Promoting Good Communication Skills among Secondary Schools Staff in FCT Abuja Nigeria

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Abstract: The study investigated the impact of promoting good communication skills among staff in secondary schools in Kuje area of FCT- Abuja. In all, two research questions guided the study. A survey design was adopted and the study population was all the teachers in Kuje area council of FCT-Abuja. The sample for this study was 50 teachers and 4 principals that were drawn from the selected four secondary schools in the study area. A well-structured 20- item four point scale questionnaire titled communication and staff performance questionnaire (CSPQ) was constructed by the researchers and used to collect data for the study. Data obtained for the study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while the chi-square (x^2) statistical analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study were as follows: mistrust, threat and fear distorts information in schools, poor medium of communication distorts encoding and decoding of information, and emotional state of the communicator. Also strategies that promote effective communication include maintenance of free flow of information, principal should get information from the students and staff and maintain regular staff meeting as an avenue to get feedback. It was concluded that formal communication significantly affects staff performance in secondary schools. The researcher recommended that experienced principals should be appointed to head secondary schools to facilitate effective communication in the school system as regard teaching and learning. The leadership style of principals should be transformational and transactional to ensure free access of information in schools.

Keywords: Impact, Promoting, Communication, Skills and Staff

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to American Library Association (2013), communication that takes place in most organizations could be classified into two categories, namely - formal and informal communication. This type of communication takes place through the formal channels of the organizional hierarchy. In many organizations, formal communication follows the line of authority through the various levels. There is also what is called procedural communication which goes hand in hand with all formal communications. It simply implies communication that follows prescribed procedures set down by precedent. In this type of communication three categories exist i.e downward, upward and horizontal (cords-wise or diagonal).

Downward communication refers to the type that starts from the top to the bottom levels of the school organization. This type of communication is usual1y in written form and takes place in a routine manner, is implemented by regular staff releases, memoranda, personal direction, telephones and any other system at the disposal of the management.

Traditionally, downward communication was emphasized but there is ample evidence that if this is the only direction of communication, problems will develop. Drucker in Jones and George (2013) is even more emphatic when he states that downward communication does not work because it ignores the receiver of the communication. For instance principal to clerk.

Upward communication refers to the flow of communication from the subordinates to the superiors at the top. Most organizations in this country are likely to overlook the great importance of allowing information to pass from the lower to the higher levels of the organizations. As a result, the organization may not provide adequate means for persons in different organizational units to communicate with each other on this level. In addition, subordinates may hesitate to even bring matters to the attention of their superiors particularly if the news is not good. Furthermore, some subordinates may not be articulate enough to express their thoughts. In spite of these, there is much to be gained if upward communication is encouraged in our organization. Akpakwu (2012) said this type of communication provides a "Feedback" of the effectiveness of downward communication. Through it, management could see how well, its plans, policies and objectives are understood by those at the lower levels. Management could also be brought closer to the attitudes and problems of lower-level personnel that are at the operational level which too often they are oblivious of. Furthermore, upward communication could increase morale by giving employee an opportunity to participate in organizational matters or rather in decision-making. This participation often yields a harvest of good ideas from the operative level.

This type of communication according to Bua (2014) does not follow channels of authority as done in a formal communication. Instead, it is channelled through the social contacts among the people in the school, company or group. It is known as the "grape vine". The grape vine is surprisingly fast in its distribution of information but it is distressingly inaccurate in keeping the original fact straight. Management must appreciate that this form of communication is very powerful. Management must also recognize that informal communication contributes in same way to the effectiveness of reaching organization's goals and as such cannot be eradicated as Keith Davis (2012) advised: "Managers may try to cultivate the grape vine themselves; they may as well know that grape vine cannot be abolished rubbed out, hidden under a basket, chopped down, "tied or stopped" one way of keeping facts straight therefore is to make sure that the grape vine gets accurate information in the first place. This could be done by keeping informal leaders aware of organizational matters, and by avoiding a policy of secrecy on anything not absolutely necessary. Care must however, be taken in the use of informal channel for it can damage the morale of employees, since all or most information it paddles is based on hear-say.

Communication is either written or oral, and non-verbal, (gestures, facial, expressions). However, in selecting the media, the communicator, the audience, and the situation must be considered. An executive who feels uncomfortable in front of a large audience may choose written communication rather than a speech; on the other hand, certain audiences who may not read a memo may be reached and become motivated by direct oral communication. Situations also may determine a specific medium to use. For communication to be effective, it must be precise, accurate, less ambiguous, short, appropriate and straight to the point.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will be lacking in a workplace where ineffective communication predominates the administrative style. Ubeku (2013) stated that morale is likely to be low in any school where relevant information is not passed on those who need it. He further remarked that poor communication could raise suspicion among teachers towards the management, with the result that they rely mainly on the grapevine for their source of information. He argued that this could serve as a fertile ground for conflicts, lowering of moral and lack of adequate co-operation. Poor communication will have drastic effect on production and cordial relationship among work groups. According to Harrington (2013). Constant misunderstanding of information will lead to confusion, mistakes, wastages and accidents. In secondary school, teachers become frustrated with low morale, which leads to lack of motivation and low productivity. All these will have adverse effect on staff job performance. When communication gaps occur in any school, the different units of the organization tend to operate in isolation and perhaps in conflict with the other components to the detriment of the overall objectives of the organization (Lezotte 2016). These situations is likely lead to a breakdown in communication in a school and consequently lead to misunderstanding, confusion and frustration of teachers and the school authority.

Effective communication in an organization brings about positive administrative environment which is manifested in high productivity and job satisfaction in the organization. Ogunsaya (2013) maintained that if communication is effective, work is performed more efficiently and problem solved more quickly. Thus there is a positive relationship between communication and the behaviour of the workers in an organization.

Effective communication in a school system has the intent of motivating or influencing behaviour. This is in view of the fact that as people interact with others to resolve problems, ideas, attitudes and feelings are exchanged and understood. High spirit, high consideration and trust and low maladministration are the basic feature of open school climate. In the school system, these features lead to teacher satisfaction and productivity. Ogunsaya conceived that for teachers to be highly productive in the school system, the school principals has to be dynamic, showing good examples and treat teachers with dignity, involving them as much as possible in arriving at important decisions that may likely affect them in the school. This means communicating properly information that concerns staff welfare and how they will perform to achieve the set objectives of the school. Dickie (2014) showed that effective communication will lead to the success of the school.

In addition effective communication enhances learning and teaching activities to create understanding and concerted co-operative effort among all those involved in the education process (Okeke 2011). Effective communication in any school makes the principal to generate good decisions, think out well, conceived plans and establish sound school structures. It even makes them to be well liked by his associates because he appreciates the social system of the school. In secondary

school system, effective communication would give teachers a better understanding of their work. It will also help teachers to work intelligently, efficiently and to accept the need for change when the need arises. When the climate of a school is good, it will go a long way to promoting the academic performance of the students (Kolawale 2013).

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The school as a social organization needs effective and efficient communication system by the principal to enhance teaching and learning. The school principal has a lot of roles to play in the school such as the supervision of instruction, general administration of the school, maintaining school community relations. Other roles are maintaining a balance in the student personnel services, personal seniors and staff-personnel services in the school systems all which are aimed at improving the teaching and learning processes in the school. These cardinal roles can only be attained with effective communication system in the school which may be verbal or nonverbal.

Communication is the most important area of management yet the most neglected as evidenced by observations made by several stakeholders in education industry. Bua (2014) said the success or failure of the teaching and learning process depends largely on the way and manner in which the communication process is initiated, developed and maintained in educational institutions. Today, the situation in secondary schools seem worst because it is speculated that educational personnel administrators pay very little attention to effective communication in the formal and informal channels. In many schools there are problems of lack of planning to communicate; un-clarified assumption, semantic distortions, badly expressed messages, loss by transmission, poor retention and poor listening and premature evaluation.

It is evidenced that without good communication it is doubtful whether meaningful teaching and learning can take place. Teachers are most times discouraged by the nature of school communication process. The researcher observed that communication in the school has been neglected and this more than any other thing, may have created negative impact on staff performance and on teaching and learning in secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. It is against this background that the researchers feel there is the need to investigate into the impact of good communication skills among staff performance in Abuja.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

✓ What are the factors that militate against effective communication in Secondary Schools in the study area?
✓ What are the communication strategies that promote effective communication in schools in the study Area?

D. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

✓ Identifying factors that militate against effective communication in school.

✓ Determine strategies that promote effective communication in secondary schools administration in the study Area.

E. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this research work will be of immense benefit to the students in that when the communication channels are not distorted, administrative climate of their school will be conducive enough, they will be properly taught and this will produce conducive learning. When the atmosphere for learning is conducive enough, the result will be the student's high academic performance.

The teachers will also benefit from the findings of this research. They will be motivated to teach, and know what is around them in the school. This can be done via seminars or conferences organized based on school communication pattern.

It will also be of immense benefit to the principals in the sense that when they generate effective communication that produces conducive administrative environment in their schools, there will be adequate interaction between them and the teachers. This will lead to the teachers' high performance in the school and thus promoting the status of the schools where the principals administer.

The finding of this study will equally enable secondary school principals to know the strategies necessary for effective communication in Secondary Schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT. The findings of the study will help the educational planners to be aware of the obstacles that can hinder effective communication in Secondary School. The principals will immerse benefit through conferences or seminars organized on importance of communication to school administrative. It will enable them to combine both formal and informal communication methods to attain the set objectives.

The Government will also appreciate the need for constant workshops for principals to know the current trends concerning communication in the school system. This can be done via workshops organized by the Government for all the stakeholders involved in educational planners and implementers of secondary schools.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a descriptive survey design which is concerned with finding the impact communication on teachers' job performance in Government Secondary Schools in Kuje Area Council of F.C.T.

Descriptive survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analysing data from only a representation of the entire group (Nworgu, 2011). Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study because it enabled the researcher to collect and analyse data from a sample representative of the population and the entire population. It was also used because of the nature of the variables that were at hand, to produce data, required for quantitative and qualitative analysis and to allow simultaneous

description of views, perceptions and beliefs at any single point in time. According to Awotunde & Ugodulunwa (2014), the concern of descriptive research is not why the observed distribution exist, but what the distribution is.

B. POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of this study consists of all the male and female teachers, including principals, in fifty six (56) Government Secondary Schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

C. SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The sample for this study is 50 teachers and 4 Principals that are drawn from the selected four secondary schools in Kuje Area Council of F.C.T. The researcher used proportionate sampling procedure to draw 20% of male and female teachers in each of the selected schools in the study area. According to Quizlet (2015), proportionate sampling technique is a sampling strategy used when the population composed of several subgroups that are vastly different in number. The number of participants from each subgroup is determined by their number relative to entire population of teachers.

Name of School	No of Teachers	Sampled Teacher
Government Girls Science Secondary School, Kuje.	58	12
Government Secondary School, Kuje	129	26
Government Secondary School, Pegi.	31	06
Government Secondary School, Gaube	32	06
TOTAL	**250**	**50**

Table 3.1: Sampled Schools and Teachers

D. INSTRUMENTATION

The instrument adopted for the collection of data was a structured questionnaire. The questions were framed on fixed responses based on a four point rating scale with the following weights as assigned below: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument named Communication and Staff performance Questionnaire (CSPQ) is divided into 2 sections. Section A contains factors that militate against effective communication and Section B contained strategies that promote effective communication in schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT.

E. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

In the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher personally visited the selected government secondary schools and obtained the permission of the principal after explaining the purpose of the research then administered 50 questionnaires to teachers and four (4) to the principal and retrieved same on the spot.

F. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data generated from the personal information of respondent were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The research questions were answered with mean scores and standard deviation.

III. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A. DATA PRESENTATION

Data collected were analyzed according to the research questions and hypothesis of the study. The results of the analyzed data were presented in three sections: demographic data and answer to research questions and testing of hypothesis.

a. RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

What are the factors that militate against effective communication in Secondary Schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT?

N=54

SN	Factors that Militate Against Effective Communication	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Mistrust, threat and fear distorts information in schools.	26	18	08	02	3.26	0.94	Accepted
2.	Poor medium of communication distorts encoding and decoding of information	34	09	04	07	3.30	0.90	Accepted
3.	Inappropriate setting of the information to excessive intermediaries	27	22	08	00	3.52	1.06	Accepted
4.	Emotional state of the communicator	29	20	02	03	3.39	0.87	Accepted
5.	Poor delegation of function	40	10	04	00	3.67	0.98	Accepted
	Cluster mean and standard deviation					3.43	0.95	Accepted

Table 4.6: Factors that Militate Against Effective Communication

Research questions three sought to identify the factors that militating against effective communication in secondary schools. The table indicates that all the item statements are above the criterion mean of 2.50. Items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 with 3.26, 3.30, 3.52, 3.39,and 3.67 mean rating and a corresponding standard deviation of 0.94, 0.90, 1.06, 0.87,

0.98, and overall grand mean of 3.43, shows that all the items accounts for poor communication system in secondary schools. By this, there is mistrust among the principal's teachers and the entire students. Also identified is the lack of delegation of authority by the principals to his very senior teachers coupled with role conflict situations in the schools. Other problems identified are poor medium of communication which affects encoding and decoding process, inappropriate setting of the message due to the existence of numerous intermediaries and emotional state of the communicator in secondary schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT.

The analysis above shows that all he respondents are homogenous in their responses to identifying the factors that militates against effective communication in secondary schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT.

b. RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

What are the communication strategies that promote effective communication in schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT?

N=54

SN	Strategies that Promote Effective Communication	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
16.	Maintenance of free flow of information	24	18	08	04	3.14	0.82	Accepted
17.	Principal should get information from the students and staff	19	23	03	09	2.96	0.78	Accepted
18.	Maintenance of regular staff meeting as an avenue to get feedback.	38	14	02	00	3.67	0.93	Accepted
19.	Teachers are often given information on issues concerning them	29	20	02	03	3.39	0.87	Accepted
20.	Provision of information communication technology (ICT) in schools.	20	23	07	04	3.09	0.98	Accepted
	Cluster mean and standard deviation					3.25	0.88	Accepted

Table 4.7: Strategies that Promote Effective Communication

Research question four identified the factor that will promote effective communication in secondary schools. The table indicates that items 16 to 20 have means above the criterion level of 2.50. here, items 16, 17,18,19, 20 have means 3.14, 2.96, 3.67, 3.39, 3.09 with standard deviation of 0.82, 0.78, 0.93, 0.87, 0.98 which are all above the criterion level of 2.50. This is shows that effective communication in schools can be enhanced through the maintenance of free flow of information adoption of open door policy by the principals, holding of regular staff meetings to iron-out issues or problems that may impede communication system in schools. Other measures are giving out information to teachers on the issues or problems that affect them and the general tone of the

school, the use of information communication technology. All these were agreed by the respondents as avenues to promote effective communication in secondary schools. This account for 3.25 grand mean of all the responses which is above the criterion level of 2.50 mean ratings. This shows that all the item statements enhance effective communication in secondary schools.

c. TEST OF HYPOTHESES

The null hypothesis of the study was tested with result presented. To test the significance of the impact of formal and informal communication on teacher job performance, the Chi Square statistical method was used. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 (5%) level of significance.

Null Hypothesis (Ho₁)

Formal communication does not significantly impact on staff performance in Secondary Schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT.

Opinion	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Df	X^{2-cal}	X^{2-}_{tab}	Sg	Decision
Impact	46	27	3	22.56	7.81	0.05	Significant
No impact	08	27					

Table 4.8: Chi–Square Test of Formal Communication on Staff Performance

Table 4.8 above shows the result of the chi-square statistical analysis of the significant difference between formal communication and teacher job performance. The Chi Square calculated with value of 22.56 is greater than the chi square tabulated value of 7.81 at 0.05 levels of significance and 3 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis which states that formal communication does not significantly affect performance in secondary schools is rejected. This implies that the alternative hypothesis is accepted indicating that formal communication significantly affect staff performance in secondary schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT.

Null Hypothesis (Ho₂)

Informal communication does not significantly impact on staff performance in Secondary Schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT.

Opinion	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	df	X^{2-cal}	X^{2-}_{tab}	Sg	Decision
Impact	38	27	3	18.22	7.81	0.05	Significant
No impact	16	27					

Table 4.9: Chi–Square Test of Informal Communication on Staff Performance

Table 4.9 above shows the result of the chi-square statistical analysis of the significant difference between informal communication and teacher job performance. The Chi Square calculated with value of 22.56 is greater than the chi square tabulated value of 7.81 at 0.05 levels of significance and 3 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis which states that formal communication does not significantly affect performance in secondary schools is rejected. This

implies that the alternative hypothesis is accepted indicating that formal communication significantly affect staff performance in secondary schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT.

B. CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the impact of communication on staff performance in some selected government secondary schools in Kuje Area Council of FCT. The following conclusions were made from this research work:

- ✓ Formal communication motivates teachers towards effective performance and that the level of formal communication of teachers in a school depends on the leadership style and policy of the school management.
- ✓ The informal channel of communication can damage the morale of employees, since all or most information it paddles is based on hear-say.
- ✓ The problems of effective communication in the study area are poor medium of communication which affects encoding and decoding process, lack of delegation of authority by the principals, there is mistrust among the principal's teachers and the entire students, inappropriate setting of the message due to the existence of numerous intermediaries and emotional state of the communicator.
- ✓ The effective communication in schools can be enhanced through the maintenance of free flow of information adoption of open door policy by the principals, holding of regular staff meetings to iron-out issues or problems that may impede communication system in schools. Other measures are giving out information to teachers on the issues or problems that affect them and the general tone of the school, the use of information communication technology.
- ✓ Formal communication significantly affects staff performance in secondary schools.

C. RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ The SEB should organize seminars, conferences and workshops from time to time for all the stakeholders in secondary schools on the importance of effective communication in schools. Such workshops should focuses on ideals techniques of communication in secondary schools and the strategies for improving communication behaviour of secondary school principals.
- ✓ The secondary school principals should delegate functions to vice principals to ensure free flow of information.
- ✓ Experienced principals should be appointed to head secondary schools to facilitate effective communication in the school system as regard teaching and learning.
- ✓ The leadership style of principals should be transformational and transactional to ensure free access of information in schools.

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