

Assesment Of Principals' Communication Styles And Administrative Impact On Secondary Schools In Osun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study identified the communication styles adopted by principals in secondary schools in the study area. The study employed survey research design. The study population consisted of 6,922 secondary school teachers and 466 principals in Osun State while the sample for the study consisted of 720 teachers and 36 principals. From the 30 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the State, nine LGAs were selected using simple random sampling technique. From each of the nine LGAs, four schools were selected also using simple random sampling technique. The principal and twenty teachers were selected from each of the 36 schools using simple random sampling technique. Two instruments were used for the study, namely; 'Principals' Communication Styles Questionnaire for Principals (PCSQP) which was used to elicit information on principals' communication styles and 'Principals' Communication Styles Questionnaire for Teachers (PCSQT) was also used to elicit information on principals' communication styles. Data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The results showed that the common communication styles adopted by secondary school principals in Osun State were inclusive, open and assertive communication styles in that order. The results further showed that only a few secondary school principals adopted aggressive communication style in their various schools. The study concluded that principals' communication styles play important roles in the smooth running of schools as well as enhancing school effectiveness. The study recommended that secondary school principals should be encouraged to adopt communication styles that will enhance smooth administration of their schools.

Keywords: Communication, communication style, inclusive communication style, open communication style, assertive communication style and aggressive communication style.

Introduction

Communication system in schools and other organisations can be likened to blood in human beings. No administrative functions can be carried out in schools without good and effective communication. Secondary school principals plan, organise, control, coordinate and perform other related administrative functions through communication. According to Stephen (2011), communication is a critical factor in directing and mobilizing the workforce towards the accomplishment of the organizational goals and objectives. It is the vehicle through which the basic management and administrative functions are carried out. It can therefore be said that without effective communication between and among schools' stakeholders, the achievement of goals and objectives of such a school could be impossible. Communication in schools takes place between and among principals, teaching and non-teaching staff, students as well as other stakeholders. The goals of schools are shared by the principals (who are the main managers of secondary schools) with relevant individuals within the school system through communication. Not only this, the management of human, material, time and information which are the main resources in schools cannot be effectively and efficiently utilised without effective communication. It could therefore be said that good and effective communication is pivotal to the achievement of educational goals in schools. For better communication in a school, the principal must first conceive ideas and relate such ideas to his staff and other stakeholders. He is responsible for sharing visions and useful information needed for the smooth running of the school, transfer ideas

and feelings to enhance the collaborative support of all individuals within the school. Communication is thus important in schools because it constitutes one of the chief means by which staff work together, and also helps to hold the school together by making it possible for members to influence one another and to react to one another, all in the bid to achieve educational goals. In schools, communication takes place at all times and in various ways. However, principals adopt certain styles when they communicate and these communication styles to a great extent could determine the effectiveness of a school system. The styles that a principal adopts in coordinating the affairs of a school could go a long way in either increasing or decreasing the morale of staff members. Good and effective principals' communication styles enhance smooth running of schools which also helps in the realisation of the set goals and objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Communication and Communication Style

Communication is essential for the exchange of information between people. The word communication has been derived from the Latin word "Communicare" meaning to share. Communication can therefore be defined as the process of sharing information, ideas, images, attitude, feelings and facts between the source (the sender) who conveys desired meaning to the receiver and causes desired response behaviour from the receiver. Keyton (2011)

defined communication as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. He derived this definition from another Latin word “communis” which means common. The definition underscores the fact that unless a common understanding results from the exchange of information, there is no communication. This common understanding can be achieved through effective feedback. Aribisala (2006) defined communication as a two-way process of reaching mutual understanding in which participants not only exchange (encode and decode) information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning. Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another. It is the exchange of information between people by means of speaking, writing, or using a common system of signs or behaviour (Encarta, 2010). Communication is a symbolic, verbal, or written message, exchange of information between two or more people. According to Koontz and Wehrich (2004), communication as a transfer of information, is the means by which organizational activities are unified. It is seen as the means by which behaviour is modified, change is effected, information is made productive, and goals are achieved. It is also important to state that communication is the vehicle through which information relevant to decisions is transferred. It is crucial to the implementation of decisions and programmes in any organisation like schools. Communication in whatever form is goal directed in school. It is broadly intended to secure performance at all levels and effect implementation of decisions and achievement of organizational goals. Communication as an inter-personal process serves a number of organizational functions as: the expression of emotion; the motivation of behaviour and performance; the transmitter of technical information required for decision-making; and the control of organisations’ activities. This transfer of information, ideas, goals and visions in schools are done by principals and different principals have different styles of communication. Norton (1978) defined a communication style as the way a person uses verbal and non-verbal communicative behaviour to indicate how literally others should interpret a message. De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, Siberg, Gamenen, & Vlug (2009) considered Norton’s definition very narrow and not sufficient to capture the concept, so they added other dimensions. They defined a communication style as a distinguishing way an individual transmits verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal indicator in social interactions to present the identity he or she has or want to (or appear to) have, the way he or she relates with people and the way his or her message should be understood . Reece, Brandt, & Howie (2010) viewed a communication style as the method by which one negotiates situations involving others. It is a distinctive way and mode of action by which one usually behaves when exchanging information, ideas, and emotions with others. It can also be seen as the kind of attitudes and characters that individuals portray to other people when having conversation with them. Thomson (2004) defined communication style as a way of thinking and behaving. To him, communication style is not the ability but instead a preferred way of using the abilities one has in communication. This distinction is very important, as ability or skill refers to how well someone can do something, while a style refers to how someone does

something. From the above definitions of communication style, it is evident that different authors and researchers have different ways they perceive the term communication style. But one thing that is common to all the perspectives is that, communication style deals essentially with the method and pattern of communication of an individual. This study focuses on four communication styles as they are identified by (Ezenwekwe, 2013; Sherman, 2015). These are open communication style, inclusive communication style, aggressive communication style and assertive communication style. An open communication style is a style of communication in which the leader consciously creates an atmosphere where all individuals within an organization express their views and opinions on issues affecting the running of the organization. In other words, a leader (secondary school principal) with an open communication style provides necessary information that will help and allow all workers in the school to perform optimally and maximally. Such leader also creates rooms for effective feedback and constructive criticism when and where necessary in order for the organization to achieve its set goals and objectives. This type of communication style encourages all staff to pour out their minds on school policies and issues affecting their jobs in the school. The style allows school principals to see teachers not only as workers but as human beings whose views and opinions must be heard and respected for the progress of the school. An inclusive communication style is another style that can be adopted by principals in schools. It is one in which leaders (secondary school principals) ensure that all staff members in the school feel free to get involved in the decisions that affect their day- to- day activities (Barnlund, 2008). This means that a school with an inclusive communication style welcomes contributions from within and outside the school. Since it has been noted that no school principal can work alone to achieve educational goals in a school, it is therefore imperative for school principals to involve all stakeholders (especially teachers) in decision making process in schools. This is so important, as a school has been regarded as an open system that depends on input from both internal and external environments (Scott, 2008). Another communication style is assertive style. Being assertive means being able to stand up for your own or other people’s rights in a calm and positive way without being either aggressive or passively accepting ‘wrong’. Assertiveness means standing up for your personal rights - expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways (Sherman, 2015). A school principal who engages in assertive communication is open to hearing the opinions of others and feels comfortable enough to express his own opinions as well. He has high self-esteem, as he has the confidence to effectively communicate with others without getting offended or being manipulative. While engaging in a conversation, he states limits and expectations, states observations without judging, he is an active listener, and checks on others’ feelings. Other characteristics associated with principals with assertive style are: stating needs and wants clearly, appropriately and respectfully, expressing feelings clearly, appropriately and respectfully, listening well without interrupting, being in control of self, having good eye contact, speaking in calm and clear tone, feeling connected to others, not allowing others to abuse or manipulate them, and creating a respectful environment for

everyone (Benedict, 2015). Generally speaking, one can conclude that open, inclusive and assertive communication styles can be regarded as a democratic communication style. The style rests on the idea that members of a school or their representatives are duly communicated and duly involved in decision making. This style of communication of the leader according to Lussier (2010) is characterised by cooperation, democratic and political language, delegation of duty and authority and two-way communication. It is also characterized by respect for everybody's opinions and ideas. Democratic communication style according to Fashiku (1997) makes the subordinates to be efficient, effective and dynamic in goal achievement of the organisation. Aggressive communication style can also be used by principals in sharing their ideas, goals and visions among teachers in schools. An aggressive communication style is one in which individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others. Thus, aggressive communicators are verbally and /or physically abusive (Adubato, 2014). A school principal who uses aggressive communication style creates a win-lose situation and uses intimidation to get his own needs met, often at the expense of others. In addition, he feels a strong sense of inadequacy, has lack of empathy and believes the only way to get their needs met is through power and control. He is usually close-minded, a poor listener and tends to monopolise discussions. He is a fault finder, tries to dominate others, uses humiliation to control others, criticises, blames or attacks others, has low frustration tolerance, speaks in a loud, demanding and overbearing voice, acts threateningly and rudely. It is worth noting that aggressive communication style has a bearing with autocratic communication style. A school principal that uses autocratic communication style dictates policies and procedures, decides what goals are to be achieved, directs and controls all activities without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. The style is characterized by domination and overconcentration of power in the hands of the leader. Autocratic communication style is always downwards in flow and with the use of commanding tone. Messages in this style of communication come with order that must be obeyed by the subordinates without any question. No use of personal initiative in the work place is allowed and no group inspired decision is allowed. Such a leader stays aloof from the group and hence takes decisions alone and assigns tasks to members when necessary without seeking their interest or opinions (Fashiku, 1997).

Empirical Review

Solaja, Faremi, and Adesina (2015) made an investigation on the relationship between leadership communication style, personality trait and organizational productivity. The results of the study revealed that there are ten different communication styles that can be adopted by leaders in an organisation. These styles are: dominant style, dramatic style, contentious style, animated style, impression-leaving style, relaxed style, attentive style, open style, friendly style and precise style. The study concluded that impression-leaving, attentive, open, friendly and precise communication styles promote high level of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, inclusion into work setting, acceptance of responsibility and positive subordinate. It added that dominant, contentious, animated, relaxed

communication styles lead to poor organizational commitment, dissatisfaction, resistance to change, distrust and judgmental attitudes in work place. The study recommended that managers should employ good leadership communication styles when disseminating information in order to increase the job commitment of workers which could lead to increase in productivity. Guo, Li and Wu (2015) carried out an empirical study on effects of leaders' verbal communication style on employees' job satisfaction. The results of the study showed that autocratic verbal communication style and supportive verbal communication style can be used by leaders in different organisations. The study concluded that autocratic verbal communication style leads to low job satisfaction while supportive verbal communication style results in high job satisfaction. The study suggested that leaders should use more of supportive communication style in order to keep the satisfaction of employees high. Ezenwekwe (2013) carried out a research on teacher-principal communication patterns as correlates of effective school administration in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. The study identified the communication patterns or styles that are commonly used by public secondary school principals in the State. These are open, inclusive, two-way, result driven and multi-channel communication patterns. The result concluded that schools where these styles are used are better managed and that the styles contribute to increase in teachers' job satisfaction. The study recommended that secondary school principals should adopt more of these styles for the achievement of overall objectives of secondary schools in the State. The findings of this study support the submission of (Guo, Li & Wu 2015; Solaja, Faremi, & Adesina 2015; Fashiku 2016; Ezenwekwe 2013), who all submitted that democratic and autocratic communication styles have great impacts on the administration of any organisation which may also affect job commitment and job performance of workers. It can therefore be concluded from these studies that, the effectiveness and efficiency or the smooth running of any organization including schools rely heavily on the communication styles of the leader of such an organisation. It is also worthy of note that the communication style of any leader determines his/ her leadership style which in turn could also determine the job performance of workers and the extent to which the organisation will achieve its set goals (Fashiku, 2016) For effective administration of secondary schools therefore, principals must be aware of various communication styles that can be adopted in their schools and what the effects of each style may be on staff's job satisfaction, job commitment and over all smooth running of secondary schools. This is important because the management of human and material resources may be difficult without effective leaders' communication styles.

Research Question

1. Which communication styles are commonly adopted by secondary school principals in Osun State, Nigeria?

METHODS

The descriptive research design was employed for this study. The population for the study comprised 6,922 secondary school teachers and 466 principals in Osun State. The sample for this study consisted of 756 respondents

using multistage sampling procedure. Simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of three Local Government Areas (LGAs) from the three senatorial districts of the State, and four schools from each of the LGAs. The principal of each of the 36 schools was selected using purposive sampling technique. Twenty teachers were selected from each of the 36 schools using simple random sampling technique. Two adapted instruments from (De Vries et al., 2009) were used for the study; the instruments were titled; Principals' Communication Styles Questionnaire for Principals (PCSQP) which was used to elicit information on principals' communication styles and Principals' Communication Styles Questionnaire for Teachers (PCSQT) which was also used to elicit

information on principals' communication styles as well. The research instruments were made up of two sections 'A' and 'B' respectively. Part A of each section elicited information on the respondents' demographic data while part B contained sets of questions on the variables of the study. Section B was rated on four-point Likert scales of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree. Both validity and reliability of the instruments were done to ensure the appropriateness of the instruments. The reliability co-efficient of 0.75 was obtained for the study. The research questionnaire were personally administered by the researcher. The research questions raised were answered using frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1: Principals' Responses to Communication Styles Adopted in Secondary Schools in Osun State

VARIABLES	Adoption of Communication Style by Principals	
	Adopted	Not Adopted
	N=36	
TYPES OF COMMUNICATION STYLES	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Aggressive Communication Style		
Use of threats to motivate teachers to work	0 (0.0)	36 (100.0)
Use of obscene language when relating with teachers	5 (13.9)	31 (86.1)
Easily find faults in whatever teachers do	5 (13.9)	31 (86.1)
Display of anger when displeases by teachers' actions	5 (13.9)	31 (86.1)
Transfer of aggression when things are not happening as expected	0 (0.0)	36 (100.0)
Dislike being confronted by teachers in a general meeting	0 (0.0)	36 (100.0)
Use query and derogatory words when teachers make mistakes on the job	5 (13.9)	31 (86.1)
Assertive Communication Style		
Fluency in the clarification of ideas	26 (72.2)	10 (27.8)
Clearly express a chain of thought during argument of a point	21 (58.3)	15 (41.7)
Taking the lead in a conversation in the school	5 (13.9)	31 (86.1)
Standing for the rights in school when necessary	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)
Determines the direction of conversation in a meeting	10 (27.8)	26 (72.2)
Giving concise and unambiguous messages to teachers	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)
Respecting the rights and dignity of teachers in the school	26 (72.2)	10 (27.8)
Open Communication Style		
Talk freely with all the teachers	15 (41.7)	21 (58.3)
Teachers are allowed to freely express themselves in meetings	15 (41.7)	21 (58.3)
Teachers feel free to discuss challenges facing them in teaching	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)
Encourage teachers even when students are not performing as expected	21 (58.3)	15 (41.7)
Encourage teachers to give feedback on policies and programs of school	15 (41.7)	21 (58.3)
Showing of concern to teachers' challenges in a professional way	15 (41.7)	21 (58.3)
Often show a lot of understanding for other people's problems	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)
Inclusive Communication Style		
Making opinions counts in day-to-day decision that affect teacher's work	15 (41.7)	21 (58.3)
Inclusion of one or more teachers in the school management	15 (41.7)	21 (58.3)
Principal seeks for teacher's ideas and inputs in school programmes	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)
Showing of admiration for teachers' work	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)
Teachers are allowed to participate in the planning of school work/policy	10 (27.8)	26 (72.2)
Staff are made to be aware and have understanding of all school procedures and policies	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)
Making the school environment comfortable for all the teachers	25 (69.4)	11 (30.6)

Source: Author's Field Work, 2017

Table 2: Teachers' Responses to Communication Styles Adopted by principals in Secondary Schools in Osun State

VARIABLES	Adoption of Communication Style by Principals	
	Adopted	Not Adopted
	N=720	
TYPES OF COMMUNICATION STYLES	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Aggressive Communication Style		
Use of threats to motivate teachers to work	47 (6.5)	673 (93.5)
Use of obscene language when relating with teachers	73 (10.2)	647 (89.8)
Easily find faults in whatever teachers do	55 (7.7)	665 (92.3)
Display of anger when displeases by teachers' actions	112 (15.6)	608 (84.4)
Transfer of aggression when things are not happening as expected	184 (25.6)	536 (74.4)
Dislike being confronted by teachers in a general meeting	187 (26.0)	533 (74.0)
Use query and derogatory words when teachers make mistakes on the job	204 (28.3)	516 (71.7)
Assertive Communication Style		

Fluency in the clarification of ideas	393 (54.6)	327 (45.4)
Clearly express a chain of thoughts during argument of a point	636 (88.3)	84 (11.7)
Taking the lead in conversations in the school	537 (74.6)	183 (25.4)
Standing for the rights in school when necessary	512 (71.1)	208 (28.9)
Determines the direction of conversations in a meeting	522 (72.5)	198 (27.5)
Giving concise and unambiguous messages to teachers	503 (69.8)	217 (30.2)
Respecting the rights and dignity of teachers in the school	580 (80.6)	140 (19.4)
Open Communication Style		
Talk freely with all the teachers	652 (90.6)	68 (9.4)
Teachers are allowed to freely express themselves in meetings	663 (92.1)	57 (7.9)
Teachers feel free to discuss challenges facing them in teaching	676 (93.8)	44 (6.2)
Encourage teachers even when students are not performing as expected	670 (93.1)	50 (6.9)
Encourage teachers to give feedback on policies and programs of school	670 (93.1)	50 (6.9)
Showing of concern to teachers' challenges in a professional way	659 (91.5)	61 (8.5)
Often show a lot of understanding for other people's problems	662 (91.9)	58 (8.1)
Inclusive Communication Style		
Making opinions count in day-to-day decision that affect teachers' work	600 (83.3)	120 (16.7)
Inclusion of one or more teachers in the school management	583 (81.0)	137 (19.0)
Principal seeks for teachers' ideas and inputs in school programmes	667 (92.7)	53 (7.3)
Showing of admiration in teachers' work	674 (93.6)	46 (6.4)
Teachers are allowed to participate in the planning of school work/policy	620 (86.1)	100 (13.9)
Staff members are made to be aware and have understanding of all school procedures and policies	627 (87.1)	93 (12.9)
Making the school environment comfortable for all the teachers	690 (95.8)	30 (4.2)

Source: Author's Field Work, 2017

Table 3: Communication Styles Commonly Used by Secondary School Principals in Osun State, Nigeria.

Commonly used communication styles	N	Common	Percentage
Aggressive	756	98	13
Assertive	756	468	62
Open	756	484	64
Inclusive	756	522	69

In answering the research question, data on the communication styles used by secondary school principals in Osun State, Nigeria were collected from teachers' and principals' responses to the questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The data indicated that inclusive communication style was the most commonly used communication style by principals in secondary schools in Osun State; 522 (69%) respondents gave this response. This was followed by open communication style; 484 (64%) respondents and assertive communication style; 468 (62%) respondents. Only 98 (13%) respondents indicated that aggressive communication style was used by principals in secondary schools in the State.

Discussion

The result of analysis of data on communication styles adopted by secondary school principals in Osun State showed that most of the principals adopted inclusive, open and assertive communication styles. It was shown that principals that adopted inclusive, open and assertive, communication styles respected the opinions of the teachers. Principals allowed teachers to take active part in the decision making in schools. They made teachers aware of what they were meant to do precisely and unambiguously. Above all, they protected their rights and respected the rights of others as well. The response of teachers and principals also indicated that principals rarely used aggressive communication style. In other words; principals in secondary schools in Osun State used more of democratic communication style than autocratic style in their schools. These communication styles adopted by secondary school principals in Osun State will undoubtedly enhance effective administration of

secondary schools in the State. This will in turn lead to the achievement of educational goals and objectives in the State. This corroborates the findings of (Carlijn Van de Linden 2016, Guo, Li & Wu 2015, Shilpee, Damodar & Seema 2012, Solaja, Faremi, & Adesina 2015, Fashiku 2016), who all submitted that democratic communication style enhances effective administration of schools which in turn helps in boosting the morale of staff members in schools.

Conclusion

The study concluded that principals' communication styles play important roles in the smooth running of schools as well as increase in the job commitment and productivity of staff members which will also help in the achievement of educational goals in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to enhance effective administration of secondary schools in Osun State Ministry of Education and All Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS) should organise training on communication skills for effective school administration of school principals. This will expose principals to various communication styles and skills that can be adopted in schools. Secondary school principals in Osun State must carefully choose their communication styles in order to be able to achieve effective communication within the school system. In other words, contingency style of communication should be adopted by them. By this, principals must study teaching and non teaching staff and situations in their schools before adopting communication styles. They must

know when democratic communication style will enhance effective school administration and when to use autocratic communication style for effective administration of their various schools.

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