AFRICAN JOURNAL OF

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION STYLES AND TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Alabi, Christianah Oluwakemi
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State
Email: Christianah.kemi@yahoo.com

Abstract
Everyone has different ways of interacting with others in an organization and this understanding of interaction is germane to organizational success. This study examined organisational communication styles and teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Ibadan Southwest Local Government Area of Oyo State. It addressed the concept of communication, elements of communication, principals' communication strategies/ styles such as open communication style, inclusive communication style, aggressive communication style and assertive communication, principals' communication strategies in relation with teachers' productivity. It also pointed at the implications of poor communication to the educational system. Suggestions were made that there is need for connectivity between principal and staff in the school system, need for internet facilities in the schools for students and teachers. Need to promote effective teaching and learning process in the schools and need for the principals and the staff to improve their communication skills, school administrators should embrace good style of communication. There should be a dialogue between the superior and subordinates for decision making, provision of professional training/workshops on communication style for teachers to boost their skills on communication in the classroom.

Introduction

The significant roles of communication cannot be under estimated in any community. Thus, communication is an important element of the management process because it links people together in any given organization such as school or business organization. However, principals' communication approaches and teachers' efficiency are germane for the accomplishment of educational goals. Ayeni and Akinola (2020) pointed that teachers are the hubs on which the education system rests upon and their roles cannot be under-estimated if quality education is to be achieved.

The principal being the instructional leader is expected to be the driving force for effective curriculum delivery. It is the task of the principal to device appropriate measures to ensure that all the teachers comply with the laid down rules and regulations in the performance of their instructional tasks. This is not to witch-hunt the teachers but to make them committed, self-regulated, goal-oriented, and have high expectations for the learners (Ayeni and Akinfolarin, 2014). The need to improve teachers' productivity in terms of students' academic performance has become a matter of concern to the stakeholders in the education sector.

Concept of Communication

Communication is known to be a composite of information given and received; a learning experience in which certain attitudes, knowledge and skills change, carrying with them alterations of behaviour; a listening effort by all involved; a systematic fresh examination of issues by the communicator himself; and a sensitive interaction of points of view leading to a higher level of shared understanding and common intention.

However, Novinger (2008) defines communication as a form of communication patterns existing between two or more ethic groups in a given community, either rural or urban. In communication process, difficulties do occur as a result of the difference in languages, beliefs or value systems of the people involved in communication. This happens because people of different ethnic backgrounds perceive information differently. For effective communication to take place, information must be processed. In communication process, it has been established

by scholars that elements such as sender and receiver must be involved.

In addition, Mwankwo (2003) in Durbin (2005) defines communication as an interaction between a minimum of two symbolic systems (persons or groups). Thus, communication serves as a linking process by which parts of a system are tied together. It also enables people to develop and share knowledge, combine efforts and expand their store of knowledge, technology and culture for the purpose of achieving best practices in service.

According to Ayeni and Akinola (2020), communication is the process of creating, sharing and exchanging ideas, feelings, thoughts and information to make people active, reflective and improve on the performance of their tasks in the organization. Good communication stimulates teachers' morale, initiative, networking, quality service delivery and sustainable improvement in the work process towards achieving the educational goals (Udeze, 2004). The regular sharing of information between principals and teachers improves teachers' competence and productivity toward attainment of educational objectives and curriculum contents. Thus, principals are expected to establish and apply effective communication strategies to stimulate teachers in order to achieve the educational goals.

The perceived inconsistencies in communication channel, poor networking and gap in interdependence could impede effective coordination of human and material resources, which has, perhaps, been responsible for ineffective curriculum delivery and the relatively low productivity in many Nigerian secondary schools. Ijaiya (2013) in her study on education and teachers' productivity stated that if teachers fail to measure up in the performance of various assignments, they may be perceived uncooperative and unproductive.

Elements of Communication

For clarity of purpose, this paper highlighted the critical elements involved in communication process. Famade (2003) identified the following elements:

The sender: This is the where communication is initiated, it initiates the communication. In an organisation or community, the sender is that person or group of people with needs, desires, or information,

with a purpose for communicating them to the other individual or group of people.

Encoding: This involves translating information into a series of symbols or gestures that the receiver can easily understand what is being communicated. The sender of a message must attempt to establish "mutuality" of meaning with the receiver by choosing symbols, usually in the form of words and gestures that have the same meaning for the receiver.

The message: It is the physical form into which the sender encodes the information. The message could be in any form like speech, written words, and gestures e.g., a wave of the hand.

The channel: This is also known as the mode of transmission e.g., paper, internet e. t. c

The receiver: This is the person whose senses perceive the sender's message; he is the recipient.

Decoding: This is the process where by which the receiver interprets the message and translates it into information that is meaning to him.

Noise: This refers to anything that disrupts, distorts, disturbs, confuses, or interferes with communication whether in the sender, the transmission, or the receiver.

Feedback: This is a reversal of the communication process in which a reaction to the sender's communication is expressed. It is also necessary to specify in clear terms the precautions to be taken when handling the tasks. The information must be clear from semantic problems by explaining various terms used and how they are related to the tasks.

Thus, effective communication can be achieved through regular meetings where different sections and departments report their progress and discuss the way forward in solving their problems. This can also be achieved through organization's reports which are used to examine the work done, share best practices and keep the staff abreast of innovative approaches that are necessary for the accomplishment of prescribed tasks and goals. Principals can perform regulatory role through network of information, operational manuals, policies, orders/instructions which enable teachers to know exactly what they are expected to do, why, how, when, where and whom they are responsible (Downs, 2009).
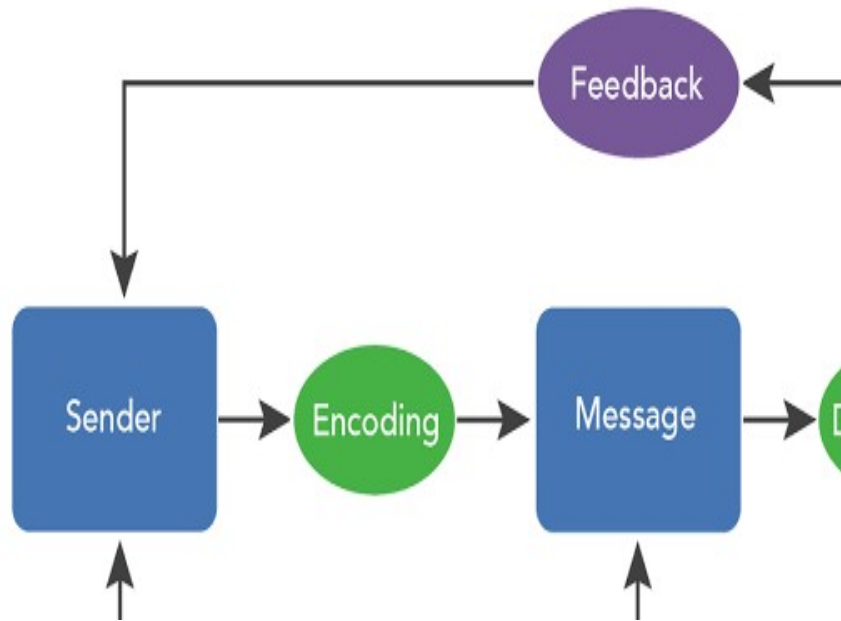
Fig. 1: Elements of Communication Process
Source: Stoner (1982) and Famade (2003)

Figure 1 shows a representation of the elements of communication process. If any of the elements is missing, the chain of communication is incomplete. The process of creating, transmitting, interpreting ideas, facts, opinions and feelings involve people who attempt to share meaning via the transmission of systematic messages. (Stoner, 1982). From the above, there is no doubt that communication is broad enough to mean almost anything to almost anybody, depending on the angle from which individual understand it.

Principals' Communication Strategies/ Styles
Okotoni and Akinwale (2019) focused on four communication styles. These are open communication style, inclusive communication style, aggressive communication style and assertive communication.

An open communication style is one in which all members of the school feel free to share feedback, ideas and even criticism at all levels. In a school where a principal adopts an open communication style, such principal usually allows teachers to share feedback. This

implies that the principal uses participatory decision- making method or leadership skills. The principal is open even to criticisms from both internal and external stakeholders. This type of communication style encourages all staff to say their minds on issues bothering them on school policies, programmes and views, and opinions expressed will not be used against them. The style also allows school principals to see teachers not only as workers but as human beings whose views and opinions must be heard on all issues affecting them.

An inclusive communication style is another style that can be adopted by principals in schools. It is one in which conscious steps are taken by principals to ensure that all staff members in the school feel that they are involved in the decisions that affect their day-to-day activities (Brannon, 2008). In other words, a school principal with an inclusive communication style is open to people and allows contributions from within and outside the school. This is so important because the school is regarded as an open system that depends on input from both internal and external environment. Such principal does not only accept the inputs from school stakeholders, but ensures that the views and opinions raised are considered during decision making.

Another communication style is the assertive style. A school principal who engages in assertive communication is open to hearing the opinions of others and feels comfortable enough to express his/her own opinions as well. He/She has high self-esteem, and the confidence to effectively communicate with others without getting offended or being manipulative. While engaging in conversations, he/she states limits and expectations, and observations without judgment, an active listener, and checks on others' feelings.

`   Generally speaking, one can conclude that open, inclusive and assertive communication styles can be regarded as a democratic communication style. This style of communication of the leader according to Lussier (2010) is characterised by cooperation, democratic and politic language, delegation of duty and authority, and two-way communication. It is also characterized by respect for everybody's opinions and ideas. It can also be said that school principals with democratic communication style are people-oriented leaders who usually care about the well fare and the well-being of the followers and do everything possible to make subordinates happy in order to be able to give their best.

Aggressive communication style can also be used by principals in airing their ideas, goals and visions among teachers in schools. Aggressive communication is a style 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 (Famade,2003). A school principal who uses aggressive communication style creates a win-lose situation and use intimidation to get his own needs met is through power and control, often at the expense of others. He/She is usually a poor listener and tends to monopolize discussions. He is a fault finder, tries to dominate others, use 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 also worthy of note 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. Messages in this style of communication come with orders 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. It can also be added that the school principals with autocratic communication style are product or output-oriented leaders. They are not interested in the well-being of workers, rather, they are only concerned about workers meeting targets and deadlines (Okotoni and Akinwale, 2019).

Principals' Communication Strategies and Teachers' Productivity
Ayeni and Akinola (2020) opined that principals play key roles in the management of human and material resources to achieve educational goals in secondary schools. This could depend largely on the ability of principals to communicate effectively in the process of coordinating teachers' instructional tasks in secondary schools. Redding (2003) described communication as the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with the information being understood by the receiver. On the other hand, productivity is the measurement of the

efficiency of an individual or organization's performances to achieve given set of objectives. Productivity measure indicates the rate of growth in capabilities of respective organizations to accomplish and indeed fulfill their mission/goals and ensuring that quality of goods and services meet the expected standard.

According to Akinloye (2013), productivity is the degree of efficiency and effectiveness with which an individual contributes to the achievement of set objectives. This implies that an efficient teacher utilizes the available resources optimally to accomplish the tasks set out in the job description/schedule within the stipulated time. Productivity in education is the rate at which educational objectives are achieved, putting into consideration, the input, process and output phases of education. In the context of this study, productivity refers to the level of teachers' effectiveness in adherence to the time-table, lesson planning, usage of textbooks, research, usage of instructional materials, students' motivation, classroom management, students' discipline, continuous assessment, and performance feedback.

Ijaiya (2013) in her study on education and teachers' productivity found that principals, teachers' work performance and productivity are determined by effective teaching measured by students' academic performance in examinations, punctuality at school and classes, giving extra lessons to students and contribution to the progress of the school through participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, students' discipline, committee assignment as may be given by the principal.

She further stressed that if teachers fail to measure up in these various assignments, they may be perceived uncooperative and unproductive. Ayeni and Akinola (2020) pinpointed that effective communication in an organization strengthens the level of coordination which results in high productivity in the organisation. Ogunsanya (2003) stated that effective communication brings about efficient task performance and prompt intervention in solving problems in an organization. This implied that there is a positive relationship between communication and workers' behaviour in an organization.

Effective communication in a school system has the possibility of influencing learners' behaviour. This is in view of the fact that as people communicate with one another to resolve problems, it is

evident that ideas, attitudes and feelings are exchanged and understood. The open school climate promotes positive interaction, high spirit, mutual consideration, trust and innovative best practices that enhance teachers' productivity. Ogunsanya (2003) stated that for teachers to be highly productive in the school system, the school principal has to be dynamic, be of emulative characterd treat teachers with dignity, involving them as much as possible in important decisions that may likely affect them in the school. This will motivate them to put in their best in instructional tasks performance and achieve the set educational goals.

In addition, effective communication in a school helps the principal to think out well, generate good ideas, conceive goal-oriented plans, establish sound organization structures, and take good decisions. These also give teachers better understanding of their work and accept the need for innovation in curriculum delivery, which improves the level of productivity in secondary schools. However, the perceived inconsistencies in communication strategies seem to hamper teachers' productivity, which has been a matter of serious concern to stakeholders in education.

Implications of Poor Communication to the Educational System
Communication in schools takes place 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. The implications of the poor communication in school system is that without good and effective communication, the achievement of educational goals in a school may be a mirage (Okotoni and Akinwale, 2019).

Also, poor communication can create organizational conflicts, this would hinder the teachers' productivity which would eventually affect achieving the educational objectives. In addition, the students' progress would be negatively affected. However, principals have certain communication styles or patterns when sharing their ideas and thought and these styles or patterns to a great extent could determine the effectiveness of communication within a school system. This means that the styles that a principal decides to adopt in coordinating the

affairs of a school could go a long way in either increasing or decreasing the morale of staff members especially the teachers.

Conclusion

The importance of effective communication between principals and staff in a school system cannot be overemphasized. The realization of the goals of a secondary school as an educational organisation, among others, hinges on effective communication among the various stakeholders. Therefore, communication between the principal and staff go a long way in building relationships and facilitates achievement of goals in schools. This is because every administrative functions in a school involves direct or indirect communication.

This implies that principal's communication skills and styles affect both personnel effectiveness. In order for the school principal to make sound and coherent decision, plan, organise, control etcetera, he must map-out strategies for receiving and passing information to every individual within the school for effective management.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- There is a need for connectivity between principal and staff in the school. This would promote effective teaching and learning process in the schools.
- Need for the principals and the staff to improve their communication skills. This would improve principals' organization competence and teachers' efficiency in the schools.
- There is need for principal to adopt good communication style that would promote smooth relationship with their staff.
- There is need for Ministry of Education to improve principals' capacities in the use good communication skills which enhance the quality of education delivery in secondary schools.

References

Akinloye, G. M. (2013). Teacher demographic and behavioural indicators as correlates of student learning outcomes in secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis). University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Ayeni, A. J. & Akinfolarin, C.A. (2014). Assessing principals' coordinating and controlling strategies for effective teaching and quality learning outcome in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 7(1), 181*

Ayeni, A. J. & Akinola, O. B. (2020) Organizational Communication and Teachers' Productivity in Secondary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice. 11,17*

Brannon, T. S. (2010). The Effects of classroom management beliefs/ideologies on student academic success. Dissertation completed at California State University. 1 – 97.

Downs, V. F. (2009). On the definition of feedback. Behavioural Science, 28(1), 4-13.

Durbin, N. (2005). Communication in business. London: Longman Group Limited.

Famade, N. D. (2003) Organisational communication. Retrieved 2nd April, 2007 from www.//hppt: elementsofcommunicationprocess.com

Ijaiya, N. Y. S. (2013). Belief systems of secondary school principals and vice principals about productivity of teachers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

Lussier, P. S. (2010). The learner centered curriculum. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Novinger, A. A. (2008) Communication Network in the school. New York: Goldy Publications. 3.6:6 -13

Nwachukwu, C. C. (2006). Management theory and practice. Onitsha: Africana – FEB Publishers.

Ogunsanya, N. Z. (2003). Introduction to business data processing, (2nd ed). Tokyo: McGregor- hill Book Company. *Journal of Education and Practice.* Vol.11, No.17 www.iiste.org ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online)

Okotoni, C. A. & Akinwale, A. S. (2019) Principals' Communication Styles and Teachers' Job Commitment in Secondary Schools in Osun State, Nigeria. *British Journal of Education* 7.12: 7-19.

Redding, I. A. (2019). Communication: A tool for effective management. *Management Review.* 2(2), 1-26.

Stoner, J. R. (1982) Elements of Communication Process. Retrieved 2nd April, 2007 from www.//hppt:elementsofcommunicationprocess.com

Udeze, D. A. (2004). Educating the reflective practitioner. Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions. San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.