COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CANADA: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

By

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Abstract

Communication plays a vital role in the success of any organization, including institutions of higher learning. Ineffective communication can hinder the growth of institutions and organizations. The sender of an information must ensure the receiver gets the information without distortion. The communication process is incomplete without feedback. Administrators in higher learning institutions must communicate effectively if they want to achieve their goals and objectives. Though communication can be said to be synonymous with effective leadership, the literature reveals little research on this topic in a university setting. This study examined the communication process between senior administrators and faculty members in one university in Ontario Canada. Semi structured interviews were used to gather data from senior administrators and faculty members. Findings revealed channels of communication used and preferred by both administrators and faculty. Some of these channels included emails and face to face interactions. Though email was the most used channel of communication in this case study, both participants preferred face to face interactions such as meetings. This was preferred because it allows communicators to give live feedback interpreted through body language and facial expressions.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.0 Background of Study

The most respected leaders have often been viewed as decision-makers and change agents. Leadership requires the use of communication to build and engage in a shared vision towards improving an institutions future and directing it through periods of change. The benefits of effective communication are enormous. First, effective communication enables leaders and followers to develop a joint understanding of the vision, values, and strategic direction of an institution (Hall, 2012). Effective communication ensures transparency of visions and goals. It also creates an environment where everyone feels comfortable and secure with their responsibilities (Babatunde, 2013). Through effective communication leaders encourage employees to participate in the decision-making process (Evans, 2012).

Success is often determined by the quality of communication between those in leadership positions Barrett,2006). Since senior administrators and faculty members are involved in the day-to-day operations of an institution, their communication effectiveness is vital. However, communication within an institution transcends verbal communication. For instance, in multiple studies, including Becker and Jon (2009), and Bolton and Grover (2009), effective communication takes verbal and non-verbal forms. The authors suggest that people communicate through listening, writing, and using non-verbal cues. Therefore, what is unsaid during an interaction could be just as important as what is said. Body language can have a significant impact on the message. Thus, the effectiveness of communication is determined by the channels or processes used to transmit messages.

Ballantyne, Thompson, and Taylor (1998) argue that senior administrators are in constant communication with faculty members, and thus, how they address their faculty and departments determines the tone for communication within a learning institution. As a result, Bodycott, Walker, and Kin (2001) recommend senior administrators seek verbal feedback from faculty to determine how they are being perceived. The authors emphasize that while feedback may not always be positive, it should be accepted, appreciated and acknowledged. Communication is said to be effective when the intended message is received and understood. Effective communication can only be achieved by maintaining positive attitudes. Bodycott et al. (2001) explain that attitudes determine a person's communication effectiveness. As such, the way senior administrators present themselves when communicating can determine the effectiveness of the entire communication process. Adding to the necessity of effective communication is how leadership is often demonstrated through effective communication (Bolman and Deal, 2002). Senior administrators can demonstrate their leadership prowess to faculty members through effective communication. Effective communication between school administrators and faculty assist in communicating shared vision and goals and improving an institution’s future (Cheng and Cheung, 2004).

In institutions of higher learning such as universities, the role of leaders is crucial. In these settings leaders serve as decision makers, creators of culture, and change agents.

Leadership in institutions of higher learning require effective communication to achieve their goals and objectives. The selection of a communication method can be equally as important in achieving effective communication (Johnson, 1996).

To fully understand this crucial element, it is essential to find out the most appropriate methods leaders can use to effectively communicate with their stakeholders.

1.1 Problem Statement

Leaders at universities must deal with complex and diverse stakeholders including faculty, staff, alumni, and students. It is critical to investigate the most appropriate methods of information flow between their important publics. One important public is faculty.

Faculty satisfaction is vital to the success of a university, as faculty serve as a link between administration and students. Despite the valuable connection between communication and leadership in higher learning institutions, it is an under-investigated area. Much of the literature that deals with communication in leadership are limited to other sectors, such as health and business. The few studies that focused on communication in education are limited to primary schools, mostly examining principals, teachers, and students. Several notable studies in the field of effective communication revolve around improving communication between health managers, doctors, nurses and patients in hospitals (Boyle and Kochinda ,2004), and communication between principals and teachers (Ärlestig ,2007).

This study examines the perspectives of senior administrators and faculty on the best methods in ensuring effective communication between both groups.

1.2 Purpose of Study

Irrespective of the size of a University, effective communication is critical in conveying the vision and direction of the institution to its stakeholders. Aside communicating for the purposes of delivering information, administrators are required to communicate in a manner that the message delivered influences the expected behaviors of its target audience. Administrators must ensure delivery of the intended message leads to the realization of the expected outcomes. All forms of communication should be applied in a manner that the intended message is not distorted. It is critical for leaders to choose the appropriate channel and message of communication.to its intended audience

In a university setting, administrators and faculty must agree on channels and processes that effectively supports their communication needs. This research uses a qualitative case study to answer the research questions that frame this study. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the process of communication between administrators and faculty members in an Ontario University.

1.3 Research Questions

The broad objective of this study was to understand communication processes and information flow between senior administration and faculty in higher learning institutions with a case study of a public university in Ontario.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the communication processes or methods between senior administration and faculty at this university in Ontario, Canada?
2. How effective are these processes and methods of communication?
3. What are the challenges associated with these processes or methods of communications?
4. What are the faculty's attitudes or perceptions towards current communication methods and processes?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Communication processes used by senior university administration can either motivate and increase productivity or decrease productivity and create confusion. Cheng and Cheung (2004) argued that communication channels used by leaders influence the performance levels of junior employees. Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) further this notion by stating that effective communication plays a critical role in the achievement of a team's desired goals and objectives. This study gives insights into the most effective communication methods that can be used in higher learning institutions to ensure future success. Furthermore, this study serves as a basis for future studies on communication and leadership in higher learning institutions.

1.5 Definition of Terms

Word choice and terminology is important in the examination of effective communication. The following terms, defined below, are used throughout this study:

1. **Communication:** Communication can be defined as the receiving and sending of information through speaking, writing and non-verbal cues (Chandler and Munday, 2011). Communication in this study is defined as the processes of transmitting information.

2. **Channels of Communication:** The methods through which information flow from one place to the other within an institution or organization (Shepherd and John, 2006).

3. **Senior Administrators:** Leaders in institutions of higher learning who lead faculty and junior staff members to perform their duties (Woods, Bennett, Harvey and Wise, 2004). This term is used in this study to mean senior administrators ranging from the president to department heads.

4. **Faculty Members:** Academic staff members who are associated with universities (Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005). They also include sessional faculty.

5. **Effective Communication:** Positive communication that leads to results in the achievement of goals and objectives (Ballantyne, Thompson and Taylor, 1998).

1.7 Limitations

As with all research, limitations exist. These limitations do not necessarily highlight any short-comings of the work but must be highlighted in the spirit of transparency. The potential weaknesses of the study include:

1. the reliance on the perspective of participants as indicated in the interviews;
2. the use of only one approach to collect data;
3. the skills and the knowledge of the researcher in conducting interview.

1.8 Assumptions

The development of research questions and research designs require certain assumptions be made by the researcher. The following assumptions were made within this study:

1. participants who worked at one university in Ontario Canada had developed perspectives on communication processes within the university;
2. participants were truthful during interviews and were willing to share their perspectives with the researcher.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis has five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research problem and discusses the background of the study. The chapter presents the purpose of the study and states its significance for research and practice. The general and specific objectives as well as the research questions are established in this chapter. The chapter also outlines the definitions, delimitations, limitations and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 reviews and discusses previous studies and literature on the topic. The study's theoretical approach is discussed. Chapter 3 discusses the research methods and designs used in data collection and analysis. The chapter offers justifications for the research methods and designs used in the study. Chapter 4 presents the research findings. Chapter 5 discusses research findings and identifies opportunities for future research. The chapter also provides recommendations for effective communication in higher learning institutions.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Knowledge plays a vital role in our societies and economies. Education is viewed as the key to achieving prosperity (Uk, 2010). Given the pivotal role higher education institutions play in creating and dispersing knowledge, it is essential to understand the components fuelling their performance. Several studies have linked effective leadership to institutional success. In examining the effectiveness of leadership in higher learning, Durie and Beshir (2016) surveyed leaders in three Ethiopian universities about measures they believe makes their institutions effective. Their research mentioned multiple activities, such as securing funding and student retention rate. The authors, however, excluded communication, which is a critical aspect of effective leadership. With the routine exclusion of communication in studies (Beshir, 2016), this research is designed to examine what role communication plays in educational leadership and how essential it is to institutional success.

2.2 Leadership in Higher Education Institutions

Global challenges facing higher education have resulted in a growing interest in understanding higher education leadership (Black, 2015; Schofer and Meyer, 2005; Altbach, 2011). The internationalization, emergence of profit-making private universities, and the reduction of public funding of higher education have brought profound changes.

Faced with these challenges, leaders in higher education have been called to re-evaluate how they are managing their institutions and their best strategies (Black ,2015). Kennedy (1994) acknowledges the difficulty of this task due to the lack of a universal definition of effective leadership in higher learning and the complex nature of senior administrator roles. For instance, whiles roles such as Vice Chancellor, Vice-President, Provost, and President are akin to executive roles in other sectors, academic leadership roles such as Deans or Department Heads are complicated by the fact that their positions are mostly fixed term. The values and identities of institutions must be re-evaluated if they are to meet the ever-increasing demands facing higher education.

One critical element to achieving success is for leaders to build good relationships with faculty members. Astin and Astin (2000) suggest this can be done by building collective beliefs, values and reducing bureaucracy.

2.2.1 Current Leadership Models Used in Educational Institutions

With the ongoing changing dynamics in educational institutions, many scholars have started to compare the leadership models being used. The primary leadership models are discussed below.

2.2.2 Authority and Power Model

According to Astin and Astin (2000), the most common leadership model in universities is the authority and power model. The leadership structure in this model is hierarchical, placing senior administration officials at the top. Here, leaders at the top wield nearly absolute power and authority. Black (2015) suggests that for universities to impart the feeling of being a part of a global society to their students, they need to adapt to a more open style of leadership. Goffee and Jones (2009) also argued that a command-and-control leadership strategy is ineffective when managing academic staff such as lecturers.

2.2.3 Individualistic Model

The individualistic model is associated with a style of leadership where personal status and professional qualifications are held in high esteem. Astin and Astin (2000) explain individualistic leadership is mostly associated with faculty positions, as it is believed to drive more the desire for more research than teaching. Gorodnichenko (2017) highlights that, *"Individualism can make collective action more difficult because individuals pursue their own interest without internalizing collective interests."* A major setback identified in the individualistic leadership model is that it weakens teamwork. The individualistic model is considered unfair to minorities and women, who are more likely to take career breaks. The model's negative effect on women is often reported within the fields of science and technology. In response to these challenges, national programs in the UK, USA, and Europe seek to cultivate female leadership in math, medicine, science, technology, and engineering (Amey, 2006; D'Amico, Vermigli, and Canetto, 2011;Garforth and Kerr (2009).

2.2.4 Collaborative Models

The past thirty years have seen a shift towards collaborative leadership approaches, yet institutions have been slow in adapting due to existing traditional structures (Bennis, 2009; Kouzes and Posner 2010). The collaborative model argues that institutions need less hierarchal or bureaucratic leadership system if they hope to produce dynamic students prepared for a global society (Jones et al. 2012). Successful administrators are increasingly perceived as those who are able to develop shared partnerships (Amey, 2006). However, Defazio, Lockett and Wright (2009) maintain that there are fears these partnerships are not being initiated by institutions themselves, but by third-party sponsors and funding organizations. Altbach (2011) believes collaborative models are poised to overshadow conventional models where senior professors are selected from their peers for positions as more leadership skills are now required for effective university administration.

2.2.5 Transformational Leadership Model

Burns (1978) was the first proponent of transformational leadership, which was later expanded by Bernard Bass (Liontois, 1992). Although the transformational leadership model was developed for the economic, military, and political sectors, it is now widely associated with leadership in academic institutions (Liontois, 1992). Goleman (1997), suggest the assumption of “emotional intelligence” in transformational leadership is appealing to higher learning institutions as they are fundamentally in the business of human relations. With the increasing challenges posed by internationalization of institutions, Amey (2006) agrees the role of university administrators as change agents and facilitators of creative solutions cannot be overemphasized. This model has been widely proposed for leaders in higher learning institutions (Astin and Astin 2000).

Whiles studies have suggested several leadership models and frameworks for institutions: collaborative, transformative (Astin and Astin 2000), effective (Bryman 2007) exemplary (Kouzes and Posner,2010), others are calling on leaders to be cautious when applying these frameworks. According to Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973), a competency framework must recognize the contextual idea of leadership. Bryman (2007) believes a checklist of effective leadership traits cannot be applied in varied context, especially in institutions where academic positions are rotational. Seddon and Caulkin (2003) believe that sticking to a set of competencies will make leaders concentrate on developing the competencies instead of completing the work.

Due to these frameworks overdependence on individual leadership skills and traits some scholars, such as Womack and Jones (1996) and Seddon and Caulkin (2003), have called for systems thinking. In systems thinking, the understanding of the institutional system is more important than individual traits and skills. Rummler and Bache (1995) contend that if you put an excellent performer in a bad system, the system will win every time. Other scholars are also of the opinion that institutions should choose models that work for them according to their focus and vision. (Astin and Astin, 2000, Seddon, 2003)

2.3 Communication

Keyton (2011) defined communication as “the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (p.10).” Guffey, Rogin, and Rhodes (2009) also define communication as “the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another (p.10).” Meaning is the most crucial aspect of communication in the definition by Guffey, Rogin, and Rhodes (2009). The communication process is complete and effective only when the receiver interprets the message as intended. Communication is not complete if both the sender and receiver do not share the same meaning.

In explaining the communication process, Cheney (2011) describes two main components: the sender/source of the information and the receiver/consumer of the information. It is the ‘sender’ who initiates the process of communication. The sender is the person(s) who needs to pass information to another. The ‘receiver’ is the person(s) to whom the message is intended. The sender creates a message by choosing words, gestures, and symbols. The message/information can be written, verbal or nonverbal. The message must be transmitted through a selected medium. The medium can be a face-to-face engagement, call, email, telephone, or written memo. Anything that interferes or distorts the message is considered "noise.” Feedback occurs when the receiver reacts to the sender's message. The role of feedback is to allow the person(s) sending (sender) to establish whether the message has reached the receiver and is understood. The communication process is one-way communication when there is no feedback. Two-way communication is when a receiver sends feedback to the sender.

Keyton (2011) contends that distortion in any one of these elements can hinder the effectiveness of the communication process. She explains that information ought to be encoded into a message that is easily comprehensible. Where written communication is necessary, Keyton suggests senders to choose from letters, emails, memos, reports, newsletters, bulletin boards, and handbooks to deliver their messages. Keyton recommends face-to-face conversations, telephone, closed-circuit television, and pre-recorded messages as forms of verbal communication. Keyton (2010) explains that a message can be decoded positively or negatively based on the recipient's values, beliefs, and needs.

2.3.1 Channels of Communication

The choice of a communication channel depends on the purpose and objectives of communication (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, and Dannels 2002), Communication channels used in one institution may differ from another. De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, and Oostenveld (2010) rationalise one of the most effective ways of selecting the best communication channel in an organization is to ask employees their preference. Parylo and Zepeda (2014), however, suggest that the selection of communication channels depends on the situation and content of the message.

Communication channels differ. Some communication channels do not provide opportunities for feedback. For example, notice board announcements do not provide for feedback on issues. According to AlFahad, AlHajri, and Alqahtani (2013), at times a lack of feedback hinders effective communication in educational institutions. In contrast, Lasswell (2007) defends non-feedback communication channels asserting that feedback does not always add value to communication. Laswell argues that allowing feedback on directive orders and announcements, especially in emergency situations, will waste time.

De Vries, Bakker-Pieper and Oostenveld (2010) explains that different channels of communication are used by controlling and collaborating leaders. Controllers use channels that express emotional and urgent messages. People should be direct, clear, and brief when communicating with controllers. Collaborators, on the other hand, use channels that show relaxed, expressive, and inquisitive messages. Collaborators prefer communicating with people who will listen and have an interest in their message. Communication is effective when both the sender and receiver prefer the same channels.

Multiple examples of communication strategies exist in the literature. In a study to examine the most preferred channels of communication in an organization in Malaysia, Vegiayan, Ghanbari, and Sazmand (2013) found most employees used "instant messenger" to communicate with their colleagues and preferred the telephone as the main channel of communication of between them and senior management. Haridakis and Piele (2010), on the other hand, argued that voicemail as a channel of communication is more effective in supporting inter-organizational communication as compared to email communication. Parylo and Zepeda (2014) support written communication in an organizational setting. The authors note that with the advent of advanced technology, senior managers and administrators mostly use online platforms to communicate with their junior employees. As a result, emails are commonly used by organizations to transmit official messages. The authors present that email communication can be used for future reference and it reaches as many people as possible within a short period. Emails are perceived as more official compared to verbal communication (Iordache-Platis and Josan 2009).

2.3.2 Communication in Higher Learning Institutions

Bartels et al. (2007) defined communication at an institutional level as *"the perception of employees about the quality of the mutual relations and the communication in an organization"* (p. 177). In educational institutions, communication is the transmission of information from one department to the other. Communication is not only a process of transmitting information but also the creation of information. Iordache-Platis and Josan (2009) explain that communicators must create information and expect feedback from the recipient. The authors criticized top-down model of communication in institutions where management writes to junior staff without the opportunity for feedback. Popescu and Olteanu (2014) noted that the success of communication is based on the extent to which the recipient understands the sent information. Therefore, for the message to be successfully transmitted, the sender must use media that is easily understood by the recipient.

One common example highlights the challenge in ensuring appropriate transmission. John Landers was principal at Fuller Elementary School who in his first meeting with faculty walked in, read several announcements, and described a new program for the following year. The principal gave the faculty marching orders, outlined the problems facing the school, and told the faculty what they were expected to do to correct the existing challenges. The principal left convinced that the process of disseminating the message was very successful, while the faculty left unhappy and frustrated. In this example, Popescu and Olteanu (2014) state that the recipient was not given an opportunity to respond to the information communicated and so the communication was not successful. Thomas (2005), however, holds a different view. Thomas criticizes the view of recipients responding to information sent by stating that the target and intention of communication determine the success of communication.

Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) emphasized the importance of listening in effective communication. In their view, leaders should learn to listen and guide, rather than direct. They believe leaders in educational institutions give direction instead of guidance. Citing the transformational leadership style, Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) suggest that leaders should guide and direct employees, but not command them. Ballantyne, Thompson and Taylor (1998) support the notion of guidance in their argument since more than three-quarters of an administrator's day is spent communicating, it is important for them to learn how to communicate effectively. For instance, when a faculty member asks for guidance, he expects the administrator to listen and offer guidance; instead, administrators tend to give specific directions for problem-solving. Supporting listening communication, Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, and Piele, (2010) contend that listening strengthens the relationship between the communicator and the recipient. The authors used the example of organizational leaders and employees to assert that when employees are listened by their leaders, they develop trust and confidence in them, and hence, the quality of communication is improved. Listening is strengthened by face-to-face, phone, and social media communication.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Empathic Listening Theory

The empathic listening theory reflects the importance of listening in the process of communication. Craig (1999) states there is importance in the words and actions of both the sender and receiver of information. Craig based his argument on empathic listening, or, listening to understand. In support of Craig, Parylo and Zepeda (2014) further that communication involves focusing, reflecting, and encouraging skills. According to the authors, several leaders use the top-down communication model where messages are passed from senior administration officials to junior staff members with little regard to how the information will affect them. Both authors conclude that effective communication is when recipients are given the opportunity to respond to the information sent. Lasswell (2007) criticised emphatic listening by arguing that the purpose of communication should determine if feedback is needed.

2.4.2 Social Penetration Theory

Social penetration theory was developed by Dalmas Taylor and Irwin Altman in 1973 to explain differences in communication styles. The theory posits that an individual's behaviour towards information is based on their level of intimacy with the information.

The theory concludes that an individual's disclosure of information is usually based on their vulnerability and long-term benefits to them (Rubin et al., 2010). Senior administrators in their quest for should ensure most the information sent out is beneficial to faculty members.

2.4.3 Attitudes and Perception Towards Communication Channels

According to Ballantyne, Thompson, and Taylor (1998), feelings and attitudes comprise more than 92% of individuals' daily communication. The authors suggest that administrators who develop and demonstrate positive perceptions in dealing with faculty members set the stage for a positive communication environment. The communication environment developed by administrators determine the effectiveness of communication channels used in an institution. The authors urge administrators not to take for granted the time spent by faculty members communicating with them. This concept has been supported by multiple other researchers including Bodycott, Walker, and Kin (2001) in examining teachers preference in communication channels and Vegiayan, Ghanbari, and Sazmand (2013). In each instance, the type of communication altered the perceived appropriate channel.

Communicators experience high information accuracy when the communication process is open (Popescu and Olteanu, 2014). Positive perceptions are created when information flow is an open, two-way process. Madlock (2008) concludes that employees have a more positive perception towards open communication than closed communication. Employees are more satisfied when they can seek clarifications and make contributions in a communication forum, as compared to receiving commands and directions by leaders.

Open communication has been criticized as not being effective when addressing employee problems (Akinnubi, Gbadeyan, Fashiku, and Kayode 2012.)

Bodycott, Walker, and Kin (2001) and Bolman and Deal (2002) found that verbal communication could be altered, and hence, fail to achieve the intended goals, but written communication can be used as a reference point. Cheng and Cheung (2004) have emphasized that communication of goals in educational institutions require discussion and clarification. The authors criticize reliance on written communication by stating that it does not give an opportunity for clarification, hence academic staff may not clearly understand intended meanings.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Administrators have a responsibility to select the best channels to communicate their goals and visions to their subordinates effectively. Previous literature (Ballantyne, Thompson and Taylor, 1998; Bolman and Deal, 2002; Cheng and Cheung, 2004) presents multiple challenges in communication in educational leadership. The importance of effective communication is emphasized, especially between senior administrators and the faculty. The literature also indicates the importance of maintaining an open communication to ensure feedback (AlFahad, AlHajri and Alqahtani, 2013; Thomas, 2005). There is a large body of research that focuses on the perceptions and attitudes towards communication channel preferences. Vegiayan, Ghanbari and Sazmand (2013) and Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, and Piele (2010) suggest that perceptions towards communication are influenced by how senior administrators present information. The literature review indicates that there is a research gap as there was no study focused on Canadian universities. Therefore, it is crucial to extend the study to establish communication in educational leadership with a focus on a university in Canada.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction to Research Methods

This chapter presents an overview of the study design. The chapter describes the philosophical stance of the study and the research design used in data collection and analysis. This study is based on the designs suggestions of Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, and Sheikh (2011) relating to case definition, case selection, data collection and analysis, data interpretation, and reporting of the research findings.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Kothari (2004) discusses two research approaches: qualitative and quantitative. A quantitative approach involves collecting data in numerical form, which can be subjected to rigorous analysis. A quantitative research approach aims to produce research findings that are reliable, reproducible, valid and objective. Objectivity in a quantitative research approach is achieved using statistical means whereby data is subjected to statistical analysis.

According to Crowe et al. (2011), positivism views research as a method of discovering the truth and understanding the reality in a manner that it allows the researcher to generalize and predict. A positivistic philosophical stance is associated with statistical tests and observations. As a result, reality or truth in a study is discovered through statistical tests or observations. Conclusions are not based on the arguments of the researcher, but the statistical tests conducted. A non-positivistic philosophical stance has a more realistic approach towards research (Niglas, 2001). The proponents of a non-positivistic philosophical stance believe that there are multiple constructive realities rather than a single reality that is based on statistical tests and observations.

In contrast to quantitative methods, a qualitative method approach is associated with a non-positivistic philosophical stance whereby the opinions, behavior, and attitudes of the researcher are very critical in making conclusions. Marcyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005) suggest research conducted in a non-positivistic philosophical situation is a function of the insights and impressions of the researcher and the data collected are the joint product of the researcher and what is researched. Nonetheless, qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be viewed as mutually exclusive but as complementing each other (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

A qualitative non-positivistic approach was adopted in this study for multiple reasons. First, based on a reading of Mitchell and Jolley (2012), a qualitative approach is more fruitful as compared to a strictly quantitative approach when the study aims to determine the meanings of experienced events. As this study aims to understand how leadership communicates to faculty in institutions of higher learning in Canada a qualitative approach was most appropriate. Second, while a quantitative-positivism approach is based on the relationship between variables, a non-positivism qualitative approach is more appropriate to determine the meaning given to communication channels in institutions of higher learning in Canada (Riemer, Lapan and Quartaroli, 2012).

Additionally, a non-positivism qualitative approach is justified because of the nature of the research question, which demanded an in-depth understanding of communication in educational leadership.

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) discuss two main approaches to research: deductive and inductive approaches. An inductive approach involves starting from a narrow perspective and moving towards a broad perspective, while a deductive approach involves starting from a broad perspective towards a narrow perspective. The authors indicate that a deductive approach is associated with the positivistic philosophical stance and quantitative research methodology, while an inductive approach is associated with a non-positivistic qualitative approach. This study was based on inductive research approach whereby data was gathered to answer the research questions rather than to test research hypotheses. The research data gathered was analyzed to answer the research questions and make conclusions regarding communication in educational leadership and the perceptions of academic staff towards the communication channels used by senior administrators in a Canadian university.

3.2 Research Design

Marcyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005) classify research designs into an exploratory, descriptive and causal. The authors note that causal design is used mainly in experimental research projects, while the exploratory design is used where there is limited material for answering research questions. The exploratory research design is associated with positivism and quantitative research methodology whereby the collected data is used to test research hypotheses. A detailed research design is associated with both qualitative and quantitative methods. This study uses a descriptive research design to describe the channels of communication between senior administrators and the faculty in universities. A descriptive design was used based on the existing literature on communication in educational leadership.

Descriptive designs have been criticized as not being usable when there is limited material about a research problem (Matthews and Ross 2010). This challenge was addressed by using interviews for data collection in order to gather detailed information regarding the research topic.

Marcyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005) and Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) discuss various data collection strategies such as survey, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative research, and phenomenology. The authors note that the choice of a data collection method is determined by the type of data required and the objectives of the research. Acase study strategy was adopted in this study. According to Crow et al (2011) a case study is a research approach used in generating a detailed and multifaceted reality or understanding of a complex issue in its real-life situation.

There are various approaches to conducting a case study depending on the epistemological stance of the researcher. Yin (2012) holds that case studies can be approached from an interpretivist, positivist, or a critical approach. The epistemological stance of this study was interpretivism as it involved understanding the perceptions and meanings interpreted from various individual perspectives.

Several studies using case study methodology cite the literature by Robert Stake and Robert Yin even though they have different philosophical standpoints. Robert Yin's work (Yin, 2012, 2013) is based on a post-positivist approach while Robert Stake's work (Stake 2005) is based on a constructivist approach. The main difference between the two works relates to the perspectives advocated. Yin (2012) advocates for the application of a formal conceptual framework whereby hypotheses are proved or refuted based on testing because the collected data is analyzed. Stake (2005), on the other hand, states that a conceptual framework could be used to guide a study, but it is not required.

This study adopted Stake's (2005) philosophical method, a more flexible and relatively unstructured approach. As suggested by Crowe *et al*. (2011), this case study had five stages: case definition, case selection, data collection and analysis, data interpretation, and reporting of the research findings.

3.3 Case Definition and Site Selection

The aim and scope of this study are to develop a deeper understanding of communication in educational leadership. The research question was identified based on the previous literature and the identification of a gap in the research. Data collection for the case study occurred over two months. Data collection involved interviewing senior administrators and faculty members. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.

Stake (2005) classified case studies into collective, intrinsic, and instrumental categories. An instrumental case study approach was used in this study as it focused on a case subject, a university in Ontario, Canada, in order to gain a more in-depth and broader insight into communication in educational leadership. The case study site is a Canadian public university that has over 1500 faculty members and more than 32,000 students. As mentioned by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), accessing participants is a significant consideration and the researcher must be conversant with the case study site. The authors further noted that the selected site must be hospitable to the investigation to answer the research questions. The university in Ontario Canada was easily accessible to the researcher.

3.4 Data Collection

The study employs a primary data collection approach on the basis that the research objectives required in-depth information on the subjects. Participants (administrators and faculty) were interviewed.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used an empirical inquiry to determine the effectiveness of the data collected and influences the research findings (Mitchell and Jolley 2012). There are two main sampling techniques used in empirical research: probability and non-probability (Mitchell and Jolley 2012). In probability sampling all the subjects in a population have an equal chance of being selected and, hence, the subjects selected are representative of the whole population. Non-probability sampling involves selecting subjects based on the judgment of the researcher, and therefore, all subjects in a population do not have an equal chance of being selected. Participants were selected based on the judgment of the researcher and their availability for the study. After identifying participants, a formal email with a recruitment letter was then sent to participants to confirm their participation and to make it official. (see Appendix A) Faculty members were selected from various departments to answer the research questions. The sample was divided into two groups: senior administrators and faculty members.

3.6 Sample Size

Ten participants (three senior administrators and seven faculty members) participated in the case study. The sample size selected was guided by the research design. As mentioned by Marcyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005), in qualitative research methodology the validity of data relies on data gathering skills such as interviewing ability, rather than the sample size. The success of qualitative research is dependent on the saturation of information. Data saturation was achieved in this study by selecting respondents who have adequate and relevant information to answer the research problem and question.

3.7 Methods of Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. Interviews enabled the researcher to understand the experience of communication in educational leadership. Interviews enabled the researcher to maintain the focus of the study and discover concerns and issues that were not anticipated (Mitchell and Jolley, 2012; Marcyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, 2005). Interviews provide an effective way to further probe responses and to seek clarification.

To determine the reliability of the interview questions a pilot study involving three respondents was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to identify potential problems in the interview process and ultimately adjust before the actual study. The pilot study addressed various issues like the design of the interview method, interview schedule, time required to answer the questions, and time required to transcribe the answers given. Feedback was given concerning the data collection method, design of the instrument, and the clarity of the interview questions. Adjustments were made to the design of the questions and the wording of the questions to ensure that they were readily understandable to the target respondents.

Interviews lasted one hour with all participants. All interviews were recorded with written consent from all participants. Notes were taken to aid in interpreting the recorded information (Riemer, Lapan and Quartaroli, 2012; Kothari, 2004).

3.8 Data Analysis and Reporting

The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) was used to analyze the data and discover administrators and faculty's perceptions and experiences with the communication process within a University. Stake (1995) explains that, "there is no particular moment when data analysis begins and since qualitative research studies involves a continuous interplay between data collection and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Based on these assumptions I decided to start analyzing the data after my first interview to identify patterns which will intend help in my subsequent interviews. I followed the data analysis and coding procedures suggested by Creswell (2009) and Esterberg (2002). Specifically, I used the open coding process by Esterberg (2002) where "you work intensively with your data, line by line, identifying themes and categories that seem of interest" (p. 158). I also allowed codes to emerge during my analysis as suggested by Creswell (2009). After extensively examining codes through the open coding process, I reviewed the codes for emerging themes in the data.

My analysis used Creswell's (2009) six steps data analysis
process

Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis (p. 185). During this step, I reviewed audio tapes from interviews and transferred into word document transcripts.

Step 2: Read through the data (p. 185). I thought through my interviews to understand the information and ideas of participants.

Step 3: Begin detailed analysis with the coding process (p. 186).

By using Creswell's procedure of organizing material into segments, I took the text data and

segmented sentences into categories. I then named those categories with terms based on the actual language of participants.

Step 4: Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories for these for analysis. (p. 189). I generated codes for the descriptions and further generalized a small number of themes. I then analyzed emerging themes and grouped various cases into general descriptions for confined cases

Step 5: Advance how the description of the themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative (p. 189). Emerging themes at this step was written into narrative passages to logically reflect participants' responses.

Step 6: Interpret the meaning of the data (p. 189). My experience as a communication specialist informed my understanding of participants responses. To accurately describe participants experiences, I specifically focused on what they said, their conclusions and recommendations

3.9 Research Site

The site for this study was a public university in Ontario. At the time of the study, student enrollment totaled approximately 18,000 undergraduate students as well as 2,500 graduate students. The university is supported by over 830 full-time faculty and 1,970 full-time staff. There were no barriers to finding a suitable university to conduct this study. Ontario has twenty-one public universities thus gaining access to one was not a challenge.

3.10 Study Rigor

Rigor proves competence and integrity in a research study and its absence shows the failure of the research to contribute to new knowledge (Marcyk, DeMatteo and

Festinger 2005). Studies that employs case study usually criticized as lacking scientific rigor results cannot be generalized. This study overcome concerns of rigor through transparency. The steps involved in the study are described in detail. Regarding the generalizability of the data, Matthews and Ross (2010) argued that there should be a provision of details to enable the readers to engage in reasonable speculations regarding whether the study findings can be applied to other cases or not. To fulfil this suggestion, this study offered a detailed description of methods used in data collection and analysis to assist readers in judging the trustworthiness of the study.

3.11 Confidentiality and Privacy

Privacy of participants' information is critical in empirical studies (Marcyk, DeMatteo and Festinger 2005). Maintaining privacy of participants protects them from potential consequences such as embarrassment, distress, or other psychological harms; social harm, such as loss of employment or damage to one's financial standing. Privacy was maintained by not sharing transcribed and recorded information. The researcher had an ethical duty to ensure confidentiality by protecting information gathered from unauthorized access, disclosure, use, modification, or theft. Prior to the interviews, respondents were informed about the integrity of the exercise.

3.12 Ethical Consideration

This study was approved by the ethics board of the case study site (See Appendix REB documents) Participants were informed in advance to ensure that they were prepared for the interview. Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby and Sheikh (2011), explain that participants are often reluctant to give reliable information if they are not assured of confidentiality in advance. To protect confidentiality, participants were guaranteed that the information they gave would be used for academic purposes only and would not be exposed to unauthorized individuals. The researcher has ensured there no duplication of transcripts and recorded information. All Participants were required to sign a consent form (see Appendix B)

3.13 Role of the Researcher

Having worked as a communication specialist in different sectors, this research gave me an idea of how communication works in a university setting. As a communication specialist, I purposely included administrators in the communication, faculty and staff relations department, as I assumed they will have an in-depth knowledge of the communication process.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to Findings

The purpose of this research study was to examine how administrators communicate with faculty and faculty's perceptions and experiences with the communication process within the University.

The following research questions informed the study

1. What are the communication processes or procedures between senior administration and faculty at a University in Ontario,Canada?
2. How effective are these processes and procedures of communication?
3. What are the challenges associated with these processes or procedures of communication.?
4. What are the faculty's attitudes or perceptions towards current communication methods and processes?

Based on the above research questions, themes from interview responses are described and presented. Themes emerged from participants' understanding and perception of the communication processes within the University.

4.2: Background

The case study site a public University in Ontario Canada. Senior administration of the university is headed by a President who is accountable to both the university's board of governors and senate. The President is deputized by the Vice-Presidents who include the Provost, Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Vice-President of Research, Vice-President of Administration, and Vice-President of Alumni Affairs and Communication. Each of these Vice-Presidents have multiple subordinates. In the context of the current study, senior administration ranges from the president to the dean. One senior administrator working under the Vice-President of Alumni Affairs Communication is the manager in charge of internal communications. The head of internal communications revealed that information targeted to faculty members, even from the President, is sent through the Provost who decides if it should be delivered. If it is identified as needing to be communicated, the communication follows a path through the internal communications department, to the Deans, and finally to faculty members. Little information goes directly to the faculty members. The actual process of communication largely depends on the content.

As previously mentioned, participants in this case study were three administrators and seven faculty members. Participant's had worked at the university between two and thirty years. All administrators interviewed had administrative experience of twenty or more years. All administrators described themselves as experienced and often communicating or sending information to faculty. For reporting purposes, and to protect participants’ identities, each participant is assigned a pseudonym. The three administrators are referred to as Administrator A, Administrator B and Administrator C. Faculty members are referred to as Faculty A, Faculty B, Faculty C, and Faculty D. Faculty E, Faculty F and Faculty G

All the participants have served in their current position for an extended period and were able to provide reliable and valuable information on communication between senior administrators and faculty in the university. All participants were familiar with the structure of communication in the university, as revealed in their familiarity with the organizational structure of the university. Two senior administrators whose responses stood out worked directly with the communication process. One was the Assistant Vice-President of Faculty and Academic Staff Relations and the other was the manager of internal communication. The communications manager had held this position for two and a half years while the Assistant Vice-President had over thirty years of experience at the university. The other seven participants were faculty members who had worked at the university for at least fourteen years and had a deep understanding and experience with the communication process.

To gather background information on participants and their experience with the university participants were asked the number of years they had worked the university, teaching background, and knowledge of the structure of communication. The interviews began with formal introductions in which the participants at their own will detail what their current responsibilities entail and how they received their current position.

4.3 Study Findings

In line with the research objectives and questions, findings are discussed on three themes

1. Awareness and knowledge of senior administrative and communication structure;
2. Perceptions on the effectiveness and challenges with the communication process between senior administrators and faculty; and
3. The future of communication between the senior administrators and the faculty at the University

4.3.1 Theme 1: Awareness and Knowledge of Senior Administrative and Communication Structure

Theme 1 was guided by research question 1 (*what the process and channels of communication between senior administration and faculty at the University is?) (see Appendices C and D).* This question was to determine if participants knew the composition of senior administration. After identifying senior administrator(s), it was easy to find out how the communication process works between senior administrators and faculty. Participants were asked to explain the composition of senior administration of the university.

4.3.1.2 Responses of Senior Administrators on The Structure of Administration

Administrators were able to give detailed responses and descriptions by being senior administrators. Administrator A who oversaw internal communication summarized the structure by stating that:

> *Like in most universities, the highest level of the university is the president, who as we know is at the top; we also have the board of governors, the senator, and four vice presidents. We have vice-president external, vice president financial administration and risk, the provost who is the vice president academics, and the vice president research. The provost is the direct head of the deans and all academic stakeholders.*

Both Administrator B and C confirmed this structure.

4.3.1.3 Responses of Faculty on the Structure of Senior Administration

Most faculty members did not know the administrative structure of senior administration in the university. For example, Faculty C pointed out that, "*we have the vice president, the provost, the vice presidents, and the trustees at various levels*," Faculty members had an overview of what comprises of top leadership in the university but could not give a complete structure of senior administrators.

4.3.1.4 Responses of Administrators on the Structure of Communication

All senior administrators knew how official information flows from the office of the President down to the faculty. Faculty members had difficulties in describing the structure of communication beyond their deans and departmental heads.

Administrator A who oversees internal communications explained the structure of communication between senior administrators and faculty stated,

> *Just like in many other universities, their institution's President in collaboration with the board of governors, the Senate and assisted by the four Vice Presidents are responsible for communicating issues on the strategic direction of the University to all members of the University community. Administrator A further explained that any information for faculty from the President is sent through the Provost (one of 4 Vice Presidents), the head of academic affairs.*

Administrator B who oversees labor relations explained that messages to faculty are usually sent to the Deans, who are then asked to filter the message appropriately with Administrator C adding that,

> *The Provost, however, has the option of communicating to the faculty without going through the Communications Department but the message must first go through Deans and heads of departments as they interact with faculty members regularly.*

Administrator C further noted that,

> *Information from the President to faculty is usually on the strategic direction of the University. The President usually does not communicate directly to faculty members instead he works with the communication department to ensure proper messaging.*

4.3.1.5 Responses of Faculty on the Structure of Communication

All faculty interviewed collaborated that most of the information they receive comes from the Deans. All the seven faculty members interviewed confirmed they hardly receive direct communication from the President. When asked about the content of information they receive from senior administrators, faculty participants indicated that all content was work-related. Faculty A pointed out that most of the communication from senior administrators is usually about university policies and programs. Faculty B confirmed this by stating, “Mostly the president or the provost communications is about programs or policies while the dean or the departmental heads sends information on academic issues.”

Faculty G explained that

> *If a faculty member belongs to a specific academic committee, he or she will receive communication from the senior administration related to that committee, in other words, non-committee members will not receive such communication even though they are in the same department with committee members. Some information is communicated privately by the Provost through the Dean to a faculty member. This privately communicated information usually about salary increments, promotions, and other confidential issues.*

Faculty H who has worked for the university for many years took time to explain that the communication process has evolved over the years. She indicated that when she joined the institution the communication structure was simple *“because there were fewer administrative positions, today it is difficult to know the appropriate contact person.”* She went further to explain that currently, the communication structure from the senior administration to the faculty is complex and nearly all the information to faculty comes from the Dean. According to her, information from the President usually is on emergencies such as hate speech and vandalism.

Faculty A also stated that *"although there is a specific structure of how communication should be done in the university, the determinant of the process is the* *content of the communication."* All faculty members pointed out that all communication to them is expected to go through the dean or their union. For instance, Faculty E hinted that "sometimes it is through the dean to the faculty, while in other times it is direct."

4.3.2 Channels of Communication

The head of internal communication revealed multiple channels of communication existed within the University. Other senior administrators confirmed this. The recurring channels of communication channel was email, the intranet, the university's website, and newsletters. The head of internal communication explained that aside these channels there are also posters and meetings (face to face communications). Of all the channels of communications, email was the official communication channel.

Email stood out as the most used channel of communication. Emails are used to send information such as changes in programs, budget information, and any change in leadership. Administrator A explained that issues such as a change in leadership, budget, and any new graduate and postgraduate programs are usually sent through emails. Administrator A was quick to point out that depending on the message, the channel of communication can change. Administrator A also pointed out that the mass mailing system makes it easier to send a single message to multiple recipients but emphasized that *"the communication department has been strategic and selective in what is allowed in the mass mailing system*.'

Most participants did not mention intranet. The few who did said this channel was mostly used to disseminate research articles. Posters are to publish the latest research findings and information on upcoming conferences. The corporate website was viewed as one of the most important channels of communication for the university. The website gives information on programs, research, and career opportunities among others. Information on the University's website is accessible to both the university community and the public. The university's newsletter is released periodically and contains information on the latest research activities, workshops, lectures, products and services. Finally, meetings are held in each college as well as at the university level. Administrators used this channel when the information they want to send across involves some negotiations and face to face interactions. Issues such as budget are usually discussed through meetings.

When asked how they receive information, Faculty B stated that, "*most of the information is sent through emails but occasionally have meetings".* Faculty D, who has been employed at the university for thirty years, stated in years past "*it was quite easy to get face-to-face communication with senior administrators, which I attribute to the few positions by then"*. Administrator B noted that "*in determining the channel of communication, the senior management decides whether something needs to be communicated through email because it could have some aspects that are upsetting to some people*." The administrator explained that due to the nature of her work she has a page where people can find answers to questions, and if not, they can personally contact her for a face to face meeting.

4.3.3 Feedback Mechanism

Faculty members stated that the source of the information sometimes influenced their feedback. All faculty members interviewed conclude that information from the senior administration is treated the same as information from other members of the university community equally. All faculty participants concluded that there is minimal feedback from them to senior administrators on information sent. All administrators collaborated that faculty members hardly send any feedback to senior administrators, even when it is required of them. In probing further to find out established procedures and structures for feedback, administrators explained that though there are well establish procedures such as filling an anonymous form, faculty members are usually skeptical. The administrators explained there existed a fear of being victimized influencing the decision not to give feedback.

According to Faculty F, Faculty D thinks; "*as a faculty, you are not expected to go straight to the senior administration, you have got to go through the ranks."* Faculty D explained it is difficult to give feedback on any communication because of the complexity of the university structure. Faculty D added, *"there is lack of connection."* Administrator B concluded that: "*Our system is very flexible, and there is nothing like one-size-fits-all. I, therefore, see our system as being highly integrated where information flows from the top to down and vice-versa."*

4.4 Theme 2: Perceptions on The Effectiveness and Challenges with Channels and Processes of Communication

Theme 2 seeks to answers to research questions two and three *(2) how effective are these channels, processes, or formats of communication, 3) what challenges are associated with these processes or formats of communications, and 4) what faculty's attitudes or perceptions towards the current communication channels are?). (see Appendix CandD)*

4.4.1 The Effectiveness of The Processes and Channels of Communication

Faculty and administers expressed their satisfaction with the communication channels and processes within the university. However, participants pointed out that using multiple communication channels has a different effect on the message. For example, Administrator A stated that "*we use different communication channels to pass different messages based on the nature of the information; for example, when engaging faculty members in budget process we need to schedule a meeting rather than sending it in an email*." Similarly, Faculty B reiterated that "*mostly we use emails, but at times they schedule meetings, and I think one thing that I appreciate about this university is that they value meeting the faculty members to discuss on some important issues like budgeting process, and I think it is quite fascinating*." Administrator C admitted that she prefers face-to-face communication because in an email, *"there is no opportunity to clarify, and the message is likely to be misinterpreted, there is no tone in an email, and no ability to react and see the reaction."* Administrator C further explained that she holds face-to-face meetings, especially on budget issues, to address any suspicions and gives faculty members the opportunity to ask questions and get immediate feedback

Though most faculty members preferred emails, they complained they received far too many e-mails, to the point of not reading them. Faculty H stated that, *"I prefer face-to-face communication as he receives over 50 emails per day which is impossible to give feedback."* Frustration with the emailing system was also raised by Faculty E who gets frustrated with the duplication of emails making it difficult to keep track. Faculty A concluded that I prefer emails because it saves time, since "*we are always busy, so we need not waste the minimum time possible. The type of channel used is determined by the nature of information*". Faculty D concluded *"so long as the channel of communication does not affect my work, it is ok."*

Administrator C pointed out that the most important thing to do is to identify the best channel for a message or information thus an administrator need to choose channels on a case-by-case basis. Faculty members revealed they often rely on the university website, newsletters, and intranet but ruled out the possibility of social media communications. For instance, Faculty D stated that, "*I do not have a smartphone, so I am not open to social media*." Though email was the preferred channel of communication faculty members did not disregard face-to-face communication. Faculty H recalled

> *The communication that I remember in detailed is when the provost came to our school meeting; it is unusual for her to come to such meetings, but I remember what she talked there it was most impactful than newsletters or emails.*

Faculty members also linked the effectiveness of communication channels to positive relationships. Faculty D hinted that "*Direct involvement of senior administration on issues affecting faculty is quite motivating and builds a good relationship*."

4.4.2 Challenges with the communication process between senior administrators and faculty: Perception of Administrators

All participants expressed some form of dissatisfaction with the existing communication system, particularly emails. Though senior administrators expressed satisfaction with the existing channels of communications, faculty members thought otherwise. Administrator A did acknowledge that high volume of emails is a challenge. Administrators also expressed dissatisfaction with how some faculty members ignore emails because they do not see themselves as part of the institution. Administrator A who oversees internal communications mentioned that the department sometimes faces the challenge of having to communicate one message several times to get the attention of faculty members. Administrator A further explained that duplication of emails is because most faculty members do not read their emails. Some administrators encouraged the use of face to face communication due to emails being perceived as lacking human emotions. For instance, Administrator B thinks "*it is better to have face to face communication because you can read the body language, tone, and the reaction; which may not be possible using email.* Administrator B believes it is better to have face to face conversations to be able to respond to concerns.

4.4.3 Challenges with the communication process between senior administrators and faculty: Perception of Faculty Members

Almost all faculty participants were reasonably satisfied with the communication process. Faculty C concluded that *"I think the current system of communication between faculty and administration is pretty good, especially with emails which means you can access information at home."* Faculty D applauded the Provost for occasionally holding meetings and stated, *"I clearly remember what she talked about, and I think it had an impact on me".* Faculty G, however, believed the previous provost was more open to the faculty because of face-to-face interaction and meetings. All faculty were fairly ok with the current channels of communication and rejected the idea of the introduction of blogs or social media. Both administrators explained several challenges and limitations facing the communication process. Administrator A stated, *"Most of the channels of communication such as newsletters, emails, etc. has a minimal level of interactivity."* Although face-to-face communication was preferred by both faculty and administrators, Faculty B stated *Practically, face to face all the time is tricky because as everyone is busy. Despite its limitations and challenges, both* faculty and the administrators generally thought current communication process is relatively effective.

4.5 Theme 3: The Future of Communication Between the Senior Administrators and The Faculty at The University

4.5.1 Responses of Administrators

According to Administrator A, more opportunities for face-to-face communications should be explored. Administrator A suggested frequent meetings between senior administration and faculty. Administrator A believed that this will give both parties the opportunity to interact and ask questions. Administrator A explained that communication in the university should be relationship oriented to nurture a sense of teamwork and commitment towards a common goal., "*I expect the expansion of the communication channels to encompass everyone in the university so as to facilitate information sharing in the university*."

4.5.2 Responses of Faculty

Faculty A expressed a desire to see a simpler administrative structure. Currently, she thinks the structure of communication is confusing because of the complex senior administrative structure. Faculty A also suggested face-to-face interaction to minimize suspicions by faculty members. All faculty members thought there should be structural changes to the senior administrative structure to make communication more accessible. They argued that the decision process needs to be decentralized. Faculty G thinks believes faculty feedback does not make a difference. Faculty expressed this by stating *"whatever anyone says will not make a difference, so why should I care. There is no need to risk* *exposing myself if it will not make a difference."* Faculty D, on the other hand, suggested, *"the need for a sense of group identity in all communication."* Faculty H suggested the need to establish a more interactive system where faculty can engage remotely.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has presented key findings of this study, concerning the research questions and objectives. The findings were ground on three central themes: (1) awareness and knowledge of senior administrative and communication structure, (2) perceptions on the effectiveness and challenges with the communication process between senior administrators and faculty, and (3) the future of communication between senior administrators and the faculty at the university. The study revealed information flow is a top to down process usually initiated by senior administrators.

Email was identified as the main channel of communication. Though faculty members experienced satisfaction with the current process, they still thought there is room for improvement. All participants thought senior administrators should explore meetings or face to face as a channel of communication.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.1: Introduction of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss research findings in the context of existing literature. This chapter highlights the implications of the findings to the University. Suggestions for further research is presented in this chapter.

Discussions are centered on the three themes that emerged from the research which includes

i. Awareness and knowledge of senior administrative and communication structure,

ii. Perceptions on the effectiveness and challenges with the communication process between senior administrators and faculty

iii. The future of communication between the senior administrators and the faculty at the University

5.1.1 Awareness and Knowledge of Senior Administrative and Communication Structure

Though participants had a general overview of senior administrators, most faculty members could not explain the structure of senior administration. This can be a challenge especially when feedback is needed. One issue that came up in the findings was the complexity of the administrative process. Though the university has a complicated administrative and communication process, it is essential for faculty members to have a clear understanding of the communication structures in order to engage properly. Though the complicated communication process can be attributed to the size of the university, senior administrators must find ways to make it simpler for faculty engagement. It is evident faculty members have little knowledge of the existing communication structures but are also not interested in knowing. In the absence of a simple process, it is important for faculty members to familiarize themselves with existing structure to bridge the gap between them and administrators as revealed in their responses.

5.1.2 Perceptions on the effectiveness and challenges with the communication process between senior administrators and faculty

Though participants complained about the number of emails, it is interesting to know it was still their preferred channel of communication. This is not a surprising revelation as many studies such as Vegiayan, Ghanbari and Sazmand (2013) found the similar results in their studies. Though most participants thought emails was an appropriate channel it was confusing they still wanted face to face communications. This dilemma was explained by Administrator B that "*although all other channels were quick, face to face communication gives both the sender and the receiver the opportunity to clarify. Face to face communication also gives a chance to observe the tone and body language of the participants. Emails do not give the opportunity to see a reaction of both the sender and recipient. Additionally, e-mail communication is prone to misinterpretation"*. This view is confirmed by Tripathi and Mukerji (2013) who state that *"*Emails and other forms of *written* communication *may be misinterpreted whiles* face-*to*-face *communication has the benefit of body language"* (p.281). It was interesting to know most people still preferred face to face communication even with the advancement of new technology. With the introduction of social media such as blogs and Facebook. one would have thought faculty members would like to explore these channels, but this was not the case.

Administrators in this study believe they will be able to effectively communicate sensitive information such as budgets and salaries with face to face information. One demonstrator explained that they do not like the idea that some faculty members think they just sit in their offices and send emails on budgets and salaries without showing any empathy on how they feel. Both faculty and administrators stressed the need for listening and empathy in communication. Both participants expressed how nonverbal cues in communication can effectively help the communication process. This findings from participants confirms the importance of listening and empathy as explained in the emphatic listening theory in Chapter 3. These findings further support the critics of the top down communication model where administrators send information through emails with little regard to how it affects receivers.

The tenets of social penetration theory that an individual's disclosure of information is usually based on their vulnerability and long-term benefits to them (Rubin et al., 2010) was also seen with the findings of this study. Most of the faculty members explained that their need to give feedback or read an email from senior administrators depends on how that information will benefit them. Most participants confessed that they usually will not read or respond to an email that is on the strategic direction of the University as it does not directly affect their research and teaching. They further explained that they receive a lot of emails and do not have the luxury of time to respond or read those that do not directly impact their work.

Some administrators in this study agreed that they usually do not give room for feedback on certain information. This confirms Lasswell (2007) who criticized emphatic listening by arguing that the purpose of communication should determine if feedback is needed.

Though both administrators and faculty inn this study preferred face to face communication over emails, it is important to note that Bodycott, Walker, and Kin (2001) and Bolman and Deal (2002) found that verbal communication could be altered, and hence, fail to achieve the intended goals, but written communication can be used as a reference point.

Though participants listed several challenges to communication, one that stood the concentration of communication at the top. Faculty A complained *that "the higher up it goes, the more it gets people confused on whom to go to first with a particular issue or query."* Administrator B hinted that:

the purpose of the Provost's face-to-face communication during budget presentations is aimed at addressing any suspicions that might be raised about budget allocations. The

Provost's initiative is by far one of the best solutions to the communication challenges at the university. In part, this is due to the fact many faculty's complaints against an institution's strategic policies and administrative plans usually arise not just because of the proposed changes, but rather how such changes are communicated to them. In most cases, faculty members complain about a lack of transparency, inclusivity or what Faculty C termed as "lack of connection" in the current communication system.

5.1.3 The Future of Communication Between the Senior Administrators and the Faculty at the University

Both senior administration and faculty expressed optimism about the future of communication process. Lasswell (2007) explained channels and structures of communication are usually influenced by a given situation thus as situations change one should be hopeful that some of the challenges listed in this study will be resolved. Given the way universities are becoming more populated and technology taking a central part in communication, it is possible that the current communication channels and structure at this University will change in other to meet the changing needs of members of this University's community.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Decentralize Communication to the Department Level

Based on the findings, it is recommended that decentralizing and simplifying administrative structures will reduce the complexity of the communication process between faculty and senior administration in the university. This is supported by Parylo and Zepeda (2014) encourage large organizations to decentralize their communication process.

5.2.2 Focus on Face-To-Face Communication

Since almost all participants in this study prefer and think face-to-face communication is the best channel for them going forward. Frequent meetings are therefore recommended. The benefits of face to face as a form of sending information are many for example Rubin et al. (2010) believes that face-to-face communication creates a more coherent flow and exchange of information since clarifications and feedbacks are sought in real-time.

5.2.3 Adoption of Teleconferencing Facilities

Although face to face communication is preferred, it may not be practical considering the size of the university hence it is recommended administrators explore the option of teleconferencing which will enable both faculty and senior administrators to interact and engage on critical issues.

5.3 Future Research

Although this study was able to answer its research questions, the researcher acknowledges the limitations within the study. Although in-depth interviews with ten participants provided comprehensive data, the research sample was tiny compared to the entire population of the university, especially for the faculty members. As such, the researcher suggests the use of both interviews and surveys in the future to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data, which the researcher believes will enable greater generalization of findings. In addition, the researcher recommends the exploration of communication between senior administration and students in a university. Doing so will provide a holistic view and understanding of communication between a university and its internal stakeholders.

5.4 Conclusion

Findings revealed the communication process between the faculty and senior administration in a university setting. The study found that though emails, intranet, newsletters, and meetings were the typical channels of communication, participants however preferred to face to face communication. Although most participants expressed satisfaction with the structure of communication in the university, they still presented some challenges. They were however optimistic about the future of communication.

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APPENDIX A

20-2--2018

Dear Sir /Madam,

RECRUITMENT LETTER (REB 18—02-028)

My name is Charity Mensah, and I am a student in the faculty of education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am conducting a research project called Communication in educational leadership in Canada: A qualitative case study. for my master's degree under the supervision of Professor Jerome Delany. The purpose of the study is to investigate communication processes and methods between senior administration and faculty in tertiary institutions. The study will also examine the perception of faculty members on current communication methods and processes within the university. Senior administrators and faculty members will be interviewed in this study. Senior administrators will be asked to talk about existing communication channels and how they send information to faculty members. Faculty members will also be asked how they receive information from senior management and their perception of existing communication channels.

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in an interview. Participation in this study is not a requirement of employment and will not be reported to other faculty members, staff or administration at the University, you will be given the opportunity to review your transcripts to change or delete your responses. Participation will require one hour of your time and will be held at your University.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me to arrange a meeting time; in your office.

If you have any questions about me or my project, please contact me by email at cmensah@mun.ca

Thank-you in advance for considering my request,

Charity Mensah

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title: Communication in Educational Leadership in Canada: A qualitative case study

Researcher:

Charity Mensah: Primary Researcher
Masters Student, Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Email: cmensah@mun.ca

Supervisor: Professor Jerome Delaney
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Email:jdelaney@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled:

"Communication in Educational leadership in Canada: A qualitative case study"

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. To decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researchers, Professor Jerome Delany or Charity Mensah, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

I am Charity Mensah and a master's student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am completing this study as part of my master's thesis.

Purpose of study:

The purpose of this study is to understand the processes and channels of communication between senior administration and faculty in Universities. The results of this study will be used to further understand communication processes in higher learning institutions

Are you eligible to participate?

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be a senior administrator or faculty member at this case study

What you will do in this study:

In this study, you will participate in an interview by answering questions about current communication channels at your University, how you receive information from senior administration and your perception of current communication channels in the University. You will not answer questions that will reveal your age, sex, relationship status, ethnic/racial heritage and your specific department. Please note that during your participation in this study you may skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

Length of time: The interview should take less than an hour. I will be recording the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can't possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we are on tape, please speak up so that I don't miss any of your comments

Withdrawal from the study:

There are no consequences to withdrawing from the study. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If at any time you wish to discontinue the interview, you can simply notify the researcher and your responses will be destroyed. Your interview transcripts will not be shared with Memorial University of Newfoundland. You will have the opportunity to review your transcripts and delete or change your responses to ensure any information I include in my final report has your approval. Once you have reviewed the transcripts and provided approval for any information that will be included in my final report, your data can no longer be removed

Possible benefits:

Although you may not receive any immediate, direct benefits yourself, your participation will help us to better understand communication in tertiary institutions.

Possible risks:

There are no possible risks as the researcher will ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants (see confidentiality and anonymity section below)

Confidentiality vs. Anonymity:

There is a difference between confidentiality and anonymity: Confidentiality is ensuring that identities of participants are accessible only to those authorized to have access. Anonymity is a result of not disclosing participant's identifying characteristics (such as name or description of physical appearance).

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be ensured always. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data obtained will be kept secure from theft, copying, interception and/or casual release. Data will be kept in locked cabinets to which access is restricted to only the researcher (Student). Electronic data will be password protected to preserve security of the data. Participant's data (without identifying information) and coding lists (with identifying information) will be stored separately.

Anonymity:

No identifying information will be included in the final report and all information presented or published from the results will be in aggregate form and with pseudonym names.

Storage of Data:

All data will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked room always. The researcher will be the only individual with access to the data. Data will be kept for a minimum of five years as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity of Scholarly Research. Following this five-year period all data will be fully deleted.

Reporting of Results:

The data collected will be reported in my master's thesis and may be presented and published through peer reviewed forums. These outputs will be a summary of the information obtained and will not include identifying features. Your University in the study will be referred to as a University in Ontario Canada

Sharing of Results with Participants:

Once the master's thesis is complete, the researcher will share with interested participants. It will also be publicly available through the QEII Library

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Professor Jerome Delany or master's student Charity Mensah.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to follow Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861

You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study. This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants

CONSENT

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

- You understand that your data cannot be removed after you have reviewed and approved your transcripts.

I agree to be audio-recorded ☐ Yes ☐ No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your Signature Confirms:

☐ I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

☐ I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

☐ A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

______________________________ ______________________________

Signature of Participant Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SENIOR ADMINISTRATION

This Research is aimed at finding the processes and channels of communication between senior administration and faculty in a University. . Please be as candid as possible in your responses.

A. INTRODUCTION

1.How long have you been a senior administrator in this University?

B. MODE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION

2. Can you give me the composition of senior administration in the University

3. What is the process and structure of communication between senior administration and faculty?

4. What channels of communications are used to send information from Senior administration to faculty?

5. What kind of information is communicated with these channels?

6. How long have these structures being in place?

7.How do you receive feedback on information that has been sent out to faculty?

B. BENEFITS

8. What has been the positive experience with these processes and channels of communication with faculty?

C. CHALLENGE AND LIMITATION OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS.

9. What has been the negative experience with these channels of communications

10. What do you consider as some of the challenges, limitations and disadvantages of using these channels?

D. FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SENIOR ADMINISTRATION AND FACULTY.

11. What do you think can be done to improve communication between Senior administrative members and faculty?

CLOSING

12. Is there anything you will like to talk about that I did not ask?

Thank you for your time and like I mentioned I have a procedure in place to ensure this information is confidential and used for this research only. You will receive a copy of the transcripts for your review and approval.

Thank you

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FACULTY

This research is aimed at finding the processes and channels of communication between senior administration and faculty in a University. Please be as candid as possible in your responses.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. How long have you been employed in the University?
2. What is your teaching background?

B. KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNICATION PROCESSES WITH THE UNIVERSITY

3. Do you know the composition of senior administration of the University?
4. Do you know the communication structure of the University?

C. PREFERENCE

5. How do you receive information from administration?
6. What is your preferred channel of communication?

D. EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

7. What do you think about how information is sent to you?

8. What are some the challenges with how you receive information from senior administration?

9. What do you think can be done to improve information flow between you and senior administration?

CLOSING

9. Is there anything you will like to talk about that I did not ask?

Thank you for your time and like I mentioned I have a procedure in place to ensure this information is confidential and used for this research only. You will receive a copy of the transcripts for your review and approval.

Thank you

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	**20181510-ED**
Approval Period:	February 16, 2018 – February 28, 2019
Funding Source:	Not funded
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Jerome Delaney Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	*Communication in Educational leadership: A qualitative Case Study*

February 16, 2018

Mr/s. Charity Mensah
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr/s. Mensah:

Thank you for your correspondence of February 10 and 15, 2018 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project.

ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to February 28, 2019. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

If you need to make changes during the project, which may raise ethical concerns, please submit an amendment request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration. In addition, the *TCPS2* requires that you submit an annual update to ICEHR before February 28, 2019. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide the annual update with a final brief summary, and your file will be closed.

Annual updates and amendment requests can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Portal homepage.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

KB/lw

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Jerome Delaney, Faculty of Education
Associate Dean, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education