

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS NEEDED BY PRINCIPALS FOR EFFECTIVE
MANAGEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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Abstract

This study investigated the communication skills needed by principals for effective management secondary schools in Anambra State. The study was a descriptive survey design study. It was guided by two Research questions and two null hypotheses. The population of the study comprised of 103 principals and 103 vice principals in Onitsha, Otuocho and Aguata Education zones in Anambra State. All the principals and vice principals were used because of their size. This gives a total of 206 respondents. An instrument constructed by researcher, titled: Communication Skills Questionnaire (CSQ) was used for data collection. Three experts validated the instrument, two experts from Educational Management and one expert from measurement and Evaluation, all from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. The reliability was established using a test – re-test method it yielded 0.81 correlations, coefficient using cronbach Alpha method. Mean and standard deviation used to analyze the data collected. The result of data analysis revealed the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills as low of standard of education, hinders educational policy implementation, misunderstanding and lack of unity of purpose in the school. Based on these findings, some recommendations were made which include use of clear and concise language by principals, constant use of face-to-face communication and principals being active listeners.

Key- words: communication skills, effective management, principals and effective communication.

Introduction

Communication remains one of the most important aspect of human existence and very important in any organization (School inclusive) for the achievement of its set goals and objectives. Communication helps improve effective management of any organization this is because it improves the mutual understanding between the management and subordinates. Effective communication increases staff involvement and commitment in the organization for a better result.

Yalokwu, (2002) sees communication as the effective transmission of common understanding among people through speaking, writing or the other methods. He asserts that unless there is a perfect understanding results from transmission of verbal or non-verbal symbols, otherwise communication has not taken place. According to Egbe (2002),

an administrative organization cannot work properly without an efficient and effective system of communication. He stated that even if policies and programmes have been fixed, the administrative machines will not work unless and until the meaning has been communicated to all members of the organization (school). The researcher sees communication as a process that people use to exchange messages and share feelings and ideas with one another.

Communication process is the means and stages of communication, (Udeze, 2005). According to Yalokwu (2002), communication process involves four elements, namely sender, message, channel and receiver. The elements in communication process determines the effectiveness of communication. A problem in any of these elements can lead to communication ineffectiveness. Oboegbulem and Onwura (2011) stated that effective communication occurs when the sender and receiver of a message have same understanding of the content of the message. In other words, there must be a relation between the sender and the receiver of the message through appropriate channels that will cause the person to respond. The researcher sees, channel of communication as the recognized methods through which message is transmitted in an organization (school). It could be formal or informal channel which can be vertical, horizontal, downward, upward or diagonal as well as one or two – way communication. The school management should recognize these channels of communication for effective communication in the school.

Management is the effective organization and utilization of human and material resources in a particular system for the achievement of identified objectives (Ogunu, 2000). From the researcher's view, management is the act of purposeful action of planning, organizing, directing, communicating and controlling quote human and material resources to achieve the educational goals. In secondary school management, effectiveness of communication promotes the school efficiency and helps in achieving the educational goals of the school.

Secondary school education, according to National Policy on Education (2004) is the education children receive after primary education and before tertiary stage. According to National Policy on Education (2004), the objectives of secondary education are to provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades, develop and promote Nigeria languages, art and culture, inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence, foster National unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unites us in our diversity, among others. These objectives can arrived at through staff development programme, teaching, research and distribution of knowledge and inter-school cooperation which involves a lot of communication.

Secondary school functions depend on the effectiveness of communication among those concerned. The basic function of school management relies almost completely on communicating teachers and students among various school structures and levels. Other function include – assigning specific duties to all the staff working under him, seeing that everyone performs their duties satisfactorily, maintaining discipline among staff, orientation of new staff, developing sound personnel policies, contributing to the professional development of the staff, consideration of students needs, interest and right, imitating school curriculum design and reform, maintenance of moral tone and satisfactory disciplinary standards among the pupils, developing guidance services for the students,

maintaining a good system of account, maintaining good public relations with the parents and community and promoting school community relations. The ability of the school management to perform these functions effectively depends on their communication skills, Manafa (2016). Communication skill is the competency to communicate information exactly, clearly and as intended. It is also how one gives and receives information and transfer ones ideas and opinions with people around. Communication skills entails speaking appropriately to people while maintaining good eye contact, eloquent speech with tailored language, listening effectively, writing clearly with concise language, being confident, friendliness, empathy, use of question, open mindedness and presenting your ideas appropriately. The school management is expected to be competent in all these communication skills and at the same time be aware of their non-verbal behavior and be skillful of “reading” their subordinates.

Improper use of communication skills among secondary school principal pose a lot of negative effect in school management, which cause educational goals misplacement and creates impediment in teaching and learning processes. This most times leads to poor enhancement of teaching and learning in secondary schools. It also brings about conflicts between the principals and vice principals, and also vice principal writing petition against the activities of principal. Okezue (2001), noted that communication gap resulted in misunderstand rumour, and counter-rumour, mistrust in schools administrations, lack of unity of purpose and suspicious among staff, which resulted in lack of commitment by the staff, lower standard of education, wastage in school management low morale, frustration among staff and indiscipline among staff and students. It is on this ground that the researcher was moved to investigate communication skills needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of Problem

Education is an instrument for national development and its success or failure is dependent upon the communication skills used in management. However effective communication skills are virtually indispensable in the management of secondary schools, since no rational educational objectives can be achieved without effective flow of communication among the system. Poor usage of communication skills in secondary schools in Anambra State has been a great concern to the school management and members of staff. It seems the problem has brought about decline in standard of education and poor quality of educational performances in Nigeria secondary schools especially in Anambra State.

It seems that most school principals refuse to have listening ears to the members of staff and also not competent to use clear and brief and straight forward language while giving out informing, there by bringing confusion, tension and conflicts in the school. It was observed from the above statement that in most secondary schools, communication skills are not properly used while performing management functions. This has resulted to inefficiencies in management. The problem of this study therefore is what are the communication skills needed for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the communication skills needed by the school principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the management of secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Find out the communication skills needed by principals for the effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:-

1. What are the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the management of secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the communication skills needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and vice principals on the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the management of secondary schools in Anambra State.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and vice principals on the communication skills needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted by the researcher. Ali (2006) defines, descriptive survey design as documenting or description of events in its natural phenomena without any manipulation of what is being observed. This is considered appropriate for this study because the study involved collecting data or information directly from the respondents on the communication skills needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra state. The population of the study was all the 103 principals and 103 vice principals in the public secondary schools in Onitsha, Otuocha and Aguata Education zones, which is 31 schools, 24 schools, and 48 schools respectively, making it a total of 206 respondents. There was no sampling due to the manageable size of the population.

A self developed instrument by the researcher titled “Communication Skill Questionnaire (CSQ) was used for the data collection. Three expert validated the instrument, two experts from Education Management and one from measurement and evaluation units of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbaram Campus. Their corrections and suggestions were used to produce the final instrument. The instrument had two sections, sections A and B. Section A inquired information on personnel data of the respondents. Section B had two clusters A and B, each addressing the research questions of the study and contains structural items. The response option of the items were structured on a 4 point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), = 4 points, Agree (A) =3 points, Disagree (D)= 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point.

The instrument was trial tested using 10 principals and 10 vice principals from Imo State. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81 using Cronbach Alfa formula. Two hundred and six copies of the questionnaire were distributed with the help of three research assistants. However, two hundred (200) copies were retrieve giving a percentage returned rate of 97.1%. Mean and standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to analyze the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Criterion mean of 2.5 and above was accepted as indicator of agree, while mean scores below the criterion mean was an indicator of disagree.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Standard Deviation Scores on the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Item	Problems caused by poor usage of communication skills	Principals = 100			Vice principals= 100		
		X	SD	DEC	X	SD	DEC
1.	Causes low standard of Education and hinders educational policy implementation in secondary schools	2.68	0.85	A	2.52	0.83	A
2.	Brings about mistrust, suspicion, role conflict, and misunderstanding in the school	2.83	0.94	A	2.51	0.79	A
3.	It brings in lack of unity of purpose and indiscipline in the school	2.77	0.84	A	2.31	0.92	D
4.	Leads to tension and lack of commitment by the staff in the school	2.51	0.88	A	2.33	0.91	D
5.	Results to staff withdrawal transfer and mismanagement of school finances in secondary school	2.66	0.91	A	2.55	0.86	A
Grand Mean		2.69	0.88	A	2.44	0.86	D

Table 1 above showed the data analyzed regarding the responses of the principals and vice principals in Post Primary Schools Services Commission Onitsha Zone on problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in secondary schools. The data revealed that all the items under principals are above the criterion mean of 2.50 ranging from 2.51 to 2.83 showing that they agreed unanimously on the stated items as problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in secondary schools. The vice principals agreed on items 1, 2 and 5 and disagreed on items 3 and 4 with their mean ranged from 2.31 to 2.55. The cluster mean for principals was 2.69 while the cluster mean for vice principals was 2.44.

generally, the respondents agreed that these are problems caused by poor usage of communication skills.

Table 2

Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation scores on the communication skills needed by principals for the effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Items	Communication skills needed by Principals	Principals = 100			V. principals = 100		
		X	SD	DEC	X	SD	DEC
6.	Adequate use of inter-personal communication, eg eye contact while discussing and fact-to-face communication eg meetings	2.54	1.06	A	2.51	1.00	A
7.	Adequate use of verbal communication like sound, language, tone-of voice.	2.71	0.98	A	2.55	0.91	A
8.	Always make use of active listening and hearing skill inorder to reduce misunderstanding and enhance school management	2.63	0.81	A	2.88	1.00	A
9.	Often use open-ended question when in doubt to get information	2.53	0.94	A	2.59	0.96	A
10.	Constant use of non-verbal and writing skills with clear, and concise language	2.55	1.03	A	2.57	1.00	A
	Grand Mean	2.59	0.96	A	2.62	0.97	A

The data in table 2 shows that all the items fall within 2.51 and 2.88 which are indicators of agree with standard deviation of 0.96 and 0.97 for principals and vice principals respectively. This shows that good communication skills are needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: t-test analysis of principals and vice principals on the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills by principals in the management of secondary schools.

Source of variation	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Prob-level	t-Cal	t-Crit	Decision
Principal	100	2.69	0.88	198	0.05	2.08	1.96	Rejected
V. Principal	100	2.44	0.86					

The table above showed the calculated t-value of 2.08 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom with the critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value is more than the critical value, thus, the null hypothesis is therefore, rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of principals and vice principals on the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the secondary school in Anambra State.

Table 4: t-test analysis of principals and vice principals on the communication skills needed by principals in the management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Source of variation	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Prob-level	t-Cal	t-Crit	Decision
Principal	100	2.59	0.96	198	0.05	0.23	1.96	Accepted
V. Principal	100	2.62	0.97					

The result of data analysis in table 4 reveals the calculated t-value of 0.23 at 0.5 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom with the critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value is less than the critical value, thus, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. Thus there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and vice principals on the communication skills needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Results

The result of the study in table 1 revealed that there are problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in secondary school which include low standard of education, hinders implementation of educational policies, brings about mistrust, suspicion, role conflict and misunderstanding in schools, lack of unity of purpose and indiscipline in schools, leads to tension and lack of commitment by the staff and results to staff withdrawal, transfer and mismanagement of school finance. This is in line with the opinion of Ndu, Ocho and Okeke (1997), that inability to use communication skills effectively, by school administrators causes problems such as poor quality of education and low productivities of workers. They maintained that this causes poor management of secondary

schools and would create environment which are injurious and unhealthy to the school management.

The result of the test of the first hypothesis on the responses of principals and vice principals or problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in secondary schools shows that there is significant difference between the mean scores of principals and vice principals. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

The findings from the analysis of research question two as shown in table 2 revealed the communication skills that are needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools. The findings showed that constant use of eye contact and face-to-face communication, adequate use of verbal communication, making use of active listening and hearing always, often use of open ended question and constant use of non-verbal and writing are the communication skills needed for effective management of secondary schools. Supporting the findings Miller (2006) opined that communication skills like face-to-face meetings, planning of information, dialogue, use of questions during discussion be further developed among members of the school system. This finding is also in line with Wagne, Cecil and Tarter (2013) who stated that school administrators give suggestions, ask questions and stimulate participation, encourage alternative suggestions and demonstrate a desire for a group to reach its own conclusion. Hypothesis 2 showed there was no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and vice principals on the communication skills needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State.

Conclusion

Usage of good communication skill is the means by which organized activity is unified in the school. It also enhances the morale of staff and make them more productive and relevant in the pursuant of school objective. Therefore these communication skills are needed in the schools for effective management of the school.

Recommendations

In view of forgoing, the researcher recommended the following for effective management of secondary schools.

1. Use of clear and concise language in disseminating information by the principals should help reduce misunderstanding and role – conflict in schools.
2. Constant use of face-to-face communication like meetings by the principals will help create a conducive learning environment in the school for effective management of secondary schools.
3. Principals should try as much as possible to be active listeners and learn when and how to use questions effectively in order to encourage staff participation in school management.

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