# Rumour Management in the Educational System: Theoretical Perspective

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*Abstract-* Rumour management in the educational system among the employees can be very debilitating for the employer as employees spend work time talking and speculating about the latest rumour. Rumour is unverified information of uncertainty in which is usually by word of mouth. Gossip in our educational system cannot be overemphasized. Grievances are generated when employees in the educational sectors prematurely react to a rumour. It cannot be completely eliminated but officials of our educational system should take prompt action by supplying the employees the fact supported by empathy rather than projection on the part of the employee. Rumour are not mere chance development. They arise from distinct causes. If those causes can be controlled, rumours will much less probably develop in our educational system. Rurnour cannot be avoided among the employees as the employees are curious to know what happening in the environment they work. This paper is focused on rumour management in the educational system: theoretical perspective.

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## I. Introduction

Rumour is unverified information of uncertainty in which is usually by word of mouth. Gossip in our educational establishment among employees can be very debilitating for the employer as employees spend work time talking and speculating about the latest rumour. Grievances are generated when employees in the educational sectors prematurely react on a rumour.

Even when Directors of educational establishment keep employees well informed, rumours will not be completely eliminated. When rumours are detected; Directors/Supervisors should take prompt action by giving the employees the facts supported by empathy rather than projection on the part of Directors/ Supervisors.

Entrepreneurship as against Entrepreneurship parse and integration of work coordination through means-ends-chains desired synergy among the "actors" at the work site will dispel most rumours. Taking the initiative in dealing with runmours reduces grievances.

## II. Rumour Management in Educational Establishments

Wild rumours can sweep through an educational establishment like the spread and destructiveness of s summer storm. Nearly every educational establishment organizational establishment occasionally experiences such an onslaught of the varieties of information that pass through grapevines. Rumours are of special interest.

Rumours are unverified beliefs that are transmitted from one individual to another. Because rumours harm both individuals, the organization it self and the system. Directors/Supervisors, must consider how to control and eliminate rumour mills. For example, like the rumour about Zik's "death" was wild and sweeping. In an editorial" death that never was, National Concord (1989) Stated the rumour that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe had joined his ancestors was probably started by a magazine published abroad. But it began to filter into the nation houses on Monday October so". It gathered momentum both in and in speed as the week dragged on. By Friday, a national newspaper had become sufficiently certain to speculate on the matter of its front page. By the afternoon of that day virtually the whole country had been gripped by the report. As always the case with rumour the source of the rumour was not investigated. The question was how was it originated. Oba Adesoji was also rumoured to have died up to seven times before he finally gave up the ghost on July 2nd 1980.

History repeated when another of such rumours arose in a1988 40 years latter. A Lagos tabloid. The republic 1989 went to town with a screaming headline: Akinloye is dead". The rumour sounded authoritative. But Adisa Akinloye was alive. In 1989, the National Concord outscored other papers on the supposed death of Chief Ezeoke, who unknown to a paper was merely convulsing after receiving gunshot wound from assailants etc.

Rumour is a natural results of human interaction. Directors/Supervisors in an educational establishment need not be alarmed every time a breeze rustles the grapevine since most rumours turn out to be harmless speculations that die off by themselves. Only rarely are rumours serious enough to require action, but when rumours do seem to threaten the school or an organization something has to be done.

There are essentially three ways to manage rumour in an organization or Educational system (Davis 1978, Vecchio 1988, Dubrin 1984). The first is to try to wait them out. Some rumour dissipate overtime and do little actual harm.

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Secondly, if waiting fails, the rumour should be publicly refuted. When rumour refuted and as well made to look unreasonable and absurd in public, it negates its "news value" (Vecchio 1988}.This technique will make people to disregard those still interested later to pass the rumour along. Thirdly, truth or authentic information should be released as quick as possible in restraining a rumour. (Davis 1978, Vecchio 1988, Dubrin 1984).

The last point portrays the essence of grapevines. Grapevines can be used by head to transmit information rapidly to test the reaction to various decisions prior to their final consumption, as a valuable source of feedback, when the head of institution are grapevine member.

Like wise the grapevine can carry damaging rumour that reduce the effectiveness of formal communication. In this wise, Director/ Supervisor in Educational establishment should utilize formal channels by ensuring that they regularly carry the relevant and accurate information that employees seek. (Robbins 1988).

## III. Background Literature

The Directors/Supervisor has to recognize that rumours are not mere chance development. Rumours arise from distinct cause. If those causes can be controlled, rumours will much less probably develop.

### a) Lack of Information

Perhaps a key cause of rumour is want of news about things important to employee. This leads to state of need and curiosity to know what is happening in their world. Consequently, the employees in educational establishment are likely to speculate about the situation and then what next- is the birth of the rumour.

### b) Insecurity

Another major cause of rumour is insecurity or unsafety and the anxiety that accompanies it. Employees that are insecured, anxious and stressful are more likely than others to perceive events negatively and at the same time are better motivated to tell others about their worries. The remedy is to provide employees with genuine emotional, psychological and economical security by providing stable employment, enriching work condition, fair wage, job training and prospects for advancement in their everyday activities. Head of educational establishments or managers should endeavor to "build trust and keep communication open". (Davis 1962 and Dubrin 1988). To this end, as employees feel safer and their welfare secure, wild rumors are less likely to be born.

### c) Emotional Conflict

Rumours can also emanate emotional conflict. Rumours thrive in emotional-laden situation such as disagreement between an action-centered union and an uncompromising Director/Supervisor, or cutthroat competition between two Departments. Personality conflict can also activate rumours. Sometimes, malicious lies have one-person edge on the other. Perceptions could be distorted by strong emotion.

Management by objectives (MBO), goal setting and job enrichment and cooperative team work among various special interest groups in institution or organization are the palpable remedy for rumour, activated from personality conflict. All members of Educational establishment should work as a football team towards achieving the set goal.

Member of same team are much less likely to make erroneous or vindictive assumption of feelings against each other. (Davis 1978, Dubrin 1984 and Schermerborn et a11985).

## IV. How the Rumour Mill Operates

According to Davis' (1978) model, whether a rumour starts because of job insecurity, emotional conflicts or an information gap, each person receive and transmit it in terms of his/her own biases. Rumour's detail is often not maintained but its main theme is usually intact, just as any oral communication is subject to "filtering" a process of reducing the story to a few basic details that is conveniently remembered and passed onto others.

Generally, each person choses the detail in rumour that reflects his particular perception of reality and passes this on. (Davis, 1952; Schermerthorn et al 1985; and Dubrin 1988). New details that frequently make it worse are added to a rumour as a way of reflecting their own strong feelings and reasoning. Davis (1978) called this "elaboration": If for example, a rumour about an employee of college of Education Akampa injury arises, someone who does not like his Director/Supervisor will interpret the cause of the accident as his Directors failure to provide machine maintenance. Consequently, by the time a rumour has undergone both process of filtering and elaboration, it often bears only a faint resemblance to the original story.

Rumours that flow from the work environment do not cause damaging harm. And they soon fade away. It will be a waste of effort to try to stop them, because some rumors may even provide certain benefit-such as a pass-time or avenue to release pent-up emotions. They may help to maintain one-to-one intact and add glamour to work.

## V. Serious Rumours

A few rumour however, may be challenging enough to need apt attention. A Director/Supervisor of education would like to immediately stimulate these rumours. The second techniques of dealing with rumour (Vecchio 1988, Schermetborn et al1985). Davis (1952) advocates that if productivity is affected, community

relations suffer, or interdepartmental cooperation is hampered a Director/Supervisor must do something.

The most efficacious antidote is to vanquish the rumour with the truth. As the true story is released, the information gap is filled and the rumour ceases to leave. A negatively- implied truth is less distractive and helpful than rumours that feed on fear of the unknown. It is more likely to be acceptable to workers than any story a Director or a Supervisor of the institution concocted.

## VI. How to Refute a Rumour

While refuting a rurnour, never repeat the rumour or refer to it directly. This is because of erasing the accidental reinforcement of the mind of the people who might hear or read only the rumour. In subduing a rumour, a Supervisor or a Director of education should release the truth as quickly as possible, the more people tend to believe it, if rumour is not quashed or eliminated quickly, people will interpret later events in light of rumour.

## VII. The Horse's Mouth

There is more effectiveness and helpfulness if communication of truth behind a rumour comes from a source considered reliable by the receivers, if the rumour concerns layoff stratagem for example, the Director of personnel officer or the appropriate person in higher management should be the one to respond. If it concerns an accident the medical department might respond. If it concerns a technical problem, someone with respected technical knowledge should respond.

Face-to-face instant release of the truth is an essentially effective to manage rumour- the third method of dealing with rumour. The method has the advantage of speed and accuracy especially when it is necessary to clear up specific misunderstanding on the part of each member of the Educational establishment.

It encourages personal contact with individuals of varied personality and outlook. There is a particular need to follow up by a written statement a sort of fact reinforced for face-to-face stratagem to work (woodford 1986). On some occasions unions are brought to the front by management to help combating rumour.

## VIII. Listening to Feelings

A genuine and personal concern and a deep interest in the employee as a whole person in his/her own right is also a prerequisite for effective communication as it is for good supervision and management. When a Supervisor hears a rumour the ability to listen and respond to the feeling as well as the content of the rumour, in spite of the probably blatantly untrue ness of the rumour are helpful. Rumour do provide important information about employees feelings and understanding.

## IX. Recommendations

1. It is out of sheer ignorance that many people luxuriate in the peddling and circulation of rumours as a pass time. But the truth is that the outcome of such display of ignorance cannot be viewed lightly.
2. Propaganda which is sometimes fuelled by rumours is clearly a mischief-maker, since its aim is mainly to harm a victim.
3. An understanding of the immense loss caused by the peddler of rumours and condemn its practice. There is nothing good that comes out of rumour. All we can reap from rumour is maiming and destruction.
4. Rumour has sown the seed of discord in families and in broken relationships: personal, political, professional and religious.
5. Rumour has destroyed life and property. It has brought about mistrust, fear, suspicion and enmity in educational establishments. Rumour mongering in whatever form, shape or context is anti-social, unpatriotic, immoral and ungodly. It should be completely rejected.
6. Rumour has created more problems for the educational establishments than it has solved. We should try to reduce the incidence of harmful rumours by learning to give them a second thought before we transit them to another person.
7. Also members of the educational establishments should try to be cautious in their reaction to any story emanating from the rumour network even at the drop-of-a-hat.

## X. Conclusion

Directors and Supervisors of our educational system can sometimes appreciate rumours better if they search for the message behind them. Some rumours are symbolic expressions, feelings that are not really offered by their communication as fact of truth.

Rumours will continue to thrive as long as people continue to live and work, especially because certain issues cannot be communicated officially. Issues such as scandals and private affairs can only be communicated freely through rumours and gossip. The inquisitive nature of man will continue to offer fertile ground for the peddling and circulation of rumours. Rumour is a natural phenomenon that can hardly be eradicated from the educational system or society.

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