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ISSN (Online) : 2455 - 3662
SJIF Impact Factor :4.924

EPRA International Journal of **Multidisciplinary Research**

Monthly Peer Reviewed & Indexed
International Online Journal

Volume: 4 Issue:7 July 2018



Published By :
EPRA Journals

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**EPRA International Journal of
Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)**

**PRINCIPALS' APPLICATION OF COMMUNICATION
SKILLS AS A CORRELATES OF TEACHERS' JOB
PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA**

Egboka, Patience Ndidi (Ph.D)¹

Department of Educational Management
and Policy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka,
Anambra State,
Nigeria.

Alike, Uche Grace (Ph.D)²

School of Education,
Federal College of Education (Technical),
Umunze, Anambra State,
Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This study ascertained principals' application of communication skills as a correlates of teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study and three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlation survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 6,396 secondary school teachers in Anambra State. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample 665 teachers for the study. The researchers-developed two sets of questionnaire titled "Principals' Communication Skills Questionnaire (PCSQ)" and "Teachers Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ)" were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts comprising two lecturers from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and the other a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instruments were ascertained using Cronbach alpha and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.81, 0.78 and 0.76 for the three parts of PCSQ and 0.77 for TJPQ. The researchers together with five research assistants collected data for the study. A 98% return rate was recorded. Data analysis was done using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions and t-test to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that there is a moderate relationship between principals' application of verbal skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. It was also found out that there is significant relationship between principals' application of feedback skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Ministry of Education should sponsor principals to workshops, seminars and conferences to enable them up-date their knowledge and communication skills in order to create conducive school environment that would enhance teachers' job performance.

KEYWORDS: communication, communication skills, listening skill, verbal skill, feedback skill, teachers' job performance

1. INTRODUCTION

The principal as the chief executive of secondary school communicates with students, staff, parents and stakeholders on a daily basis. Communication is exchange of ideas, feelings knowledge, information, experiences and emotion within people or a group of people. Arguing in the same line, Nwangwu, Eze and Ndukwu (2016) defined communication as a coerced effort on the part of the individuals involved in the school system to share their personal feelings, purpose and knowledge and to appreciate the feelings, purposes and knowledge of others. Communication helps in coordinating the efforts of staff in school. Similar to this, Nwosu (2017) stressed that communication is a managerial tool frequently used to share information with members of staff, to coordinate activities, to reduce unnecessary managerial burdens and rules, and ultimately to improve organizational performance. It is also a means in which staff are informed of various duties and how to perform it. Akinnubi, Gbadeyan, Fashiku and Kayode (2012) pointed out that communication is essential for understanding roles and assignments; planning and carrying out activities; coordinating approaches with students; providing information to teachers on students' progress and behaviours; and building a positive relationship with students, teachers and other staff. In the same vein, Ejeh and Okoro (2016) asserted that through communication, management can establish mutual understanding and exchange of ideas, information, experience and innovation for peaceful co-existence, conflict resolution, cumulative development, progress and well-being of the organizational structure.

A problem or misunderstanding may arise, if there is breakdown in communication or principal fails to provide timely information to members of staff. Iskandar, Ahmad and Martua(2014) asserted that managers who are involved in communication process need to possess both basic skills and abilities; otherwise the information could be misunderstood. Principals' application of appropriate communication skills as situation demands is essential for the smooth running of the school. Communication skills are the competencies, techniques and abilities to expertly disseminate information or express feelings, thoughts or ideas from one person to another or a group of people for mutual understanding so as to attain common goals. Nwite and Eze (2016) outlined communication skills to include, listening skill, verbal skill, non-verbal skill, written skill, and feedback skill. In the same vien, Okoye (2014) listed communication skills to include: writing, listening, speaking (verbal) and reading skills. The communication skills that are of great interest to the researcher in view of their relevance in positioning teachers towards greater performance are listening, verbal and feedback skills.

Listening is one of the communication skills. Hacıaferoğlu (2014) stressed that listening carefully and with interest to the other person's words and observe her/his behaviors, is an essential skill of communication. Listening skill is the ability to pay attention so as to accurately receive and interpret information or ideas. Arguing in the same line, Nwite and Eze (2016) defined listening skill as the ability of someone who may be the communicated to pay attention to the communicator in order to decode the message property. Listening skill enables principals to understand staff views in the school. Effective listening promotes interpersonal relations, cooperation, understanding and harmony in the school. Listening requires concentration, attention and patience. Segiu and Tatiana (2016) stressed that active listening include behaviours such as: empathetic, appropriate gesture and expressions to indicate listening and asking helpful questions among others. Okoye (2014) asserted that listening does not just entail hearing but an active psychological process that involves meaningful information reception with adequate concentration. Listening skills also entails soliciting the teachers' opinions and willingness to consider it during decision making. The listening skill enable principals to learn, understand and obtain information to foster good interpersonal relationship in school.

Verbal skill is the ability of the principals to express or exchange thoughts or information through sound, words or speech. In the view of Nwite and Eze (2016), verbal skill is the ability of the communicator to be outspoken so that one can hear and understand the message being communicated. This communication skill enables the principals to orally disseminate information to members of staff. Principals' application of verbal skills is essential in rendering professional advice, assistance, guidance and counseling services to members of staff. Examples of verbal communication include: face-to-face conversation and use of electronic media for oral conversations among others. Okoye (2014) asserted that many school administrators may not be proficient at application verbal skills.

Feedback is another communication skill that is both critical to fostering loyalty and integrity of the school manager (Segiu & Tatiana, 2016). Feedback skill lies at the heart of communication. According to Nwite and Eze (2016), feedback communication skill means, the ability of the communicate respond appropriately to the message being communicated. In the views of Ayeni (2014); Keyton (2011), feedback is essential because it conveys to the sender that the message was received and understood. It serves as a powerful reinforce of what staff are getting right in school. Feedback occurs when the receiver responds to the sender's message and returns the message to the sender (Ejeh & Okoro, 2016). Some teachers rely on

feedback from principals on a given issues for necessary actions. Segiu and Tatiana stressed that constructive manager's feedback is significantly linked with work job related outcomes such as performance, self-confidence, recognition and emotional bonding.

Teachers' job performance is defined by various scholars in varying ways based on their perception of the subject matter. According to Uko, Umosen and Caleb (2015), teachers' job performance refers to the extent to which teachers are committed to pedagogical delivery and display of moral uprightness and academic excellence in the teaching profession. In the same vein, Owala, Odongo and Raburu (2016) defined teacher job performance as the teacher's ability to integrate the experience, teaching methods, instructional materials, knowledge. The researchers defined teachers' job performance as the level of commitment and dedication of teachers in executing their duties so as to achieve predetermined objectives of the school.

There are various indices of teachers' job performance. Duze (2012) pointed out that the teachers' performance could be measured through annual report of their activities in terms of performance in teaching, lesson preparation, lesson presentation, mastery of subject matter, competence, teachers' commitment to job and extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, Duze asserted that other areas of assessment include effective leadership, effective supervision, effective monitoring of students' work, motivating students' interest, class control and disciplinary ability of the teachers. Similar to this, Nnebedum and Akinfolarin (2017) pointed out that the indicators of teacher job performance is evaluated in his or her ability to make deliberate effort to enhance students academic performance, display in-depth knowledge of his or her subject matters, presenting of lesson in a well-organised manner, regularity and punctuality in the school, discipline, motivation and counseling of students and compliance to teachers professional code of conduct, among others. This implies that teachers' job performance could be ascertained through evaluation of their; lesson delivery, students' academic performance, school attendance, punctuality, compliance to teaching professional code of conduct, classroom control and management among others. There are decline in secondary school teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. The decline in teachers' job performance in secondary school in Anambra State is evident in their absent and lateness to school, leaving school before the official closing hours, irregular use of lesson plans and notes during instructional delivery among others. In the same vein, Ezeugbor and Emere (2017) who observed that in as much as it is important to appreciate the outstanding performance of secondary school students in Anambra State in the SSCE examinations from

2013-2016, there still exist evidences of teachers' failures and laxities in the discharge of their onerous responsibilities. Communication gaps may contribute to laxities in teachers' discharge of their duties in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Unachukwu and Odumodu (2015) who observed that in secondary schools in Anambra State, principals communicate with their staff as if they are slaves and not colleagues whose efforts are also needed in achieving the school objectives. Some secondary school principals in Anambra State find it difficult to listen when teachers are speaking and some are reluctant to provide timely feedbacks to them. This seems to create misunderstanding, chaos, disorder and other forms of conflict among principals and teachers in secondary schools in Anambra State. In the same vein, Nwite and Eze (2016) observed that sometimes misunderstanding, misinterpretation and break down of law and order occurs as a result of breakdown of communication between the principals, students and the staff in secondary schools in Anambra State. This corroborates Ejeh and Okoro (2016) who observed that poor communication breeds misunderstanding, suspicion, mistrust, rumors, creates conflict between the management and members of staff, and causes students crisis among others. It is in the light of this unpleasant situation that this study was set out to investigate principals' application of communication skills as a correlates of teachers' performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to ascertain principals' application of communication skills as a correlates of teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, this study sought to find out:

1. The relationship between principals' application of listening skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. The relationship between principals' application of verbal skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.
3. The relationship between principals' application of feedback skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between principals' application of listening skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between principals' application of verbal skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State?

3. What is the relationship between principals’ application of feedback skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State?

4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between principals’ application of listening skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant relationship between principals’ application of verbal skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.
3. There is no significant relationship between principals’ application of feedback skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

5. METHOD

The study adopted a correlation survey. The study population comprised 6,396 secondary school teachers in Anambra State. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample 665 teachers for the study. The researchers-developed two sets of questionnaire titled “Principals’ Communication Skills Questionnaire (PCSQ)” and “Teachers Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ)” were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts who are lecturers; two in Department of Educational Management and Policy and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University,

Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established. The data used for computing the reliability indices were obtained from copies of the questionnaire administered on a sample of 30 teachers in Enugu state. The choice of Enugu state was because Anambra and Enugu states share similar characteristics and principals’ application of communication skills in the states seem to be similar. The data obtained were subjected to test for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha. This yielded coefficient values of 0.81, 0.78 and 0.76 for the three parts of PCSQ and 0.77 for TJPQ respectively. The administration of the instruments was done by the researchers together with five research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Anambra State using direct administration method. A total of 665 questionnaires were distributed and 654 copies of questionnaire were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating 98 percent return. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions. In answering the research questions, the coefficient (r) and the size of the relationship was interpreted using the interpretation of correlation coefficient by Downie and Heath cited in Nworgu (2015) as shown: 0.80 and above for high, above 0.30-below 0.80 for moderate and 0.30 and below for low respectively. The t-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses. In testing the null hypotheses, if t-calculated is equal to or greater than t-critical at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected, but if otherwise, it is not rejected.

6. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between principals’ application of listening skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation between principals’ application of listening skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools

	N	Listening Skill	Teachers’ job Performance	Decision
Listening Skill	654	1	.803	
Teachers’ Job Performance	654	.803	1	Positive

Table 1 shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, $r(654) = .803$. This is an indication that there is a high relationship between principals’

application of listening skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. Research Question 2: What is the relationship between principals’ application of verbal skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation between principals' application of verbal skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools

	N	Verbal Skill	Teachers' job Performance	Decision
Verbal Skill	654	1	.712	
Teachers' Job Performance	654	.712	1	Positive

Table 2 shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, $r. (654) = .712$. This is an indication that there is a moderate relationship between principals' application of verbal skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between principals' application of feedback skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation between principals' application of feedback skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools

	N	Feedback Skill	Teachers' job Performance	Decision
Feedback Skill	654	1	.793	
Teachers' Job Performance	654	.793	1	Positive

Table 3 shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, $r. (654) = .803$. This is an indication that there is a moderate relationship between principals' application of feedback skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between principals' application of listening skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: t-test analysis of no significant relationship between application of listening skill and teachers' job performance

	N	Listening Skill	Teachers' Job Performance	t-cal.	t-crit.	Remark
Listening Skill	654	1	.803			
Teachers' Job Performance	654	.803	1	2.13	1.96	Rejected

Data presented on Table 4, the t-calculated value of 2.13 is greater than t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level

of significance and 652 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between principals' application of listening

skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Ho 2: There is no significant relationship between principals’ application of verbal skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 5: t-test analysis of no significant relationship between application of verbal skill and teachers’ job performance

		Verbal Skill	Teachers’ Job Performance	<i>t-cal.</i>	<i>t-crit.</i>	Remark
Verbal Skill	654	1	.712			
				1.98	1.96	Rejected
Teachers’ Job Performance	654	.712	1			

Result presented on Table 5, the t-calculated value of 1.98 is greater than t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 652 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between principals’ application of verbal

skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Ho 3: There is no significant relationship between principals’ application of feedback skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 6: t-test analysis of no significant relationship between application of feedback skill and teachers’ job performance

		Feedback Skill	Teachers’ Job Performance	<i>t-cal.</i>	<i>t-crit.</i>	Remark
Feedback Skill	654	1	.793			
				2.07	1.96	Rejected
Teachers’ Job Performance	654	.793	1			

Table 6 shows that the t-calculated value of 2.07 is greater than t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 652 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between principals’ application of feedback skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found out that there is a high relationship between principals’ application of listening skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. This implies that an increase in principals’ application of listening skill will increase teachers’ job performance and vice versa. It also

reported that there is significant relationship between principals’ application of listening skill and teachers’ job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. This is in agreement with the finding of Nebo, Nwankwo and Okonkwo (2015) who reported that communication skills (techniques) have enhanced the performance of staff. This is supported by the finding of Nwosu (2017) who reported that there is a significant relationship between principals’ communication skills (strategies) and teachers’ job performance. The similarity in findings could be attributed to the fact the communication skills which also entails listening to staff, gives them the opportunity to air their views on issues affecting their performance. Principals’ paying attention to

suggestions or complaints of the teachers on issues affecting their performance gives them a sense of belonging and motivates them towards higher performance. Principals' patience in listening to aggrieved staff who is complaining and tackling the problem creating conducive work environment that enhance their job performance.

The finding of this study revealed that there is a moderate relationship between principals' application of verbal skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. It also found out that there is significant relationship between principals' application of verbal skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. This is in line with the finding of Oyebode, Adeboyo, Oduntan and Afeisume (2016) who reported that there was relationship between communication skills in an organization and staff job performance (productivity). This finding is supported by Asamu (2014) who reported that there is a relationship between communication and staff job performance. This agreement in findings could be as result that application of verbal communication skill plays crucial roles in directing and mobilizing staff towards accomplishment of the school objectives. Principals' use of right choice words or sound in communicating with teachers helps to maintain staff self-esteem and enhance their commitment in performing their jobs. The principals' application of verbal skill helps in improving teamwork, boost teachers' morale and facilitate the execution of tasks delegated to them.

The study also reported that there is a moderate relationship between principals' application of feedback skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. It was reported that there is significant relationship between principals' application of feedback skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. This is in agreement with the finding of Babatunde (2014) there was significant relationship between principals' communication skills and teachers' effectiveness. This similarity in findings is not surprising owing to the fact that it is through feedback that the receiver of information or message reacts according in order to foster unity of purpose in performing a task. Prompt feedback to teachers on outcome of decisions enriches their knowledge and also informs them on possible modification of the roles in attaining the school objectives. Feedback is also a mechanism in which principals could use to clarify and explain conflicting issues to staff. This helps to promote understanding among teachers, cooperation, harmony and mutual interpersonal relationship which enhance teachers' job performance.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it is concluded that there is significant relationship between principals' application of communication skill and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. It is also through communication that tasks, the resources needed to perform the tasks and the expected results are made known to secondary school staff in Anambra State and this makes the tasks easier for better performance. The ability of principals to make use of the right choice of words in communicating to staff, giving listening ears to them and providing a constructive feedback gives them a sense of belonging and motivates them towards higher performance.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ministry of Education should sponsor principals to workshops, seminars and conferences to enable them up-date their knowledge and communication skills in order to create conducive school environment that would enhance teachers' job performance.
2. Principals should pay attention to staff and provide constructive feedback so as to improve their performance.
3. Secondary school principals should endeavour to provide opportunities for staff to give feedback on various issues communicated to them so as foster good interpersonal relationship and cooperation for enhancing teachers' job performance.

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