International Journal of Management and Commerce Innovations ISSN 2348-7585 (Online)
Vol. 7, Issue 2, pp: (584-594), Month: October 2019 - March 2020, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

LISTENING SKILLS: A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Iorhen, Peter Terna

The Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON)
Topo-Badagry, Lagos State,Nigeria

+2348065494353
ternaiorhen@yahoo.com

Abstract: **This paper is aimed at discussing one of the components of communication which is a requisite for any leadership position. As a leader, listening for understanding is important, as well as listening for needs and desires of those served (Steil and Bommelje, 2004; Wolvin 2010a).Therefore, transactional and transformational leaders require these listening skills as a quality to function effectively. It is also an important skill that is needed to relate with stakeholders with diverse needs, desires and expectations. Many leaders take for granted and misinterpret listening to hearing and for this reason, they run into problems in the course of leading because they cannot interpret and process what is being said by their stakeholders'. This paper adopts descriptive methodology with the use of secondary materials. The paper encompasses historical perspective of listening, concepts clarification (listening as a skill and effective leadership), importance of listening, challenges of listening and effective listening techniques. Finally, for 21st century leaders to attain and actualize their leadership goals for effectiveness, listening skills have to be acquired, developed and learned.**

Keywords: **Listening Skills, Tool, Leadership Effectiveness.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a challenging and sensitive position that requires diverse skills and experiences to deliver and function effectively. Among these skills are team, decision-making, problem solving and communication skills. Listening skills being a process and component of communication is not only of great value but fundamental for every leader be it transformational or transactional. This is because they need the communication to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to subordinates so as to identify and clarify their will at any given time. Rynders (1999) said "listening is the earliest communication skill acquired, the most often used but the least mastered". In addition, Rynders stated that, an ancient sage once said "we have been given two ears but one single mouth, in order that we may listen more and talk less." Atwater (1992) noted that success at all levels of management may depend on how well we listen to detailed instructions or to feedback from our staff. Of all the sources of information to help a manager know and evaluate the personalities of their department members, listening to individual employee is the most important (Hunsaker and Alessandra, 1986). According to Atwater (1992), despite the amount of time spent listening, the average person does not listen very well. The normal untrained listener is likely to understand and retain only half of a conversation, immediately after hearing someone talk. Within the next forty-eight hours we forget half of that again, so that we retain only twenty-five percent of what we originally heard. Atwater also noted that throughout the years of formal schooling, students spend fifty percent or more of their communication time listening, followed by speaking, reading and writing in that order. However, the amount of training time students receive in these skills occurs in just the reverse order. The important thing is that since listening is learned, poor listening habits can be retrained.

Since leadership position requires relating and connecting with stakeholders, communication in form of conversation is mandatory and this process requires attentive listening since the message and meaning obtained will serve as an input in the decision making process which will not only make the leader effective but substantive. Unfortunately, leaders hardly pay attention in their conversation with subordinates and stakeholders which negatively affects the whole communication

process resulting to poor decision-making. Therefore, this paper is aimed at discussing listening skills as it plays essential and critical role in any leadership position. The paper encompasses historical perspective of listening, concepts clarification (listening as a skill and effective leadership), importance of listening, challenges of listening and effective listening techniques. Therefore, for 21st century leaders to attain and actualize their leadership goals for effectiveness, these listening skills have to be acquired, developed and learned.

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Historically, the study of listening began with Paul Rankin's work in 1926, when listening was determined to be the most frequent mode of communication. However, it was not until the 1940's when more explicit attention was given to listening (Janusik, 2010). At this time, Nichols in 1947 brought listening instruction to the forefront by establishing a listening emphasis course at the University of Minnesota. Since then, Nichols has been designated as the "father of the field of listening" due to his pioneering research in the topic (Steil and Bommelje, 2004). Other researchers have continued to study this method of communication. In 1979, the International Association of Listening (ILA) was formed. This organization promotes listening and has brought together scholars from education, business, medicine, psychology, and other fields of interest for the advancement and promotion of developing and using effective listening skills in all areas of life.

According to Rynders (1999), listening "is a skill that underlies all leadership skills. It is the key to developing and maintaining relationships, decision making and problem solving." Though leaders spend a lot of their communication time listening, but much of it is wasted since they are not attentive. Listening is a part of our everyday life, both in our career and at home, that we sometimes take it for granted. As in any business, listening skills are very often ignored or just forgotten. Since listening is taken for granted, many interpersonal communication problems arise. Hunsaker and Alessandra (1986) found that the reason for this may be the misconception that listening is related to hearing. Listening is more than the physical process of hearing. Additionally, it is an intellectual and emotional process in which one integrates all three skills in the search of meaning. Effective listening does not come easily. It is very hard work. All too often we hear the words but we miss the message. To many of us, listening is viewed as a passive exercise, something we do in addition to our present focus. In order to improve the effectiveness of our listening skills, we must first understand that poor listening results from a variety of factors. We are susceptible to these factors because the time requirements of speaking and listening are mismatched. Atwater (1992) defined the typical speaking rate at about 120 to 180 words per minute. We can generally listen with good comprehension at 500 to 800 words per minute. This speech-thought gap provides the conscientious listener with a time advantage for listening. It tends to work against those who are less attentive to the speaker's words.

3. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

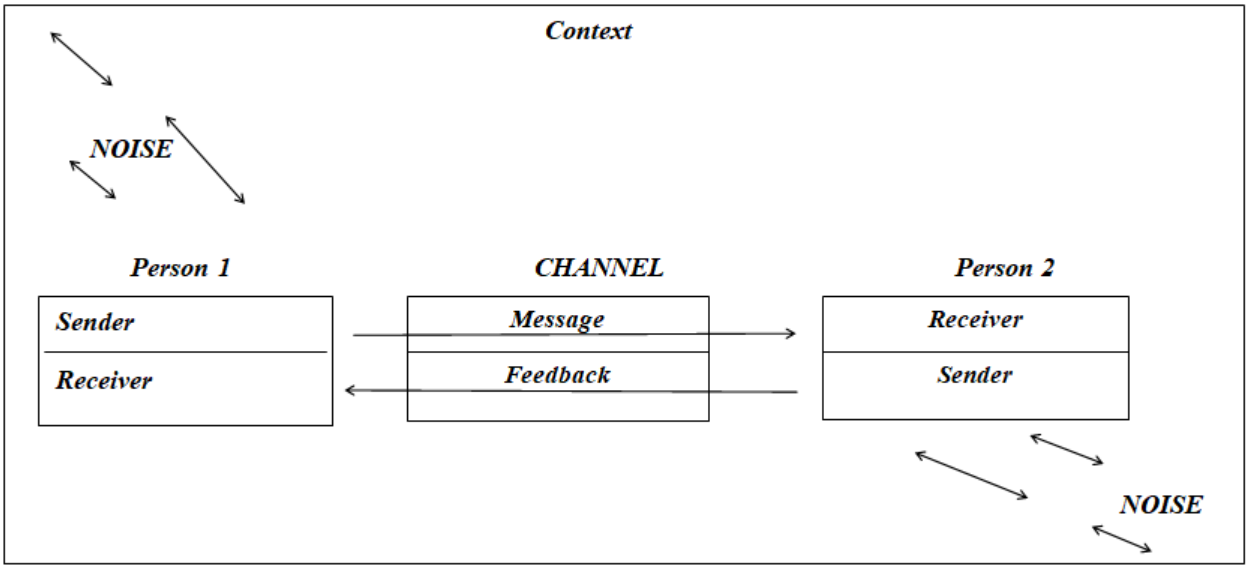
Related concepts that constitute the topic for this paper will be elucidated for better understanding.

Communication

In discussing this paper, communication as concept can never be underestimated because listening constitutes its component and process. Human beings are involved in communication on daily basis. Communication is about people speaking and listening (Kae, 2012). The National Communication Association (2015) viewed communication "as a discipline that focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media. The discipline promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication". Communication is a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings. Communication is much more than just the exchange of words. It is what we say, how we say it, why we say it, when we say it, and what we neglect to say. It is our facial expressions, our gestures, our posture, and our vocal tones. Communication includes both verbal and nonverbal language. Words are the basic tools of verbal language. However, nonverbal language includes posture and body position, facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures and mannerisms and behavior and actions. Communication is any means by which an individual relates experiences, ideas, knowledge, and feelings to another. Communication can be expressed through both speech and gestures (Harryman et al, 1996). Communication can also be defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Scott, 2015. Retrieved from http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com).As a process, it involves the sender, receiver, message, feedback and barriers.

Finally, from the above definitions, one can perceive communication to mean a process whereby an individual convey information in form of ideas, feelings, expressions, etc to another individual or group of persons for processing. It is

important to note that once information is passed across, the receiver is faced with the challenge of processing and interpreting such information for understanding. Communication as process can be explained in details using a communication model of Clampitt (2005) shown below.



***Source**: Clampitt .P. (2005:30)*

Figure: 1 Typical Communication Model

Sender:

Person 1 constructs and sends a message. Messages are the signals and symbols that we use to convey what we want to transmit. They can occur in various ways, including visual (non-verbal, written), auditory (verbal and sub-vocal speech) and tactile (touch, bodily contact) formats. In order to send the message, it must be encoded into words, as well as tone, inflection, facial expression, and other non-verbal language (Tara and Martin, 2014).

In addition, to start any conversation process, there must be an initiator who initiates the ideas and thoughts to be forwarded to the receiver. Consider in a classroom setting where the teacher is standing in front of the students, he or she initiates the topic to be discussed.

Channel:

This refers to the means used to deliver messages and the related formats. Means used to communicate can include face to face, telephone, written, radio and video communication. In face to face communication, which is most often preferred for communication of more important matters, communication occurs through visual, auditory formats etc. Skilled communicators will choose the channel most appropriate to the specific goals sought at that time (Tara and Martin, 2014)

In view of the above, the channel in any communication process is seen as a bridge through which the initiator's ideas and thoughts cross over to the receiver. Without this bridge, the intended message remains with the initiator and becomes valueless.

Receiver:

According to Tara and Martin (2014), for effective communication to take place, the message must be accurately decoded and reconstructed by person 2, from the signals received from person 1. However, even if the "encoding" is carried out very well; this in itself does not ensure that it will be "decoded" accurately. The meaning ascribed to the message may vary according to the person doing the interpreting, the context in which the message was given and the total information communicated.

It is clear that without the receiver of the constructed thoughts, the initiator will only waste his/her time crafting ideas that can never be reached out for processing. A lecturer will be motivated to prepare for a topic only when the students are on ground to discuss the topic with.

Feedback:

Person 2 responds to Person 1 and this message is received by person 1 as feedback. Again, feedback comprises of both the verbal and non-verbal messages of others, and allows us to evaluate how the message has been understood and the response to it. Actively listening to feedback is a key skill in effective communication. We can also get feedback from our own responses through a process known as 'self-monitoring' (Hargie et al 2004). Self-monitoring involves staying aware of what we are saying and doing in social encounters and how this is impacting on others. This type of feedback can then be used to alter or adapt our behaviour in the light of the responses from others. People who are skilled communicators are high self-monitors, who continuously analyze and regulate their own behaviour according to the way in which the other person is responding.

The response from students who are receiving lectures will actually send a message to the lecturer on whether he/she has prepared adequately for what the students are expecting to gain at the end of the session.

Context:

According to Tara and Martin (2014), communication never occurs in a vacuum. Communication is inextricably linked to the particular context or environment in which it occurs, which in turn has a major impact upon behavior of both the sender and receiver. In this connection, Fáilte (2013), said context is the tone and body language which constitutes both the sender and receiver's emotions. The way they feel in the course of their conversations regarding the mental images (ideas. thoughts, pictures, emotions, etc), therefore, when they feel happy, it is seen in their tone and body language as they do when they are sad, angry, hurt and so on.

Noise:

The term 'noise' describes anything that can interfere with or distort the meaning of a message. Dickson (1999) has identified a number of barriers and common sources of noise, which can affect communication accuracy and effectiveness. Psychological, semantic, environmental, demographic, disability and organizational barriers.

- **Psychological:** According to Adler & Towne (1978), psychological noise alludes to mechanisms within individuals that restrict a sender's or receiver's ability to express and/or understand messages clearly. For example, senders with limited vocabularies may have difficulty translating images into symbols that can be understood easily by receivers. Receivers with inflated self-concepts may filter messages that disagree with their self-perceptions and put energy into defending themselves rather than into understanding the messages. Psychological noise most often results in defensiveness that blocks the flow of communication between sender and receiver.

- **Semantic:** The differences in language, education, and culture. Obviously if the sender is speaking in English and the receiver doesn't understand English, there's a problem. But even if the sender and receiver speak English, they may not speak the same dialect. The words they use may not mean the same thing. If we order a soda in Washington, DC, for example, we'll get a soft drink. If we order a soda in Detroit, we'll get a drink made of soda water and flavored syrup with ice cream floating in it. If one is from the United States and he is speaking to a Scot from Glasgow, the American may have a hard time simply understanding his pronunciation.

- **Physical environment:** John and William (1973) postulated that the environment alone may create conditions under which communication cannot take place effectively. A stuffy, warm room may make it impossible to send and receive messages accurately. A person's physical state may also be detrimental to communication. More importantly, an unsecured environment can also hinder communication.

- **Demographic:** Stewart and Logan, (1998), also saw that factors such as gender and age can impact on the way in which a message is interpreted. For example, a male listener may nod his head to indicate to the speaker 'I agree', whereas a female listener may nod her head to communicate 'I am listening' (but not necessarily agreeing); so sending the same visible feedback but with different actual meanings.

- **Disability:** Physical or neurological impairment as well as psychiatric illness can call for alternative means to the usual patterns of communication to be adopted. Some examples include sight or hearing loss, and conditions such as Parkinson's disease or severe depression (Hargie et al, 2004).

- **Organizational:** Tara and Martin (2014) said barriers to effective communication can be located within the organization or agency itself. Difficulties with established lines and means of communication, different relative physical location of staff, lack of team or supervision meetings, and under resourced supervisors are factors that can impact negatively on effective communication.

4. LISTENING AS A SKILL

Listening to others, as well as understanding others is essential. It is often said that listening is the first language skill one develops, and as a result, all cognitive skills are dependent on the ability to listen (Kae, 2012). The Greek philosopher Epictetus according to King (2008) may have been the first person to notice that humans were created with two ears, but only one tongue, so that humans may listen twice as much as they speak. Today, we hear and use many proverbs about this wisdom.

Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages (Thompson et al, 2004). Leaders are not only expected to hear from stakeholders, they are to comprehend in order have a full grasp of the message for a logical feedback. Listening involves hearing the speaker's words, understanding the message and its importance to the speaker, and communicating that understanding to the speaker. There is a distinct difference between hearing and listening. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, to listen is "to make a conscious effort to hear" or "to pay attention to sound." It is evident that listening involves more than hearing. Essentially then, hearing pertains to the physical reception of sound and is an involuntary act; listening relates to the perception of meaningful sound and is a voluntary act (Atwater, 1992). To do this, we must first, pay attention to the speaker's message, share responsibility for the communication, use total body listening and, finally listen appropriately, depending on the purpose of the communication. However, it is posited that listening is the most important of all communication skills (Hunt & Cusella, 1983). To define listening, the role of cognition must be recognized, as well as the behavioral aspect (McKenzie & Clark, 1995). Communication scholars cannot agree on a single definition for listening, though, there are similar elements scholars agree should be included in this definition. These five elements include perception, attention, interpretation, remembering and responding. These common elements have been a part of the definition of listening for over 60 years (Janusik, 2010). Since listening occurs in different settings, a single definition for listening is inadequate. For example, listening in a conversation will require a response; however when listening to a television program, no response is required. The key to defining listening is to take the time to think and create a personal definition of listening (Steil & Bommelje, 2004). Steil and Bommelje's philosophy promotes the idea that listening must be defined personally, so that a person can "see it, find it, do it, measure it, enhance it, teach it, or live it and repeat it" .This appears to fit in with the contingency approach of leadership, which suggests transformational leadership (Hackman & Johnson, 1994). An effective listener or leader will determine the type of listening the setting or situation requires, and establish a goal conducive to the setting (Thompson et al 2004 and Wolvin 2010a). This understanding will allow one to incorporate listening in all settings which concurs with what Griffin (2009) says about Carl Rogers' perspective on listening, that one listens to others with the desire to seek understanding.

Hunsaker and Alessandra (1986) identified four types of listeners (non-listener, marginal listener, evaluative listener and active listener) with distinct concentration and sensitivity.

- **Non-listener:** Such a listener dominates and takes control of the conversation by not giving room for the speaker to bring forth his/her message, as a result the listener picks not a single word to construct meaning from. This is common in the dictatorship settings.

- **Marginal listener:** Here the listener appears to pay attention to what the speaker is saying but in reality the listener is only hearing and not listening. The listener fails to probe further on the message the speaker is conveying for key ideas and therefore, lacks an in-depth understanding. Most students who appear to be taking notes on a particular topic hardly listen to the teacher's discussion.

- **Evaluative listener:** The listener is concerned with judging speaker's words and content without considering the non-verbal words like body language, vocal intonation and facial expressions. This listener repeats back to the speaker verbatim what is being said and forms opinions about the speaker's words even before the message is completed by taking

the risk of not understanding the true meaning of the message. Such a listener claims to understand the speaker's message but the speaker does not feel understood.

- **Active listener:** This listener exhibit both verbally and nonverbally traits in order to carefully pay attention to the speaker's contents and feelings. Unlike the non-listener that dominates the whole discussion, the active listener gives room for the speaker to bring forth his/her words. For the marginal listener that fails to question the speaker, the active listener is a skillful questioner and always looking for verbal and visual signals that signify the speaker has something to say. This listener does only receive the words of the speaker but also constructs meaning and responds as a feedback indicating that the speaker's message is understood.

Among the types of listeners, the highest and most effective level of listening is the active listener considering its qualities opined by Hunsaker and Alessandra (1986).Such qualities are sensing, attending and responding. Sensing is the ability to recognize and appreciate the silent messages that the speaker is sending that is, facial expressions, intonation and body language. Attending refers to the verbal, vocal and visual messages that the active listener sends back to the speaker acknowledging the speaker and their message. This also establishes a receptive listening setting, away from distractions, private without invading the speakers "personal space." Responding is when the listener gets feedback on the accuracy of the speaker's content and feelings, tries to gather more information, attempts to make the speaker feel understood and encourages the speaker to understand themselves, their problems and concerns better.

5. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Leadership is an important aspect of management (Weihrich, et al, 2008). It is important because it contributes immensely to the general wellbeing of organizations and nations. Organizations such as General Electric and Chrysler had been turned around from the brink of bankruptcy to become two of the world's most profitable organizations through the effective leadership of Jack Welch and Lee Iacocca (Robbins & Coulter, 2007). Great nations like the United States of America, Britain, France and Singapore are some of the most prominent nations in the world today that have benefited from effective leadership (Weihrich et al, 2008).

White (1997) stresses that effective leaders in the 21st century must be listening leaders, leaders who will identify productive areas of confusion and uncertainty, who will demonstrate that they do not have all the answers but are willing to learn, and who will be able to "act differently, think differently, and seek inspiration from different sources". And it has been noted that listening leaders create listening environments by modeling good listening behaviors. Followers tend to listen more effectively to the listening leader (Swanson, 1997). "The hallmark of an effective leader is clear focus and direction. Successful leaders operate with a vision of where they are going, and they use this vision to inspire their people and their organization (Davis, et al., 1992)". Some leaders are able to develop this vision and direction from within themselves, and develop support inside their organization. Others work with teams to create a vision together. Axley in 1996 published the results of a survey of more that 200 managers and leaders on what effective leaders do to make them effective. More than 70% of these managers mentioned items like communicate well, listen effectively, demonstrate approachability, delegate effectively, and lead by example while the remaining 30% mentioned items like read situations and people well, use a variety of power bases to lead, teach well, care about the people they lead and show it, treat people fairly, honestly and consistently. A truly effective leader will typically demonstrate a high degree of both transactional and transformational leadership argues Rosenbach, et al. (1996). From the discussions above, effective leadership means switching between the leadership styles and having the ability to inspire, influence and stimulate followers' to drive the vision.

Leadership can be seen as the process of influencing groups to achieve goals, while a leader is someone who can influence others (Cole, 2006; Robbin and Coulter, 2007; Weihrich et al, 2008). Kae (2012) said "Leadership is also about people; people communicating, developing relationships and people working to improve society". Leadership depends on interactions and the use of communication. Since meaning is generated through communication, developing relationships with others and leading others requires knowledge of listening. These traits are reflective in the behaviours seen in leaders. As Kouzes and Posner (2010) stated, "leadership is an affair of the heart". That is serving others, while listening. Finally, leadership involves influencing activities at individual, group and organizational levels with aim of actualizing the stated mandate.

Several types and theories of leadership are being put forward to explain leadership effectiveness. Two of the most prominent leadership theories are Transformational and Transactional leadership theories. Since the late 1980s, theories of

transformational and charismatic leadership have been ascendant. Versions of transformational leadership have been proposed by several theorists, including Bass (1985 and 1996). A transformational leader is a person who stimulates and inspires followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Robbins and Coulter, 2007). This leader pays attention to the concern and developmental needs of individual followers; they change followers' awareness of issues by helping them to look at old problems in a new way; and they are able to arouse, excite and inspire followers to put out extra effort to achieve group goals. Transformational leadership theory is all about leadership that creates positive change in the followers whereby they take care of each other's interests and act in the interests of the group as a whole (Warrilow, 2012). The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James Macgregor Burns in 1978 in his descriptive research on political leaders, but its usage has spread into organizational psychology and management with further modifications by B.M Bass and J.B Avalio (Jung & Sosik, 2002).Transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the project and the collective identity of the organization, being a role model for followers that inspires them and makes them interested, challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so that the leader can align followers with tasks that enhance their performance.

Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) in their contribution also noted that transactional leadership can also be known as managerial leadership which focuses on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance. Transactional leadership is a style of leadership in which the leader promotes compliance of his followers through both rewards and punishments. Unlike transformational leadership, leaders using the transactional approach are not interested to change the future but to maintain status quo. These leaders pay attention to followers' work in order to find faults and deviations. This type of leadership is effective in crisis and emergency situations, as well as when projects need to be carried out in a specific fashion. Transactional leaders use an exchange model, with rewards being given for good work or positive outcomes. Conversely, people with this leadership style also can punish poor work or negative outcomes, until the problem is corrected. One way that transactional leadership focuses on lower level needs is by stressing specific task performance (Hargis et al, 2001). Transactional leaders are effective in getting specific tasks completed by managing each portion individually.

Therefore, transactional leaders are concerned with processes rather than forward-thinking ideas. These types of leaders focus on contingent reward (also known as contingent positive reinforcement) or contingent penalization (also known as contingent negative reinforcement). Contingent rewards (such as praise) are given when the set goals are accomplished on time, ahead of time, or to keep subordinates working at a good pace at different times throughout completion. Contingent punishments (such as suspensions) are given when performance quality or quantity falls below production standards or goals and tasks are not met at all (Odumeru and Ifeanyi, 2013).

In view of the above, the transformational and transactional leadership are effective strategies and styles deployed by leaders at different situations to either challenge the status quo by motivating stakeholders towards attaining the organizational long-term goals or day-to-day progress towards goals within the existing boundaries of processes and structures. Therefore, the transformational leaders ensure that stakeholders are triggered to get the vision of the organization actualized while transactional leaders are mutual contractors with full expectations from stakeholders' inputs for results and stakeholders' too having full expectations for rewards.

6. IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

Leaders who carefully pay attention to stakeholders' conversation are bound to benefit immensely from the following:

- **Effective decisions:** Inputs for sound decisions can only be obtained by carefully paying attention to conversations with stakeholders.
- **Preventing errors:** It is by active listening that leaders can avoid mistakes that will cost their organizations.
- **Establishing relationships:** As leaders give stakeholders the required attention, a bound is established between them to address issues at all times.
- **Sharpening of leadership skills:** As leaders pay close attention to understand stakeholders and their expectations, it becomes easier for them to address individual needs and by solving problems at all times, leaders become skillful.
- **Networking:** It is by being attentive that leaders get connected to rightful links for their resources outside the organization.

- **Facts Finding:** Problems being faced and encountered by organizations in the 21st century can only be addressed based on facts. These facts can be generated by paying close attention to conversations and interactions.
- **Motivation:** Listening as a tool pushes and triggers subordinates to put in their best for high productivity because it makes them feel recognized.

7. CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING

The inability of leaders to closely pay attention in order to construct meaning from the conversation of stakeholders can be attributed to so many factors. Hunsaker and Alessandra (1986) identified nine of these barriers which have negatively affected the listening ability of most leaders. These barriers are motivation and attitude, lack of concentration, negative attitudes toward listening, experience and background, listening setting, emotions, daydreaming and fantasizing, delivery than others and lack of learned listening skills.

i. **Motivation and attitude:** Most leaders are triggered and pushed to pay attention only to issues that interests and benefits them. This has also become a habit among leaders who lack team spirit since they cannot share or pay attention to views due to different motives.

ii. **Lack of concentration:** Leaders come to office with many issues in mind, thinking of fixing family problems, planning to advance in their career and strategizing for the organization. With all these, distractions set in and affect them from listening to pick key issues from stakeholders during conversations.

iii. **Negative attitude toward listening:** Leaders who because of their positions tend to underestimate stakeholders by not giving room for views, dominate discussions and hardly pay attention to understand the message since they have he final say.

iv. **Experience and background:** The understanding and level of competence in leaders actually gives them an edge to quickly generate facts from conversations with stakeholders in a specific area while the incompetency level incapacitates their listening ability.

v. **Listening setting:** The environment and surrounding leaders find themselves have both positive and negative impact on their listening abilities. It is positive only when the environment is conducive (well ventilated, spacious, quite secured, etc) but negative when the environment is not secured, noisy to mention but a few.

vi. **Emotions:** Leaders who react without controlling their feelings hardly pay attention to construct meaning from conversations. For instance, a leader who had misunderstanding with one of the stakeholders in the past jump into conclusion that he or she is arrogant without paying attention to the issue at hand.

vii. **Daydreaming and fantasizing:** According to Hunsaker and Alessandra (1986), leaders think nearly four times as fast as they can speak, therefore, daydreaming and fantasizing are perceived by many psychologists and psychiatrists to be a healthy aspect of life. However, failure to control this, it can be extremely detrimental to listening effectiveness and to emotional health.

viii. **Differences in proficiency:** Leaders mode of attention in most cases varies with the stakeholder's pace of passing the message making it incomprehensible. That is, when the leader is actively listening to get the message but the stakeholder can not effectively pass the message due to the delivery style. For instance, an ordinary person who is used to local radio stations may find it difficult to pick words, hear and construct meaning when he/she tunes to foreign stations because of the proficiency.

ix. **Lack of learned listening skills:** Leaders who distort and dominate during conversations are in short of basic listening skills and therefore find it difficult to pay attention when a message is passed.

8. EFFECTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

From various literatures reviewed, active listening is an important skill that takes both time and practice to acquire. Therefore, for leaders to overcome the challenge of just hearing instead of paying attention to what is being said, the following techniques and skills need to be considered:

- **Silence:** For a leader to understand any message, such a leader must avoid distorting pending when the stakeholder finishes talking. Finally, clarifications can be made to confirm what has been said.

- **Have a listening mindset:** As a leader, prepare your mind to receive a message by avoiding inner distraction and to remain focused on the messages that are being communicated.
- **Be free with stakeholders:** Leaders are to be very friendly and tolerant to win the confidence of their stakeholders so as to get the message required. Avoid being harsh no matter their level of reaction.
- **Avoid physical distractions:** Physical distractions **s**uch as playing with phone and biro, operating laptop, flipping through newspapers and writing among others must be avoided in order not to send a negative impression that the message from the conversation is taken for granted.
- **Be compassionate:** Leaders can do this by placing themselves in the position of their stakeholders to feel what they feel and experience what they experience in order to appreciate and give due attention to the message.
- **Allocate adequate time:** Leaders are expected to be patient in dealing with stakeholders, this does not mean that such leaders are slow or inactive but to give room for everybody to raise and bring forth what needs to be discussed during conversations.
- **Don't be emotional:** As a leader, never allow the attitude and behavior of stakeholders to distract you from what they are saying, since you are dealing with crop of personalities with diverse background.
- **Get the emphases:** In any discussion with the stakeholders, the tone and volume of the conversation enable leaders to determine the importance and weight of the message sent.
- **Filter words for key ideas:** As leaders get involved in conversations with stakeholders, so many words are being released but key and germane issues are very few. Getting these key ideas require that leaders sieve the words as they are being released.
- **Take the non-verbal message serious:** Leaders cannot depend on their ears alone to get true message, the eyes too can assist in picking up the additional information being transmitted via non-verbal conversation.

9. CONCLUSION

Listening is a skill and an essential tool that enables a leader to identify stakeholders' needs, desires and expectations in order to stay connected. Listening is so important that many organizations provide listening skills training for their employees. This is not surprising when you hear of good listening skills resulting to better customer satisfaction, high productivity with fewer mistakes and increased sharing of information that in turn lead to more synergy. Many successful leaders and entrepreneurs credit their success to effective listening skills. Richard Branson the pioneer of Virgin Group which is made up of more than 200 companies in more than 30 countries including United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Canada, Asia, Europe and South Africa frequently quotes listening as "one of the main factors behind the success of Virgin Group". Listening attentively is a skill that strengthens the relationship between leaders and followers in any organization. To this connection, it is evident that listening skills are the building blocks for success which leaders need to acquire, develop and learn to effectively deliver in the 21st century and beyond.

REFERENCES

[1] Adler, R., and Towne, N. (1978). *Looking Out/Looking in (2nd ed.*). Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York

[2] Atwater, E., (1992). *I Hear You: A Listening Skills Handbook (Rev. ed.).* Walker, New York

[3] Bass, B. M. (1996).*A New Paradigm of Leadership: An Inquiry Into Transformational Leadership.* Alexandria, U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

[4] Bass, B. M. (1985). L*eadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. Free Press, New York

[5] Clampitt, P.G. (2005). *Communicating for Managerial Effectiveness: Problems/Strategies/Solutions (5th.ed)*. Sage Publication, California

[6] Cole, G.A. (2006) *Management Theory and Practice.(6th ed.)* . Book Power, London

[7] Davis, B., Hellervik, L., Skube, C., Gebelein, S., Sheard, J., (1992). *Successful manager's handbook.* Minneapolis, Minn: Personnel Decisions, Inc.

[8] Dickson, D., and Tourish, D. (2004). *Communication Skills for Effective Management*. Macmillan, Palgrave Hampshire

[9] Essays, UK. (2013). *The Semantic Barriers In Peoples Communication English Language Essay*. Retrieved from http://www.ukessays.com/essays/english-language/the-semantic-barriers-in-peoples-communication-english-language-essay.php?cref=1

[10] Fáilte Ireland (2013). .*Personal Leadership Effectiveness:Leadership Skills Guide*. Ireland

[11] Griffin, E. (2009). *Communication: A First Look at Communication Theory (7th ed.).*McGraw-Hill, New York

[12] Hackman, M. Z., and Johnson, C. E. (1994). *Teaching Leadership From a Communication Perspective*. Journal of Northwest Communication Association, 22, 48-64.

[13] Hargis, M. B., Wyatt, J.D., Piotrowski, C. (2001). Developing Leaders: Examining the Role of Transactional and Transformational Leadership Across Contexts Business. Organization Development Journal 29 (3): 51–66

[14] Hargie, O., Dickson, D., Tourish, D. (2004) Communication Skills for Effective Management. Palgrave Macmillan.Hampshire.

[15] Harryman, E., Kresheck, J., & Nicolosi, L. (1996). *Terminology of Communication Disorders.* Williams & Wilkins, Media, Pennsylvania.

[16] Hunsaker, P. and Allessandra, A., (1986). *The Art of Managing People.* Simon and Schuster Inc, New York

[17] Hunt, G. T. and Cusella, L. P. (1983). *A Field Study of Listening Needs in Organizations.*Communication Education, Vol. 32(4), 393-404.

[18] Janusik, L. A. (2010). *Listening Pedagogy: Where Do We Go From Here?* In A. D. Wolvin (ed.), *Listening and Human Communication in the 21st Century* (pp. 193-224). Blackwell, Oxford

[19] John E. Jones and J. William Pfeiffer(1973) .*Conditions that Hinder Effective Communication :Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*: Pfeiffer & Company, San Diego, CA

[20] Jossey-Bass and Pfeiffer (1998). *Basic Communication Model(* 2nd ed). The Pfeiffer Library Volume 25,

[21] Jung, D.D. and Sosik, J.J. (2002). *Transformational Leadership in Work Groups: The Role of Empowerment, Cohesiveness, and Collective-Efficacy on Perceived Group Performance*. *Small Group Research*. Vol.33,No.3, 313 – 336

[22] Kae, V. E. (2012). *The Role of Communication and Listening in Leadership*: A Thesis for award Master of Arts in Communication and Leadership Studies. Gonzaga University. USA

[23] King, P. E. (2008). *Listening. The International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Vol. 6, pp. 2718-2722). Blackwell Publishers, Inc, Malden, Massachusetts

[24] Kouzes, J. M. and Posner, B. Z. (2010). *The Truth About Leadership*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA

[25] McKenzie, N. J., and Clark, A. J. (1995). *The All-In-One Concept: How Much Must Listening Research Include?* .International Journal of Listening.Vol.9, 29-43.

[26] Odumeru, J. A. and Ifeanyi, G. O.(2013). *Transformational vs. Transactional Leadership Theories*: *Evidence in Literature*. International Review of Management and Business Research Journal. Volume 2(2)

[27] Rankin, P. T. (1926). *The Measurement of the Ability to Understand Spoken Language* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan)

[28] Robbins, S. P. and Coulter, M. (2007) *Management (9th ed.)*. Prentice- Hall, London

[29] Rosenbach, W., Sashkin, M., and Harburg, F., (1996). *The leadership profile: On becoming a better leader.* Seabrook, Md., Ducochon Press.

[30] Rynders, G. L. (1999). *Listening and Leadership: A Study on Their Relationship.* National Fire Academy. USA

[31] Scott, 2015. Retrieved from http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com

[32] Steil, L. K., and Bommelje, R. K. (2004). *Listening Leaders: The Ten Golden Rules to Listen, Lead and Succeed*. Beaver's Pond Press, Inc, Edina, Minnesota

[33] Stewart, J. and Logan, C. (1998) *Together: Communicating Interpersonally*. McGraw-Hill,New York

[34] Swanson, C.H. (1997). *Listening as an Act of Leadership*. Paper presented at International Listening Association convention. Mobile, AL.

[35] Tara, D. and Martin, O. (2014) *Making Practice-Based Learning Work: Communication Skills.* Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning *(*FDTL*)* Phase 4, University of Ulster, United Kingdom

[36] Thompson, K., Leintz, P., Nevers, B., & Witkowski, S. (2004). *The Integrative Listening Model:An Approach to Teaching and Learning Listening*. The Journal of General Education, Vol.53,(3-4), 225-246.

[37] Warrilow. S (2012) *Transformational Leadership Theory - The 4 Key Components in Leading Change & Managing Change.* (Retrieved from http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Stephen_Warrilow 15/03/2013).

[38] Weihrich, H., Cannice, M.V. and Koontz, H. (2008) *Management (12th ed.)*. Mc Graw Hill, New Delhi

[39] White, R. (1997). *Seekers and Sealers: The Future Leaders*. Training and Development 51(1)

[40] Wolvin, A. D. (2010a). "*Listening." Political and Civic Leadership*. Sage Publications, California

[41] National Communication Association. 2015. What is communication? Read 5.5.2015 http://www.natcom.org/Tertiary.aspx?id=236&terms=health%20communication

[42] cw.routledge.com/textbooks

[43] dougbrooksconsulting.com/management-consultant-change-talent-expert/listening-key

[44] https://www.natcom.org/discipline/

[45] http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/15%3Fe%3Dmclean-ch01_s02

[46] www.thefreelibrary.com/international+listening+association.-a0163336301

[47] www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html