
COMMUNICATION STYLE TO ENHANCE MANAGEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined communication styles to enhance management of secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 3472 principals and teachers in 252 public secondary schools in Abia State. The sample size of the study was 347 principals and teachers from the selected public secondary schools. 25 principals and 322 teachers formed the sample for the study from 20 public secondary schools used for the study selected using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for the study was a researcher-design questionnaire titled "communication styles for effective secondary school management" (CSESSM)". It had two (2) sections, section A obtained bio data of respondents, while section B comprised 10-items in two clusters which has information on assertive and passive communication styles. The instrument was structured along four-point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The face and content validity of the instrument was done by three (3) experts. Two (2) from the department of educational administration and planning and one (1) from measurement and evaluation unit all from the faculty of education, Abia State university Uturu. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 and 0.82 for the 10 items in two clusters was returned using Cronbach's alpha statistics. Twenty (20) teachers in a secondary school not part of the study was used to determine the reliability. The coefficients returned implied that the instrument was reliable for the study. Data collected was analyzed using the statistical packages for the social sciences (SPSS) mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings from the study revealed that the assertive communication style has a positive impact on the management of secondary and that the passive communication style may inhibit effective management of secondary schools. The study recommended that stakeholders in education should always ensure that there is adequate enlightenment on communication styles that would enhance the management of secondary schools and passive communication style should be effectively excluded from the management of secondary schools as it is very ineffective in getting jobs done.

KEYWORDS: Communication, Communication Style and Management

Introduction

Communication in the classroom is one of the complicated phenomena in education fields and it is the central of classroom activities. The teacher has important roles in the success and the failure of teaching and learning process. Teacher should be communicative as possible in order to make the students understand the instructional content (Suharni & Salija, 2018). Teaching in the classroom is not merely the process of teaching but it is also the reflection of teacher's communication that is determined to their teaching goals to the students. The relationship between teacher and students in the classroom can create positive classroom environment when there is a supportive relationship between them. Because it can offer the chances to students to be motivated and feel engaged in improving the learning process.

Communication is a crucial key in conducting and organizing the targets and objectives of an organization (Okotoni & Akinwale, 2018). A communication system in any organization, like a school, is

very important for the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning (Nwogbo, Nwankwo, & Nwachukwu, 2019). Communication is a process that people use to exchange messages and share feelings and ideas with one another. Communication in the school system usually occurs between teachers, non-tutorial staff members, students, parents, the alumni association, school management, and the wider society. Communication is a basic human need. This is the reason why people choose ways to communicate (Bangayan-Manera, 2019). Excellent communication helps people receive and share information better, define and understand goals, build rapport, promote self-confidence, and avoid the adverse effects of conflict and confusion (Zubaidi, 2014). Communication is the key to the interactions in the process of teaching and learning. How students communicate is vital for a productive teaching-learning process. Communication skills are vital in a classroom setting, which relies heavily on the communication styles of students. Communicating effectively motivates students and facilitates learning.

Communication in the classroom is one of the most complicated phenomena in education, and it is the center of classroom activities. The teacher has important roles in the success and the failure of teaching and learning process. The teacher should be as communicative as possible in order to make the students understand the instructional content (Suharni & Salija, 2018). Teaching in the classroom is not merely the process of teaching but it is also the reflection of teacher's communication that is determined to their teaching goals to the students. The relationship between teacher and students in the classroom can create a positive classroom environment when there is a supportive relationship between them. Because it can offer the chances to students to be motivated and feel engaged in improving the learning process.

Effective communication plays a significant role in motivating the students. Significantly, a teacher should excellently model and assist students in any academic discussion where insights of students are appreciated because low levels of instruction and low-quality classroom interactions result in poor academic performance of the students. Although the main aim of teaching is to bring about learning, not all teaching activities cause learning. Factors such as teachers' personal qualities, physical condition of the classroom, students' interest, and teachers' communication styles interact to bring about meaningful learning (Ogunyemi, 2014).

A communication style is a set of different methods adopted by different people to enhance the level of communication (Khan, Khan, & Zia-Ul-Islam, 2017). The communication style indicates a pattern of how a person organizes his interpersonal relationships and how he interacts in the classroom, while the learning style deals with one's easy and effective way of learning (Suyu-Tattao, 2019). Communication style refers to specific ways of receiving, decoding, processing, interpreting messages, expressing the response, and personal traits of feedback (Urea, 2013). Teacher communication style (TCS) is defined as a teacher's ability to effectively communicate, verbally and nonverbally, with students in order to improve their academic performance and manage their behaviour (Urea, 2013). Teachers should adopt communication styles that promote a positive teacher-student relationship (Ogunyem & Olagbaju, 2020). Asikhia (2010) stated that when a teacher makes unpleasant comments about pupils' performances, it could damage the pupils' egos and self-esteem. Mruk (2013) emphasized that teachers who communicate positively with their learners are likely to be seen as role models by the pupils, thereby providing support that would contribute to the building of positive self-esteem in the students.

Esan (2018) classifies classroom communication styles into four main categories: assertive, aggressive, passive, and passive aggressive. Similarly, Cherry (2019) posited that there are four basic leadership communication styles (passive communication style, assertive communication style, passive-assertive communication style, and aggressive communication style). Assertive communication style is a style which translates into an ability that allows an individual highlight their rights and

legitimacy, respecting all people around them (Ashman & Lawler, 2008). Aggressive communicators are individuals who seek a position of superiority, which is often likened to authoritarianism (CastelFranchi, 2007). An aggressive teacher expresses their feelings and opinions and advocate needs in a way that violates the rights of the students. They are usually verbally and physically abusive; they try to dominate class room interactions, use humiliation to control, and speak in a loud and demanding manner to the learners. They are not good listeners; they blame and react negatively to situations (Jusriati, Nasriandi, & Sari, 2020).

An assertive communicator promotes classroom instructions because teachers using the assertive communication style stand for objectivity while at the same time considering other people's opinions. The assertive style is characterized by the ability of self-assertion, honest and direct approaches in personal speech, accompanied by ability to provide straightforward opinions without aggression and without harm to others, pursuing their interests without violating the others' needs (Urea, 2013). Teachers who engage in assertive communication are open to hearing the opinions of their learners and feel comfortable enough to express their own opinions as well. They have high self-esteem and the confidence to effectively communicate with others without getting offended or being manipulative. While engaging in conversations, they state limits and expectations and make observations without judgment (Okotoni & Akinwale, 2019).

On the other hand, passive communication is a communication style in which individual leaders in schools have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs. Such a leader delivers little or no result when it comes to effective management of people to achieve organizational goals (Kuria, 2019). Passive communicators are those who fail to assert their rights, do not express their opinions and feelings, allow others to infringe on their rights, and are always fidgeting and avoiding eye contact. The passive assertive communicators are described as people who are passive on the surface but are acting out in anger in a subtle and indirect way. These people do not deal directly with situations; they rather employ manipulation to express their feelings. They also use facial expressions that do not match their feelings (Cherry, 2019). Novak (2019) ascertained that their actions are indirect rather than direct and that they refuse to confront others about something that is bothering them.

Nonetheless whatever, communication style the teacher employs in the classroom, it should be such that will be beneficial to learners, ensure smooth classroom interaction, and make teaching and learning effective (Ogunyemi, 2014). Chinenye and Oredein (2022) determined public primary school teachers' job performance in Oyo State. Findings showed that the most adopted communication style is the passive communication style. Only an aggressive communication style among school leaders has a significant relative influence on public primary school teachers' job performance.

Ogunyem and Olagbaju (2020) investigated the effects of assertive and passive communication styles on students' self-esteem and achievement in the English language. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in the self-esteem scores of students taught by assertive and passive teachers in favour of the assertive group, and there was a significant difference in the English language achievement of students taught by assertive and passive teachers in favour of the assertive group.

Mawarni and Khalilahanum (2021) investigated the principals' communication styles and school culture in vocational colleges in Selangor. The findings revealed that most of the dominant communication styles practiced by the principals at vocational colleges in Selangor were assertive communication styles. The results also showed that the level of school culture at vocational colleges in Selangor was high based on three factors: shared leadership and vision, collegial teaching and learning, and professional commitment. Communication is the fulcrum of the teaching and learning process; however, poor communication damns the instructional objectives and inhibits a student's

academic performance. It has been observed that teachers and principals in Abia State make use of any communication style they so desire; this inhibits communication in the schools, making the management of schools hard. To this end, this study sought to investigate communication styles to enhance management of secondary schools in Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

1. Determine how assertive communication style impacts on the management of secondary schools in Abia State.
2. Investigate how passive communication style impacts on the management of secondary schools in Abia State

Research Questions

1. How doe assertive communication style impact on the management of secondary schools in Abia State?
2. How does passive communication style impact on the management of secondary schools in Abia State?

Methods

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population for this study comprised 3472 principals and teachers in the 252 public secondary schools in Abia State. This is made up of 252 principals and 3220 teachers in public secondary schools in the three (3) education zones in Abia State. The sample for the study was comprised 347, made up of 25 principals and 322 teachers who were assigned using stratified random sampling technique. Thus, one education zone (ABA) was used for the study, while 10% of the total population was used for the study, 20 schools in the selected education zone participated in the study. A researcher-designed questionnaire titled “communication styles for effective secondary school management” was used to gather relevant information. The instrument had two sections, A and B, section A contained demographic information of respondents, while section B had information in two clusters on communication styles and school management. The face and content validity of instruent was determined by three experts, two from educational administration and planning and one from measurement and evaluation unit from Abia State university Uturu. The reliability of the 10-item instrument was carried out using thirty teachers who were not part of the study, cronbach’s alpha reliability statistic was used to for the test and an alpha coefficient of 0.84 was obtained which meant that the instrument was reliable for the study. 347 copies of the questionnaire were distributed with the help of five trained research assistants. However, 322 copies of the question were found well filled and worthy for use. Mean and standard deviation was used for the answering of research questions.

Results

Research Question One: How doe assertive communication style impact on the management of secondary schools in Abia State?

Table 1: Assertive communication on management of secondary schools

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev.
ensures clear directives making it possible to get clear instructions to carry out instructions	115 (35.7)	162 (50.3)	30 (9.3)	15 (4.7)	3.17	.780
making use of positive language to direct teachers and students produces better result	156 (48.8)	21 (6.5)	114 (35.4)	31 (9.6)	2.93	1.106
does not make use of threats and blames,	156	28	63	75	2.82	1.259

making easy activities/correction of errors	(48.4)	(8.7)	(19.6)	(23.3)		
respects the rights and dignity of teachers in the school helping them carry out instructions accurately	176 (54.7)	90 (28.0)	21 (6.5)	35 (10.9)	3.26	.989
clearly express a chain of thought during argument of a point and not oppression	102 (31.7)	100 (31.1)	65 (20.2)	55 (17.1)	2.77	1.074
					2.99	

Table 1 revealed how assertive communication style impacts on the management of secondary schools in Abia State. All items revealed mean scores above the criterion bench mark of 2.50. Hence, considering the grand mean of 2.99 and the criterion bench mark of 2.50, it can be deduced that assertive communication style enhances the management of secondary schools in Abia State. This communication style makes the management of secondary schools effective as it takes care of challenges confronting learning environments as well as giving teachers the room to make suggestions when necessary.

Research Questions Two: How does passive communication style impact on the management of secondary schools in Abia State?

Table 2: Passive communication on management of secondary schools

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev.
Allows for expression opinions on issues of concern in the school	27 (8.4)	27 (8.4)	122 (37.9)	146 (45.3)	1.79	.913
Allows whatever is going on in the school whether good or bad	16 (5.0)	48 (14.3)	89 (27.6)	171 (53.1)	1.71	.889
Aims to please others even when things are not as it should be in the school	105 (32.6)	104 (32.3)	89 (27.6)	24 (7.5)	2.90	.945
Gives room for teachers to talk or heard which hastens ineffectiveness in schools	14 (4.3)	47 (14.6)	148 (46.0)	113 (35.1)	1.88	.811
Builds self-esteem even as it is not interested in hearing out the others	35 (10.9)	40 (12.4)	131 (40.7)	116 (36.0)	1.98	.960
					2.05	

Table 2 revealed the impact of passive communication style on the management of secondary schools in Abia State. All items revealed mean scores below 2.50 except item 3 which revealed a mean score above 2.50. With a grand mean score 2.05 and the criterion bench mark of 2.50, it can be deduced that passive communication inhibits the management of secondary schools in Abia State. This communication styles makes management of schools difficult because it places value on instructions and ideas coming from one person who does not care about the opinions of others.

Discussions

The finding from research question one revealed a grand mean score above the criterion bench mark of 2.50 which is an indication that the assertive communication style has a positive impact on the management of secondary schools in Abia State. The finding from the study is in agreement with Mawarni and Khalilahanum (2021) who investigated the principals' communication styles and school culture in vocational colleges in Selangor and found that most of the dominant communication styles practiced by the principals at vocational colleges in Selangor was assertive communication style due to the three associated with the style of communication such as shared leadership and vision, collegial teaching and learning, and professional commitment. The assertive communication style could be the

best form of communication in the school to enhance secondary school management due the value it places on equity.

The finding from research question two revealed a grand mean score below the criterion bench mark of 2.50 which is an indication that the passive communication style may inhibit effective management of secondary schools in Abia State as it has no regard for proper directions and in some cases could lead to anarchy. The finding from the study is in agreement with Ogunyem and Olagbaju (2020) who investigated the effects of assertive and passive communication styles on students' self-esteem and achievement in English language. The results indicated that passive communicators did not improve students' performance of students when compared with assertive communicators. Passive communication is characterized by shying away from duty, and most important not being firm on directives, these lead to poor management in schools.

Conclusions

Assertive communication is the best communication style to enhance effective management of secondary schools as it gives room for clear directions on how the work place should be run. It therefore imperative that managers, principals and teachers in secondary schools make use of assertive communication as against the passive communication to enhance management of secondary schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;

1. Stakeholders in education should always ensure that there is adequate enlightenment on communication styles that would enhance the management of secondary schools.
2. Passive communication style should be effectively excluded from the management of secondary schools as it is very ineffective in getting jobs done.

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