

## **Principals' Communication Strategies and Teachers' Maximal Productivity in Secondary Schools in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined the influence of principals' communication strategies on teachers' instructional task in secondary schools. The population comprised all principals and teachers in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State. The sample consisted fourteen (14) principals and one hundred and fifty four (154) teachers selected across the Local Government Area using random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results showed that among communication strategies adopted by principals include: principal meeting with teachers daily on salient issues in the school (71.5%), engaging teachers through e-messaging and online chatting (57.2%), placing suggestion boxes strategically within the school premises (71.4%), organizing regular staff meetings to discuss important issues in the school (68.6%), disseminating important messages through unit heads (92.9%), meets personally with individual teachers on professional issues in school (64.3%), using phone calls and text messages for urgent information (42.9%). Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teachers' instructional task performance to a large extent depends on principal's communication strategies, therefore it was recommended that principal should consider critically the various information disseminating strategies and the situation surrounding the information to be communicated to the teachers and adopt the easiest and fastest result oriented method. A combination of more than two methods could as well be employed to achieve the target goal.*

**Keywords:** Principal communication strategies, maximal productivity, teachers' instructional task.

### **Introduction**

Secondary education occupies a strategic position in the national structure of the education system in Nigeria. It caters for the differences in talents and opportunities provided at entry

point to train manpower in the Arts, sciences, technology, commerce at sub-professional grades and other professional engagements. It inspires students for self-improvement, reliance and achievement of excellence as imbedded in the *National Policy on Education* (FRN, 2013).

In a nutshell, secondary education stands as the bridge between the primary and tertiary levels of education. It absorbs the primary education products and prepares them for tertiary education which is the manpower based of the nation. As such, secondary schools are constituted as institutions or human industries established for refining human beings in terms of knowledge, skills acquisition and behavior modifications for all round excellence and Principals being the custodians and the accounting officers in secondary schools. They have the prerogative responsibility of ensuring that the schools achieve their statutory objectives for which they are established. The position of Principal is even more significant considering the tasks of planning, controlling and coordinating human, material and financial resources through effective communication strategies that majorly rest on him (Nnebedum & Akinfolarin, 2017).

It is no doubt that the administrative hegemony in secondary schools is better facilitated through the principals' effective communication. This, most of the times, says a lot about the principal's leadership style or competency. Principals' communication ensure smooth running of the school affairs, motivate teaching activities and even spur non-teaching personnel for optimal performance. The principals' communication strategies, if well harnessed can cumulate to teachers' better productivity which may lead to the achievement of the educational set goals in secondary schools. The position of teachers as the hubs, on which education system rested, emphasizes that their contributions to the achievement of quality education cannot be underestimated. Consequently, principals in their quest to derive the best from their teaching staff must be an instructional leader who is capable of being the driving force for effective curriculum delivery. The statutory responsibilities of teachers appear to be better discharged when they have sense of belonging in all the decisions and programmes of the school, in such that the rules and regulations that guide the delivery of instructional tasks are jointly formulated hence no teacher feels witch-hunted but rather are better committed, self-regulated, goal-oriented, and have high expectations for their learners.

Effective communication probably facilitates the attainment of the educational goals. Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (1997) define communication as the imparting or interchange of thoughts or ideas, orally, in writing or in signs. Communication that lacks clarity is likely to incapacitate teacher's effectiveness and cause disruption of instructional time as well as poor learning outcome. All those involved in a particular communication process should be aware of its purpose and clarity of action to be taken. Sufficient details of work to

be done have to be communicated without being ambiguous. Teachers should be clear on the purpose of the action, what is to be done, how it is to be done, who is to do it, and when. The principal must communicate mission statements, code of conduct, circulars, text messages, and letters through appropriate and unambiguous channels (Ayeni, 2020). Communication has crucial impacts within or among work groups in that organizational communication is a channel to transmit the flow of information, resources, and even policies. Organizational communication can be broadly defined as communication with one another in the context of an organization (Shockley-Zalabak, 2006).

Principal's communication strategies and teachers' productivity have been matters of serious concern to the stakeholders in the education sector. These factors have been identified as keys, that if well harnessed can reposition secondary education situation for better performance (Richmond, McCroskey, & Powell, 2012). The seamless flow of communication is a crucial channel that can advance teachers' job performance in secondary schools. Effective communication as part of the instructional flow across and within school system is capable of boosting teachers' effectiveness, knowing that the quality of school system is majorly determined by the pivotal roles teachers play. Hence, the ability of the principal to communicate effectively will entrench harmony among staff, coordinate school activities, reduce unnecessary managerial burdens and ultimately improve organizational performance (Lunenburg & Irby, 2006).

For any school to make resounding achievement especially in the areas of teaching and learning, the school headship must show proven quality and knowledge on how to harness and coordinate all resources in the schools. In attempt to make dramatic improvement in secondary school students' preparation for tertiary education and gainful careers, there is need for thoughtful, intentional human capital strategies that get the right teachers in the right places in the right subjects. The need for teachers' effectiveness in Nigerian secondary schools is becoming very urgent now, as the nation has adopted plan to develop students who can be self-reliant, after secondary schools and those that can fit adequately into higher institutions conveniently through career-ready academic standards and graduation requirements. The nation needs highly effective teachers, particularly in all the core subjects, capable of teaching rigorous content to all students (Achieve, 2009).

Teachers' productivity can be adequately measured by the teachers' effectiveness which is a multidimensional construct, since it measures a variety of different aspects of teaching such as; subject mastery, effective communication, lesson preparation and presentation (Ogunsaya, 2003). The influence of teachers' effectiveness on the learning outcome of students as measured by students' academic performance cannot be overemphasized (Adediwura & Tayo, 2007). The quality of education depends on the teachers as reflected in the performance of their duties. Over time, students' academic performance in both internal

and external examinations had been used to determine excellence in teachers and teaching (Ajao, 2001).

Teachers play the critical and dynamic role in the education process in all schools. In other words, the impressive academic performance showcased by students cannot be entirely detached from the efforts teachers put in the discharge of their statutory duties in school. Teachers in the real sense are the most important resources without which the school system is bound to cripple.

Among the functions/duties expected of teachers for better school climate include; coordinate the cleaning of school compound/classrooms before assembly, actively present on the assembly to supervise and coordinate the conduct of assemble daily, participate actively at the morning briefing before the commencement of teaching, preparation of an extensive lesson note for every lesson taught, presentation of the lesson note for vetting and endorsement by the head of department (HOD) before using it for teaching, regular attendance to lessons without being prompted, regular giving and marking of assignment to provide feedback on learner's progress in class. It is the duty of the teacher to effective engagement students during class, provide spiritual and moral guidance to the learners, serve as positive role model to the students in school, conduct unbiased test and termly examination, ensure impeccable documentation of learners' academic activities, undertake assigned duties to ensure smooth running of the school effectively, monitor students within and outside the school for misconduct, report erring student to appropriate quarter, represent the school appropriately outside, attend to other assigned duties by the principal and others as deemed necessary by the school management.

In recent years, different reports from monitoring institutions and agencies have shown rapid deterioration of ethics and statutory duties among teachers in public secondary schools particularly in Nigeria. Teachers' response to professional responsibilities is drifting from bad to worse by each successive government administrations. These days, attendance and punctuality in school for teachers are no more a big deal. Now, for some teachers to be in school at early time, it means either that the teacher has special assignment which could not be avoided or they heard of evaluation team coming to their schools. Whereas, the normal daily routine for teachers should be like this; arrival time 7.00am; which will enable the teachers prepare for the day's job and attend to some necessary responsibilities before the assembly; 7.45am for assembly is where all teachers should be actively on ground except those that have taken permission from the constituted authority; 8.00am for morning briefing/meeting anchored by the school head, here recent situation of the school is discussed briefly to keep all teachers abreast of activities in the school; 8.10am teachers enter classrooms without being prompted till the close of the school for the day. Any teaching staff coming to school after 7.30am is regarded as professional late comer.

Situation in schools now contradicts this normal routine. Teachers now attend classes without lesson note. They no longer feel concerned about students' academic/moral life. Some even believe that once they had done their statutory duty by teaching the students, every other things are immaterial. The rule and regulation which stipulated that teachers should be within school premises between 7.30 am and 2.00 pm from Monday to Thursday, and 7:30am and 1:00pm every Friday no longer matters. This present situation does not portray positive climate in schools.

This appalling situation has persisted because principals that are supposed to be the internal managers to coordinate and organizes teachers within the school for the achievement of quality curriculum delivery have lost grip. It is observed that secondary school teachers are now poorly coordinated, and controlled because of inadequate information about their roles as well as updates in the performance of their tasks and responsibilities. This has serious negative implications on students' academic performance in WASSCE in secondary schools.

According to Barker (1990), a clear description of the types of communication indicated the existence of the following: verbal and nonverbal communication, oral and written communication, formal and informal communication, intentional and unintentional communication. Other form of communication include: human/computer communication which is the trend in most oversees schools. This study therefore seeks to examine the communication strategies adopted by school principals with the aim of identifying their strengths and challenges. This is with a view to making appropriate recommendations for improved instructional management in secondary schools.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. What communication strategies are adopted by principals in secondary schools in Akure South Local Government?
- ii. What is the effect of principals' communication strategies on teachers' instructional tasks in secondary schools?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted the non experimental research design of the descriptive survey research type. The population of this study comprised of all secondary school principals and teachers in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. Simple random sampling was used to select fourteen (14) secondary schools out of the existing twenty eight (28) public secondary schools in Akure South. The sample consisted fourteen (14) principals selected from the sampled schools. One hundred and fifty four (154) teachers; comprising

eleven teachers were randomly selected from each of the selected school across the Local Government Area. The instrument for the study was a self-developed questionnaire titled; Principals' Communication Strategies and Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (PCSTPQ). The instrument is divided into two sections. Section A dealt with personal data of the respondent, while section B elicited information on principals' communication strategies and teachers' productivity. The face and content validities of the instrument were carried out by given the initial draft of the questionnaire, the research questions and the objective of the study to other colleagues in the field of measurement and evaluation, University of Benin for critique. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated in the production of the final draft. Test re-test method of reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was initially administered on two non participating principals and twenty non participating teachers on two occasions at intervals of two weeks in two schools not participating in the study. Scores obtained were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A correlation co-efficient of 0.75 was obtained. The researchers personally administered the instrument by hand. After the administration of the instrument, data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

## **Results**

**Table 1:**

Demographic Analysis of the Respondents

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Population</b>	<b>Calculated Sample Size</b>	<b>Number of Questionnaire Administered</b>	<b>Number of Questionnaire Returned</b>	<b>Response Rate i n %</b>
Principals	28	14	14	14	100.00
Teachers	382	154	154	150	97.4

Table 1 presents the response rate of respondents to questionnaire administered. The result shows that all the sampled principals were available and were assessed. However, of the 154 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the teachers, 150 copies (97.4) % were retrieved.

**Research Question 1:** What communication strategies are adopted by principals in secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area?

**Table 2:**  
Communication Strategies Adopted By Principals in Secondary Schools in Akure South Local Government Area

Items	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Principal meets with the teachers on daily basis on current issues in the school.	4 (28.6)	6 (42.9)	4 (28.5)	0 (0.0)
Principal engages teachers through e-messaging and online chatting.	1 (7.1)	6 (42.9)	4 (28.6)	3 (21.4)
Suggestion boxes are strategically placed within the school premises.	3 (21.43)	7 (50.0)	1 (7.14)	3 (21.43)
Radio and television are used to pass across vital information.	1 (7.14)	3 (21.43)	7 (50.0)	3 (21.43)
Organizes regularly staff meetings to discuss important issues in the school.	4 (28.6)	7 (50.0)	1 (7.14)	2 (14.3)
Disseminating important messages to teacher and other staff through unit heads	6 (42.9)	7 (50.0)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)
Meeting personally with individual teachers on professional issues in school.	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)	4 (28.6)	1 (7.1)
Uses bulletin and newsletters to convey information.	1 (7.1)	4 (28.6)	6 (42.9)	3 (21.4)
Phone calls and text messages are regularly used by principals to pass urgent information to teachers.	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)	6 (42.9)	2 (14.3)

Table 2 presented the the communication strategies adopted by principals in secondary schools in Akure South Local Government. The study showed that most of the respondents (70.15%) agreed that principal meets with teachers after assembly on daily basis on current issues in the school. Also, most of the respondents (50.0 %) agreed that most principal engage their teachers through e-messaging and online chatting. Furthermore, most of the respondents (71.43%) agreed that suggestion boxes are strategically placed within the school premises. However, most of the respondents (71.43 %) disagreed that radio and television are used to disseminate vital information to the teachers and populace in general. Also, most of the respondents (78.6%) agreed that principals organize regularly staff meetings to discuss important issues in the school. Furthermore, 92.9% strongly agreed that principal disseminates important messages to teacher and other staff through their unit head/departmental head. Also, 64.3% agreed that most principal meet personally

with individual teachers on professional issues in school. Also 64.3% disagreed that most principals use bulletin and newsletters to convey information to teachers. 57.2 percent of the respondents also disagreed that phone calls and text messages are regularly used by principals to teachers to engender close relationship.

**Research Question 2:** What is the effect of principals' communication strategies on teachers' instructional tasks in secondary school?

**Table 3:**  
 Effect of principals' communication strategies on teachers' instructional tasks in secondary school

Items	Highly Effective (%)	Effective (%)	Fairly Effective (%)	Not Effective (%)
Adherence to school rules and regulations by all teachers.	56 (37.6)	72 (48.3)	19 (12.8)	2 (1.3)
Discharge statutory duties by teachers.	52 (34.9)	63 (42.3)	13 (8.7)	21 (14.1)
Engage in research to improve teaching technique by teachers	72 (48.3)	59 (39.6)	14 (9.4)	4 (2.7)
Classroom management by teachers.	45 (30.2)	70 (47.0)	24 (16.1)	10 (6.7)
Strict and unbiased discipline to all students.	54 (36.2)	54 (36.2)	33 (22.1)	8 (5.4)
Unhampered administrative process even in the absence of the school head	47 (31.5)	63 (42.3)	37 (24.8)	2 (1.3)
Attending to statutory duties without being prompted.	42 (28.2)	62 (41.6)	26 (17.4)	19 (12.9)
Self-regulation for better performance through feedback constantly received from principal.	50 (33.6)	59 (39.6)	31 (20.8)	9 (6.0)
Conducive atmosphere for teachers to work with each other.	72 (48.3)	52 (34.9)	24 (16.1)	1 (0.7)

Table 3 presented the effects of principals' communication strategies on teachers' instructional tasks in secondary school. It showed how effective the communication strategies are on teachers' instructional task in school. The study showed that most of the respondents (48.3%) agreed that principal's communication strategies are effective on adherence to school rules and regulations by all teachers. Also, most of the respondents (42.3%) agreed that motivation of teachers to discharge their statutory duties is also high.

Furthermore, most of the respondents (48.3%) agreed that encouragement to engage in research to improve teaching technique by teachers is highly effective. Also, most of the respondents (47.0) agreed that management of classroom by teachers is effective. Also, most of the respondents (36.2%) agreed that strict and unbiased discipline in school to all students highly effective. Furthermore, 42.3% of the teachers agreed that the administrative process even in the absence of the school principal is effective. Also, 42% of the entire teachers sampled agreed that Attending to statutory duties without being prompted is effective. And 40% of the teachers sampled agreed that Self-regulation for better performance through feedback constantly received from principal is effective. 48.3 percent of the respondents agreed that conducive atmosphere for teachers to work with each other is effective.

## **Discussion**

Effective communication strategies are the seamless drives that propel both administrative and teaching activities in schools. In a bid to leverage on other important factors that improve school climate, the study examined the communication strategies adopted by principals and the effects on the communication strategies on teachers' instructional tasks in secondary school in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. The findings showed series of communication strategies adopted by principals in secondary schools. Among the strategies include meeting with teachers immediately after assembly on daily basis to discuss current issues in the school. In this case, first-hand information gets to the teachers. Also, some principals communicate with teachers through e-messaging and online chatting. This is however not constant due to the peculiar situation of power supply in Nigeria. Furthermore, principals communicate through suggestion boxes strategically placed within the school premises. This mode of communication is not as popular as it were many years back. What we have now is just a box in front of the principals' office which is rarely checked. The study also showed that principals seldom use radio and television as means to disseminate vital information to the teachers and the general populace. However, the study showed that most principals organize staff meetings to discuss important issues in the school. Furthermore, principal disseminates important messages to teacher and other staff through their unit head/departmental head. Also occasionally, principal meet personally with individual teachers on professional issues in school. However, the use of bulletin and newsletters to convey information to teachers were rarely or not used at all. While some claimed that phone calls and text messages are regularly used by some principals to teachers. The findings of the study align with Okigbo and Nsiegbonam (2000). In their study, they identified reports, manuals, memorandum, correspondence, staff meetings and suggestion boxes which are useful means of collecting valuable suggestion and information. It is however, the most neglected and underutilized.

Findings from research question 2 showed that principals' communication strategies have effects on teachers' instructional tasks in secondary schools. The study showed that adherence to school rules and regulations by all teachers is effective. Also, through effective communication, the level of motivation of teachers to discharge their statutory duties is high. Furthermore, through principals' effective communication strategies, encouragement to engage in research to improve teaching technique by teachers is highly effective. Also through principals' effective communication strategies, management of classroom by teachers is effective. Also through principals' effective communication strategies, strict and unbiased discipline in school to all students is highly effective. Furthermore, through principals' effective communication strategies, administrative process even in the absence of the school principal is effective. Also, through principals' effective communication strategies, teachers' attending to statutory duties without being prompted is effective. Self-regulation for better performance through feedback constantly received from principal is fairly effective. Conducive atmosphere for teachers to work with each other is also fairly effective.

The study also identified that there is significant relationship between principals' communication strategies and its effects on teachers' instructional task in secondary schools. The findings corroborate with Tabotndip cited in Moye (2015). He concluded that morale is likely to be low in a 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. In the view of Nwosu (2017), other researchers on participation of teachers in decision-making in schools, revealed a positive correlation between participation in decision making and teachers' productivity. The logic here is that by involving teachers in decisions that affect them and by increasing their autonomy and control over their work lives through appropriate communication, employees would become more motivated, more committed to the organization, more productive and more satisfied with their job. Ekara (1996) also found out that teachers who had opportunity to actively participate in decision-making processes of the school were more enthusiastic about their system than those who had limited opportunity to participate. Ogunsaya (2003) 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. Ogunsaya (2003) corroborated further 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 on information that concerns staff welfare and how they will perform to achieve the set objectives of the school. Dickie (2004) in his submission maintained that effective communication can lead to the success of the school. In addition Ogunsaya (2003) also supported the assertion that

effective communication enhances learning and teaching activities to create understanding and concerted co-operative effort among all those involved in the education process.

## **Conclusion**

Principals' competence in the conscious use of diverse communication strategies can go a long way in addressing poor teachers' performance in statutory duties in schools. The communication strategies being a major driving force to activating other critical developmental factors in school is the sole responsibility of the school principal. This implies that teacher' instructional tasks in secondary school and ultimately the students' academic performance can be enhanced through effective use of different strategies of communication in secondary schools. In furtherance to the findings of this study, the following recommendations will really be useful to improve principals' communication strategies in schools. Principal should consider critically the various information disseminating strategies and the situation surrounding the information to be communicated to the teacher and adopt the easiest and fastest result oriented method. A combination of more than two methods could as well be employed to achieve the target goal. Other recommendations include:

- i. Principalship should not be basically by rank but by appointment to curb unethical behaviour among the principals.
- ii. All appointed principals must have been thoroughly drilled to ascertain their competence to take up the position.
- i. Political influence and favoritism on principals' appointment/selection should be limited to the barest minimal.
- ii. There should be Annual Principals Performance Assessment (APPA), which will assess the professional conduct of the principals on every aspects of school management within the year under review carried out by the teachers.
- iii. Principals found wanting in the discharge of his professional responsibility should be downgraded according to his status.
- iv. The Ministry of Education should constantly organize seminars and workshops that will educate and expose principals to international best practice in the effective use of official communication strategies in schools

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