

PRINCIPALS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN ILORIN-WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study looked into the communication skills of secondary school principals for administrative effectiveness in the Ilorin-West Local Government Area (LGA). The researchers used a descriptive survey design. Two research questions and a null hypothesis served as its guiding principles. The study's sample included 40 principals from the Ilorin-West LGA. Data were gathered using a tool created by the researchers called the Communication Skills Questionnaire (CSQ). Two experts from the Education Management units of Al-hikmah University, Ilorin validated the instrument. The reliability was established using the test-retest approach, which produced a coefficient using the Cronbach Alpha method of 0.81 correlations. The data was examined using the mean and standard deviation. The examination of the data indicated that issues resulting from inadequate communication skills include low educational standards, difficulties implementing educational policies, misunderstandings, and a lack of harmony among the objectives of the school. These findings led to certain recommendations, including the use of clear, concise language by principals, regular face-to-face communication, and attentive listening on the part of principals.

Keywords: Communication skills, administrative effectiveness, principals, effective communication.

Introduction

One of the most important components of human existence is communication, which is still essential for every organization, including schools, to achieve its stated goals and objectives. Any organization can gain from better communication since it fosters a greater sense of mutual understanding between staff members and the leaders. Effective communication abilities increase employee involvement and commitment in the organization, which leads to greater results.

Ndum (2013) defines communication as the effective transmission of a common knowledge among people by speaking, writing, or other means. He believed that unless perfect understanding is attained as a result of the transmission of verbal or nonverbal signals, communication has not taken place. According to Abanyam (2001), the employment of an effective and efficient communication system is essential for the proper operation of an administrative organization. Even if policies and programs were changed, he stated that the administrative system would still not work effectively until all organization members were made aware of the organization's goal (the school). Experts claim that people use communication as a means of exchanging ideas, emotions, and messages with one another.

Communication is essential in a school or educational system. Communication is crucial for the smooth coordination of the school's activities and operations. The school's administrator, the principal, has a large network of connections. In addition to the broader public and the community, he speaks with parents, students, teachers, and other staff members (Udoh, 2019). The means of communication are the actions that make up the communication process (Udeze, 2005). According to Yalokwu (2002), communication consists of four elements: the sender, the message, the channel, and the recipient. These elements of communication have an impact on its effectiveness. Any of these components that have problems may lead to ineffective communication. Oboegbulem and Onwura (2011) contend that effective communication occurs when the message's sender and recipient have a similar comprehension of the message's key points. In other words, a relationship between the sender and the recipient of the communication must exist through the appropriate channels in order for someone to respond. The researcher believes that message transmission through channels of communication is the standard practice in an organization (school). It could be a one- or two-way, vertical, horizontal, downhill, upward, or diagonal channel that is formal or informal. The top administrators should be aware of all available lines of communication in order to ensure effective communication inside the institution.

According to Ogunu (2000), management is the artful arrangement and use of human and material resources within a given system for the achievement of particular objectives. According to the researchers, management is a conscious process that involves organizing, planning, directing, communicating, and regulating all material and human resources in order to achieve educational goals. Effective communication promotes school efficiency and helps the institution achieve its educational goals in secondary school management.

National Policy on Education (2004) defined secondary school education as the education pupils get after elementary school but before pursuing higher education. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), secondary education's objectives include providing all primary school graduates with the opportunity to pursue higher education, training people in sub-professional levels of applied science, technology, and commerce, developing and promoting Nigerian languages, art, and culture, inspiring students to strive for excellence and self-improvement, and fostering national unity. These objectives can be met by putting a staff development program in place, teaching, conducting research, and sharing knowledge. They can also be met through cooperating with other schools, which calls for substantial communication.

The efficiency of communication between stakeholders is crucial to secondary school operations. The primary responsibility of school administrators is to communicate with instructors and students at different levels and within different school systems. Some of his responsibilities include establishing sound personnel policies, advancing the staff's professional development, assigning specific tasks to each employee under his supervision, overseeing how well they are all performing those tasks, upholding staff discipline, assisting with new hire orientation, considering the needs, interests, and rights of students, modeling school curriculum design and reform, maintaining a moral tone, and upholding satisfactory disciplinary standards. According to Manafa (2016), the effectiveness of the school administrators' performance of these duties depends on their communication abilities.

Communication skill is the capacity to convey information precisely, clearly, and as intended. It also serves as a tool of sharing ideas, facts, and opinions with those close to one. Effective communication includes being confident, friendly, empathic, using questions, being open-minded, speaking to people in an appropriate way while maintaining eye contact, listening intently, speaking clearly and concisely in writing, and presenting your ideas in an appropriate manner. All of these communication abilities, as well as being aware of nonverbal clues and adept at "understanding" their subordinates, are prerequisites for school administrators.

The management of secondary schools can be severely hampered by the inefficient use of principals' interpersonal skills, which results in the misalignment of educational goals and impedes the teaching and learning processes. This frequently has a detrimental effect on secondary school teaching and learning. According to Okon (2008), poor communication breeds misunderstandings, rumors and counter-rumors, distrust of school administrations, a lack of employee commitment, ineffective school management, low morale, and indiscipline among staff and students. The researchers were inspired to investigate the communication skills needed by secondary school principals in the Kwara state local government of Ilorin-West as a result of this.

Statement of the Problem

The ability of the administrators to communicate determines whether education will be successful or unsuccessful as an instrument for fostering national development. However, effective communication skills are practically necessary in secondary school administration because no rational educational objectives can be attained without an effective communication system. The insufficient usage of communication skills in secondary schools in the state of Kwara worries both the administration of the schools and the staff personnel. It appears that the problem has caused a decline in educational standards and poor academic performance in secondary schools throughout Nigeria, especially in the Ilorin-West LGA.

The majority of school administrators seem to be ineffective listeners and are unable to instruct staff members in a clear, succinct, and direct manner, which results in confusion, tension, and conflicts in the classroom. According to the aforementioned claim, most secondary schools fail to effectively utilize communication skills for management responsibilities. Ineffective management has resulted from this. The major focus of the study is to investigate the association between secondary school principals' communication skills and administrative success in the Ilorin-West local government.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the principals' communication skills and administrative effectiveness in secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the administration of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.
2. Examine the communication skills needed by principals for the effective administration of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.
3. Examine the relationship between principals' communication skills and administrative effectiveness of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.

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 administration of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA?
2. What are the communication skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA?

Hypothesis

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

Ho: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication skills and administrative effectiveness of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.

Methodology

The researchers opted for a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design, according to Ali (2006), captures or characterizes events in the context of natural phenomena without altering what is being observed. This is deemed appropriate for this study since it involved conducting in-person interviews with respondents to get information regarding the communication skills needed by secondary school principals in the Ilorin-West LGA. 40 secondary school principals from the Ilorin-West LGA were randomly chosen as the survey's population, totaling 40 responses.

Data were gathered using a self-created instrument by the researchers called the "Communication Skill Questionnaire" (CSQ). Two experts from the Education Management units of Al-hikmah University, Ilorin validated the instrument. Their changes and suggestions were used to help develop the final instrument. The instrument was divided into two halves, A and B. The respondents' personnel information was questioned in Part A. Section B had two clusters, A and B, each of which contained structural elements and addressed a particular research question. Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) were each assigned 4 points, 3 points, 2 points, and 1 point, respectively, for their respective response options on a 4-point Likert scale.

Using five randomly selected principals, the item was trial tested. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81 using the Cronbach's Alfa formula. The forty questionnaires were distributed with the help of one study assistant. Nevertheless, entire copies were retrieved, resulting in a return rate of 100%. At the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was examined using mean and standard deviation, and the study questions were addressed using the t-test. Mean scores below the criterion mean were considered an indicator of disagreement, but a criteria mean of 2.5 and above was recognized as an indicator of agreement.

Results

Research Question I:

What are the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the administration of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Standard Deviation Scores on the problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in the administration of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.

Item Problems caused by poor usage of communication skills. Principals = 40

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
causes a low level of knowledge and prevents secondary schools from implementing educational policies	40	3	4	3.80	.405
creates a climate of distrust, suspicion, conflict between roles, and misunderstanding in the classroom	40	2	4	3.85	.427
It results in a lack of focus and indiscipline in the classroom.	40	3	4	3.85	.362
causes conflict and a lack of commitment on the part of the staff at the school	40	4	4	4.00	.000
Results of staff turnover, financial mismanagement, and employee withdrawal in secondary schools	40	3	4	3.95	.221
Valid N (listwise)	40				

Table 1 above showed the data analysed regarding the responses of the principals in secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA 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 3.80 to 4.00 showing that they agreed unanimously on the stated items as problems caused by poor usage of communication skills in secondary schools. Generally, the respondents agreed that these are problems caused by poor usage of communication skills.

Research Question II:

What are the communication skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation scores on the communication skills needed by principals for the effective management of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.

Items: Communication skills needed by Principals. Principals =40

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adequate use of interpersonal communication, such as making eye contact with others while speaking and meeting in person,	40	2	4	3.65	.580
Adequate verbal communication, including voice tone, language, and sound.	40	1	4	3.65	.662

Always utilize active listening and hearing techniques to avoid misunderstandings and improve administration management.	40	3	4	3.88	.335
When in doubt, utilize open-ended questions to elicit information.	40	1	4	3.00	1.132
using nonverbal communication techniques and writing in a clear, precise manner constantly	40	1	4	3.60	.841
Valid N (listwise)	40				

All of the items in table 2's data are within the range of 3.00 and 3.65, which corresponds to indicators of agreement with standard deviations of 0.2 and 1.1. This demonstrates that excellent communication skills are necessary for principals in secondary schools in the Ilorin-West LGA.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication skills and administrative effectiveness of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA.

Table 3: Relationship between principals' communication skills and administrative effectiveness of secondary schools in Ilorin-West LGA

		Correlations	
		communic ation skill	administrative effectiveness
communication skill	Pearson Correlation	1	.915**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Administrative effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.915**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From Table 3, the calculated p-value 0.000 is less than the set p-value 0.05 for 38 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that a significant relationship existed between principals' communication skills and administrative effectiveness of secondary schools in Ilorin-west LGA of Kwara State.

Discussion of Findings

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 Ndu, Ocho, and Okeke's (1997) assertion that school administrators' ineffective communication skills contribute to issues like low worker productivity and poor educational quality. They argued that this leads to subpar secondary school management and will foster a climate that is harmful and unhealthy for school administration.

The results of the analysis of research question two, which are presented in table 2, showed that efficient secondary school administration requires principals to have strong communication abilities. The results indicated that the communication skills required for efficient administration of secondary schools are constant non-verbal and written communication, constant eye contact and face-to-face interaction, adequate verbal communication, constant active listening and hearing, frequent use of open-ended questions, and constant use of non-verbal and written communication. Miller (2006) agreed with the findings and suggested that the school system members further strengthen their communication skills, such as face-to-face meetings, information planning, dialogue, and the use of questions during discussion. This result is also consistent with the findings of Wagne, Cecil, and Tarter (2013), who claimed that school administrators enhance group decision-making by offering suggestions, posing questions, and encouraging involvement.

The results of the hypothesis revealed no appreciable variation in the principals' average scores on the communication abilities crucial to their ability to lead secondary schools in Kwara state's Ilorin-west LGA.

Conclusion

The management of secondary schools can be severely hampered by the inefficient use of principals' communication abilities, which results in the misalignment of educational goals and impedes the teaching and learning processes. However, the means by which structured activity is unified in the school is through the use of effective communication skills. Additionally, it raises staff morale, which increases their productivity and relevance in achieving school goals. As a result, great communication skills are required in schools for school administration.

Recommendations

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

1. The principals' use of precise, succinct language when communicating information could assist lessen misunderstanding and role-conflict in schools.
2. Principals should hold regular meetings and other face-to-face interactions to maintain an environment that is conducive to learning in secondary schools.
3. To encourage staff participation in school administration, principals should make every effort to listen intently and learn when and how to ask good questions.

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