()

Has performed fairly ()

What do you think are the reasons for this trend?

12. Give your suggestions on how you think communication can be made more effective in Secondary schools?

Thank you for your cooperation

APPENDIX C
STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions honestly and as accurately as possible. Tick where appropriate. Do not write your name

Name of school _____

1. What is your sex?

Male () Female ()

2. What is your age in years? _____

3. How long have you been a student in this school? _____

4. (a) Who gives you information about

(i) School routine?

(ii) School activities?

(iii) School rules?

(iv) Time table?

(v) Subjects offered in school?

Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, Head of Department, Head of Subject, Subject Teacher, School Head Boy/Head Girl, Prefects.

(b) Is the information given to you orally or through writing?

(i) School routine _____

(ii) School activities _____

(iii) School rules _____

(iv) Time table _____

(v) Duties and responsibilities _____

Indicate whether it is written or oral communication

5. Students have various issues with the teachers and Head teacher. Indicate how often you have meetings with your teacher to share information about your welfare in school. Use the following symbols Always (A), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), Never (N)

Source of information

Headteacher _____

Deputy Headteacher _____

Class teacher _____

Subject teacher _____

Teacher on duty _____

Dorm Mistress / Master _____

Guiding & Counseling

Department _____

6 (i) Do you have a suggestion box in your school?

Yes () No ()

(ii) In your opinion is the suggestion box an important tool for sharing information with your teachers?

Yes () No ()

7 (i) How do you rate the academic performance of your school?

Above average ()

Average ()

Below average ()

(ii) Does the communication strategy used in your school affect your performance in academics?

(iii) Give reasons for your answer above

APPENDIX D
OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Things to Observe	Observed	Not Observed
Notice Boards		
School Magazines		
Suggestion Box		
Students' Newspaper		
Assembly hall/ground		
Departmental Offices		
Teachers' Common rooms		
Prefects' Common rooms		
Prefects' Identity Badges/dress		
Telephone Network between Offices		
Established Filing System		

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