

Principals' Communication Strategies for Teachers' Effectiveness in Secondary Schools in Anambra State

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Abstract

The purpose of study was to determine the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The six education zones were covered in the study. The population of the study is 6652 respondents comprising 257 principals and 6411 teachers in all the state government owned secondary schools in Anambra state. The sample size for this study is 915 respondents consisting of 810 teachers and 105 principals drawn from the 257 public secondary schools in Anambra state. Researchers-developed questionnaire titled "Principals Communication Strategies for Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire" (PCSTEQ) was used for data collection. The PCSTEQ is made up of two sections, A and B. Section A elicited information on the status of the respondents while section B contains items on communication for teacher effectiveness. The validity of the instrument was determined two experts from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one from measurement and evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method by administering twenty copies of the questionnaire on a sample of ten public school principals and teachers in Enugu state. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the reliability coefficient which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.96. The researchers administered copies of the instrument directly to the respondents with the help of five research assistants. Mean scores and standard deviations were used in answering the research question while z-test was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness. It was recommended among others that adequate remuneration that is commensurate to their work should be provided to the principals. This will make them to be more dedicated and motivated in adopting various performance management strategies for enhancing teacher effectiveness. This study therefore determined the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools. The study is significant in that it will help the principals to adopt best communication strategies in other to enhance teachers' effectiveness. The study is likely to impact positively on school principals who, through their communication strategies are likely to enhance teachers' effectiveness.

Keywords: communication; communication strategies; principals; teacher; teacher effectiveness; secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

Communication system in any organisation like the school is very vital to the survival and smooth running of the organization. It is the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning. The communication process follows a systematic procedure. It is a give and take method involving the sender and the receiver. Usually, the sender must have an idea to put across which makes it a 3-way grid – the sender, message and the receiver. For better communication in school, the principal must first and foremost conceive an idea and relate such idea to his staff and expect response. Good communication reduces the anxiety in supervision.

Communication as concept can be defined as an active process and a purposeful shared experience involving two or more people, one sending a message through written and non-written means which could be verbal (oral) or non-verbal means, (for example, use of facial expression) and the other actively receiving it (Ijaiya, 2002). Communication may be defined as the transfer of a message or information from one person to another or a group of people for common understanding (Canary, 2011). Duckworth cited in Akomolafe, (2012) Good communication and shared values are important elements in this relationship. Ideally, a principal should be able to create consensus among staff on rules and their enforcement. Furthermore, Duckworth cited in Akomolafe (2012) stated that in practice, some

principals create consensus by recruiting like-minded staff over the course of years. The person who initiates the conversation or sends the information or message is called the sender, while the person who receives the information is referred to as the receiver. Okoye (2014) saw communication as a life wire and main feature of human existence in all administrative endeavours, and education is not left out.

Any gap in communication results in administrative hiccups that may mar the goals of the organization. It could lead to distraction in human relationship, anarchy and total collapse of a system. Schools that successfully implemented a pilot programme experienced distinct improvements in discipline. Teachers are seen as the foundation upon which the growth and development of the society depends. Tabotndip (2005) opined that the quality and effectiveness of every education system anywhere in the world is dependent on the competences, effectiveness, efficiencies and devotion of the teaching force.

Communication involves at least two persons- the sender and the receiver of the information. Communication generally contains three things, the communicator, the channel of communication and the communicatee. Generally, the purpose of communication in performance management is to afford the principal and the subject teacher the opportunity to discuss the different aspects of the teaching and learning process that requires attention for effectiveness. Nakpodia (2010) noted that in communication process discipline, law and order are being maintained. Communication is the transmission of facts, ideas, emotions, feelings, attitudes, wishes and information from one person to another, with the information being understood by the receiver (Okigbo & Nsiembunam, 2000). It can take many strategies. In the school system, communication can be done through several strategies.

Communication strategies in the school system according to Okigbo and Nsiembunam (2000:28) include:

Reports – Writing of reports is important in the school in order to keep abreast with essential resolutions or strategies adopted.

Manuals- These are normally produced by an organization like in a school to guide the employees on the work and life of such organization. Manuals ideally explain the roles that department or individual workers are supposed to play in the productive process and general function of the organization. An example is the teachers' service manual.

Memorandum- Memos are the most used communication device in the present day organization. Administrators used them to pass

information and directive to the department and individual employees.

Correspondence- This is a very effective way of passing information in an organization. Such information is either photocopied or cyclostyled and distributed on large scale so as to get to many people as possible.

Staff meetings- Staff meeting is believed by many to be one of the best devices for exchanging information, building morales, confidence and making better decision. The authors also stressed that it is the most democratic system due to the fact that at the meeting, there is room for discussion and for all the participants to air their opinions on issues raised. A spontaneous feedback is obtained.

Suggestion Boxes- Suggestion boxes are useful means of collecting valuable suggestion and information. It is however, the most neglected and underutilized.

A fact that is established is that adequate communication in the organization is very important. It is not very vital whether the communication system being used is formal or informal. An important thing is that information that has been adequately transferred from one person to another has been understood by the receiver. According to Nakpodia (2010b), it is a universal activity in one form or another between people at all times in their lives with the exception of a few religious orders. Within an organisation it is formalised as social interaction and is measured by its total amount, its frequency, which initiates it, the degree of reciprocity and its directions, upwards, downwards or sideways, among the members. Good communication is also important in the school system for teacher effectiveness.

Teacher effectiveness has been viewed by some scholars as the single biggest contributor to students' success (Sanders, 1999). For them, effective means increasing academic questions and decreasing lecture and ineffective practices. Sullivan, (2001) states that teacher effectiveness means to demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum, provides instruction in a variety of approaches to varied students and measurably increases student's achievements. Uchefuna, (2001) asserted that teacher effectiveness has been conceptualized as producing desired results in the course of discharging duty as a teacher.

Teaching effectiveness goes beyond just imparting knowledge but it is a purposeful activity carried out by someone with specialized knowledge in a skillful way to enhance the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of a person or group of persons. Accordingly, Bongotons (2009) defined an effective teacher as the one who keeps herself abreast in her field and is able to communicate her

knowledge effectively to others at a level that is commensurate with their knowledge. In addition, teacher effectiveness means to perform both the curricular and extra-curricular activities conscientiously. In the same vein, Agharuwhe and Nkechi (2009) opined that teacher effectiveness is a multidimensional concept since it measures a variety of different aspects of teaching such as; mastery of duties or roles, effective communication, lesson preparation and presentation, availability of instructional materials, conducive classroom and teachers motivation.

Therefore, teacher effectiveness means to have adequate knowledge of the systems and method that are related to their profession and understand the students. When teachers are effective, the outcome is that students' engagement in studies will also increase. When students' engagement in studies increases, their performance will also increase in terms of assessment as a result of the strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness.

Teacher effectiveness is the extent to which the teacher handles his or her job at any point in time. Hence, effectiveness is a relative term that has to do with many factors like conducive environment, good facilities, remuneration of teachers, supervision of instruction, training, motivation, and good leadership (Modibo, 2004).

Teaching is a complex activity which makes the definition of teacher effectiveness difficult. To Brown and Atkins (1993) teacher effectiveness can be determined in relation to the set goals. Since the goals of teaching may be cognitive, affective or psychomotor, a single definition of effectiveness hardly suffices. It may also be observed that good teaching is the direct function of the judges' value system and judges do not always agree Brown and Atkins (1993) further states that, although good teaching is in the eyes of the beholder, it can be reflected in students' performance. Consequently an effective teacher is one who enables students to perform well in tests and examinations. This definition is upheld by Akuezilo (1999), who suggested that good teaching must bring about learning. Teacher effectiveness therefore can be assessed by student outcomes. If students show signs of having learnt meaningfully, then the teacher can be said to be effective. According to Ezeocha (2001) an effective teacher should bring about learning in its cognitive, affective, and technical components through the use of a variety of activities.

An effective teacher is seen here as one who attains these objectives. Because of this plethora in definition, teacher effectiveness is often associated with the degree to which a teacher uses desirable skills in task performance and the level of students'

achievements in examinations. For the purpose of the study, teacher effectiveness means to have adequate knowledge of the systems and methods which are related to the profession and must understand the students in order to change their academic performance for good. In a situation where there is an effective teacher, the performance of the students will continue to increase.

The personality traits that make a teacher effective are largely inborn. A few may be acquired through training, but a person who is born to be interested in working with people and who has personal characteristic such as patience, love for children, interest in helping others, a sense of humour; a pleasant personality, smartness, sympathy; alertness; good human relations, emotional stability among others, will certainly be more effective as a teacher. Such attributes as skills in imparting knowledge, scholarliness, good judgment and professional ethics can be acquired through training. An effective teacher is thus born and made (Denga 2002).

The teachers' task, according to Fordham (2003), can be grouped into two categories; instructional and managerial. The basics of instruction in secondary schools involve classroom teaching. The main feature of classroom teaching is lecturing, but the wholesale use of lecture is often decried by educators because it is presumed that verbal presentation alone does not promote meaningful learning since it is directed only to one sense. The sense of hearing must be associated with others for better understanding. Teaching is not mere talking to the four walls of a classroom with a piece of chalk.

Consequently, instructional tasks must include a variety of activities. The views of Alexander and George (2001) are that a variety of methods are needed to achieve various instructional goals; whole class instruction for basic skills, individualized instructions for individual responses, self discipline and personal creativity; small group activities for group dynamics, learning to get along with others and enhancing citizenship and community spirit and individual attention to take care of students idiosyncrasies and to help them grasp topics covered in the curriculum contents. To attain the above goals, the use of a variety of instructional techniques and teaching aids is essential. Lectures ought to be complemented with such activities as questioning. Role play, demonstrations, use of audio and visual aids, book reviews, experiments, projects and field trips. To assess students understanding, continuous evaluation and testing becomes vital. There exist various forms of, and reasons for testing. Testing can be done orally, written or in laboratories to monitor student progress, to motivate or promote students, for guidance and counseling or to assess teaching.

Other managerial duties of teachers are geared towards class management and students emotional needs. The importance of class control to any teacher can hardly be under estimated. In class, discipline enables the teacher to carry out his instructional activities in an orderly and less disruptive atmosphere (Orseer 2006) Having viewed the duties of a teacher, it can be concluded that an effective teacher is one who carries out these duties to the maximum and one whose students exhibit high learning out comes in achievement tests. Research as reviewed in literature also indicates that certain characteristics are usually associated with teacher effectiveness, some of which are reviewed below.

The following characteristics of effective teachers are an outcome of three sets of questionnaires, one for pupils, one for secondary schools and the third for university students following an investigation on teacher effectiveness conducted by Denga (2002). The list is meant to be used as a guide. Those who find themselves inadequate on the criteria can try hard to acquire these traits of effective teachers. However, it must be noted that, it is not likely that an effective teacher has to possess all these characteristics. He may possess as many of them as possible, but not all of them. These include: Interest in helping people and performing other social services; mental alertness in detecting praise worthy as well as anomalous behaviours among children; Emotional stability and poise; sympathy, kindness and empathy; Ethical and professional behaviours; considerations and generosity; Flexibility; Verbal fluency for communication; personal attractiveness which easily helps pupils want to learn;

Good and balanced judgment (fairness); physical energy and dives; Scholarliness; Objectivity and consistency in all his dealings; Forcefulness; Dependability; Patience and tolerance; Democratic and cooperative (but firm when firmness is called for); Highly capable in his subjects (imaginative and clever); cheerful and good humoured; Capable of motivating students (stimulating personality); Avoids Sarcasms and denigrating language (minds his language); confident and Self-actualizing; Acceptance of self and others; Good understanding of the pupils.

Also, Okoli (1990:34) carried out a research to develop an instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of secondary school teaching by students and principals. He came up with six criteria of teacher effectiveness summarized thus:

1. Personal attributes; he should be regularly, punctual and healthy.
2. Teaching Principle and skill; he should write clearly, be audible, logical and involve students. He should use instructional materials and prepare well.

3. Knowledge of subject; explains well, teaches all topics, use more than one book and is confident.
4. Knowledge of the learner; seeks to understand students, uses increasing activities, gives clear instructions and is available to students.
5. Inter-personal relations; Objective in marking, rewards and punishment concerned with student poor performance, sympathetic, approachable.
6. Evaluation method; tests regularly, tests only matter taught; fair in grading, returns and discusses test. These items are example from the instrument and they summarize the overt and observable attributes of an effective teacher.

Generally, teachers effectiveness can be viewed from two distinct perspectives; the qualities possessed and exhibited by a teacher while teaching and the amount of learning exhibited by students in achievement tests. This is only natural to Farrant (2000) who states that teaching and learning are opposite sides of same coin, for a lesson is never taught until it has been learnt. Everything being equal, an effective teacher must know what to teach, how to teach it and then assess students' level of understanding and if necessary reteach it to make sure more than three quarters of the students have understood it and are capable of passing any examination on it .

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of Problem

Situational analysis in secondary schools in Nigeria, especially in Anambra state suggests that performance management strategies seem to be poorly implemented by principals as there are reports of problems such as poor teacher incentives, low staff morale, staff disciplinary issues, low teacher motivation among others. These problems appear to have a negative impact on teacher effectiveness. Ofoegbu (2004) observed that poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teacher's effectiveness in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits. In the light of the above, it becomes imperative to determine empirically the communication strategies of principals for teachers' effectiveness in Anambra State.

Significance of the Study

The outcome of the study is expected to be of benefit to the school principals and teachers. The study will

provide useful information to secondary school principals and the teachers on the effective communication strategies to adopt in secondary school education. They are likely to adopt the best strategies which will aid effective school management.

Research Question

What are the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Method

This study was carried out in Anambra State. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The six education zones namely Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha, Otuocha education were covered in the study. The population of the study is 6652 respondents comprising 257 principals and 6411 teachers in all the state government owned secondary schools in Anambra state. The breakdown for the 257 state public secondary schools located in the six education zones comprised: Aguata (47), Awka (76), Nnewi (50), Ogidi (40), Onitsha (32), and Otuocha (26). The sample size for this study is 915 respondents consisting of 810 teachers and 105 principals drawn from the 257 public secondary schools in Anambra state. The multi-stage sampling

procedure was utilized to arrive at the sample size. Researchers-developed questionnaire titled “Principals Communication Strategies for Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire” (PCSTEQ) was used for data collection. The PCSTEQ is made up of two sections, A and B. Section ‘A’ elicited information on the status of the respondents while section B contains items on communication for teacher effectiveness. The validity of the instrument was determined two experts from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one from measurement and evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method by administering twenty copies of the questionnaire on a sample of ten public school principals and teachers in Enugu state. Another set of twenty copies were re-administered to the same group after a period of two weeks. The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the reliability coefficient which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.96. The researchers administered copies of the instrument directly to the respondents with the help of five research assistants. Mean scores and standard deviations were used in answering the research question while z-test was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question

What are the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness

		Principals (N=103)		Teachers (N=752)		Total (N=855)		Remarks
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Notifies teachers about goals and objectives of the school	2.51	.82	2.44	.49	2.41	.56	Disagree
2.	Provides formal communication channels to let teachers know clearly what is going in the school	2.50	.79	2.33	.49	2.45	.54	Disagree
3.	Holds meetings with staff to discuss equipment design for effective instruction	2.53	.86	2.46	.57	2.53	.63	Agree
4.	Makes effective use of suggestion boxes in his school administration.	2.55	.82	2.53	.56	2.52	.62	Agree
5.	Maintains an open door policy in running the school	2.54	.83	2.54	.59	2.52	.64	Agree
6.	Allows teachers give their own suggestions on matters concerning them	2.53	.83	2.51	.47	2.55	.53	Agree

As shown by the total mean ratings on Table 1, the respondents agree that four out of the six listed items are the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness. The total mean ratings for the four items were above the cut of mean of 2.50. The remaining two items (item 1 and 2) with mean ratings less than 2.50 indicating that the two items are not part of the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 2: z-test comparison of principals' and teachers' mean ratings on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Principals	103	2.53	.82	853	1.89	1.96	Not Sig
Teachers	752	2.47	.52				

As indicated on Table 2, the z-cal value of 1.89 is less than the critical value of 1.96 at alpha level of 0.05 and degree of freedom (df) 853. This shows that the difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness was not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the groups was therefore not rejected.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From the data analysis the following major findings emerged from the study:

1. Respondents agree that the communication strategies are adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness, include: holding meetings with staff to discuss equipment design for effective instruction, making effective use of suggestion boxes in school administration, maintaining an open door policy in running the school and allowing teachers to give their own suggestions on matters concerning them.
2. There was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that the respondents agree that the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness include: holding meetings with staff to discuss equipment design for effective instruction, making effective use of suggestion boxes in his school administration, maintaining an open door policy in running the school and allowing teachers to give their own suggestions on matters concerning them. The study also revealed through the test of hypotheses that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of the principals and teachers in the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness.

These findings agree with Asiyai (2011) who found out that effective communication is important in maintaining conducive school environment for teaching and learning. This is because the principals are supposed to communicate rules and expectations of the school to the staff and students to know the consequences of their actions. The findings of the present study is also in line with the findings of Mgbodile, (2004), who found that when effective

communication is maintained by principals it enhances awareness, enlightenment involvement, feelings of belongingness and performance effectiveness. Effective communication abilities of the principals are indispensable in improving teacher effectiveness and performance. Therefore, when principals adopt effective communication strategies, teacher effectiveness in school will be enhanced.

The findings of the hypothesis show that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness. The reason for this appears to be because principals and teachers are well aware of the communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that principals adopt four communication strategies for teacher effectiveness. They include: holding meetings with staff to discuss equipment design for effective instruction, making effective use of suggestion boxes in school administration, maintaining an open door policy in running the school and allowing teachers to give their own suggestions on matters concerning them.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study utilized questionnaire as the only instrument for data collection. It did not also exhaust all the communication strategies in the school as an organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. In order to achieve desired level of teacher effectiveness, training and retraining programmes by way of workshop and seminars should be organized for principals from time to time in order to enhance their performance management strategies for teacher effectiveness
2. Adequate remuneration that is commensurate to their work should be provided to the principals. This will make them to be more dedicated and motivated in adopting various performance management strategies for enhancing teacher effectiveness.

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