

**COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AS CORRELATES OF EFFECTIVE
MANAGEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigated communication strategies as correlate of effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design. A sample of 727 respondents was used for the study. This consists of 394 public secondary school teachers and 333 principals from the sampled states (Abia, Enugu and Imo States). The sample size of the study was determined using Taro Yamane Formula for determining sample size. The multi-stage sampling approach was used in sampling the states, education zones and local governments used for the study. The instruments for data collection were communication strategies questionnaire (CSQ) and effective management questionnaire (EMQ). The instruments were validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation with a coefficient of 0.87 and 0.82 for communication strategies questionnaire (CSQ) and effective management questionnaire (EMQ) respectively while the internal consistency was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistic which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.85 and 0.81 for CSQ and EMQ respectively. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the two research questions raised for the study while linear regression was used to test the corresponding null hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that open, and inclusive strategies had positive and significant relationship with effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the Ministry of Education should strengthen the monitoring and evaluation aspect to ensure that the head teachers are executing their mandate as required by law and that efforts should be made to ensure that there is total adherence to set communication standards and practices among others.

Keywords: Communication strategies, open, inclusive, effective management, secondary schools

Introduction

Communication remains a unique instrument that integrates management functions in an organization. This explains why communication is inevitable and indispensable for effective management in the school system. The communication systems in schools and other organizations can be likened to blood in human beings. It involves a sender transmitting an idea, information, or feeling to a receiver. It is a two-way process that involves the sender and the receiver. Communication is, therefore, concerned with transmitting and receiving information, which is the key to all aspects of organisational life, whether by planning, controlling, problem-solving, decision-making, motivating, interviewing, and other management activities (Akinnubi et al.,2010). No administrative functions can be carried out in schools without excellent and effective communication. The success or failure of any organisation largely depends on the efficiency of its communication process. The quality of communication skills possessed by the management of any institution determines the degree of accomplishment (Adejoh & Hadiza, 2015).

Managers and administrators direct through communication; coordinate through communication; staff, plan, and control through communication. For better communication in a school, the principal must first conceive ideas and relate such ideas to his staff and other stakeholders. He is responsible for sharing visions and valuable information needed for the smooth running of the school and transferring ideas (Akinwale & Okotoni, 2018). A good principal must ensure the free flow of information among the personnel in the school (teachers and students). The school system directs staff and students toward a stated goal depending on the communication strategies adopted.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a strategy is a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal, usually over a long period, or the skill of carrying out plans to reach a goal.

According to Kabandize (2014), communication is a strategy for managing student discipline by sharing views between students and administrators. Sevan and Ross (2010) explained that principals typically select the most appropriate strategy that matches their message content, communication requirements, and perceived communication tasks. They further categorized communication strategies in an organization: open communication strategy, inclusive communication strategy, two-way communication strategy, result-driven communication strategy, and multi-channel communication strategy. Others include aggressive communication strategy and assertive communication strategy. Open and inclusive communication strategies were considered in this article. An open communication strategy is one in which all members of the organisation feel free to share feedback, ideas, and even criticism at all levels. In an open communication strategy, the principal allows teachers to share feedback and criticisms. Inclusive communication strategy is one of the strategies used in communication. It is one in which explicit steps are taken to ensure that all employees feel involved in the decisions that affect their day-to-day activities (Barnlund, 2018). This entails that organisations with inclusive communication strategies are open to people and allow contributions from within and outside the organization. In this era of globalization and internet services, school principals tap information locally, nationally, and globally to improve the school administration. All staff and students have confidence in themselves and strengthen their professional performances, as they are seen as part of the school administration.

Management is defined as getting things done through others. It can be more scientifically defined as the coordination of all the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling to attain organizational objectives. It can also, be seen as the supervising, controlling, and coordinating of school activities to attain optimum results with organizational resources (Akinnubi, 2010). Consequently, management is an

integral aspect of any organisation, whether church, mosque, school, industry, etc. Effective and efficient school management is indispensable.

As an effective administrator, the principal plays vital roles, such as effective communication and time management, in the smooth running of the school. Effective school communication is required for teachers to improve their work per the general educational requirements needed to achieve school goals. Although communication is at the heart of school life, more must be known about the correlation between open and inclusive communication strategies to manage secondary schools effectively.

The realization of a secondary school's goals as an educational organisation hinges on effective communication among the various operating personnel. The primary function of education itself relies almost entirely on communication. According to Nakpodia (2010), communication helps to build relationships and facilitates the achievement of goals. Thus, the need for effective communication strategies a secondary school cannot be over- emphasised.

In secondary schools where communication exists daily, many problems are generated for administrators and the entire system. Looking at the influence of effective communication strategies on teachers and principals, the critical actors in secondary schools, one wonders if principals apply such communication strategies in their schools. This is the reason the researchers examined communication strategies as correlate of effective management of secondary schools in South East Nigeria? This is the onus of this study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate communication strategies as correlates of effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the extent open communication strategy correlates with effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.
2. examine the extent inclusive communication strategy correlates with effective management of secondary schools.

Two research questions were formulated to guide this study.

1. To what extent does open communication strategy correlates with effective management of secondary schools?
2. To what extent does inclusive communication strategy correlates with effective management of secondary schools?

Two null hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Open communication strategy does not significantly relate to effective school management of secondary schools.

H₀₂: Inclusive communication strategy does not significantly relate to effective management of secondary schools.

Methodology

The design of this study was correlational. This study was carried out in South East, Nigeria. The South- East, Nigeria comprises the following states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The population of this study consists of all the 28,861 principals and teachers, which is made up of 27,431 public secondary school teachers, and 1,430 principals in the public secondary schools in South–Eastern Nigeria. A sample of 727 respondents was used for the study. This comprises 394 public secondary school teachers and 333 principals from the sample states (Abia, Enugu, and Imo States). The sample size of the study was determined using the Taro Yamane Formula. The multi-stage sampling approach was used for the study. Two instruments were developed by the researcher for data collection. The first questionnaire,

"Communication Strategies Questionnaire" (CSQ), comprised of two sections, A and A, dealt with respondents' data. Section B dealt with items on communication strategies and has two clusters, A and B. items. Cluster A determined the extent to which open communication strategy correlates with the effective management of secondary schools, and Cluster B examined the extent to which inclusive communication strategy correlates with the effective management of secondary schools. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach alpha statistics to establish the internal consistency of the items. Alpha indices of 0.88 and 0.77 were obtained for CSQ AND EMSQ, respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r^2) was used to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results were presented according to the research questions and the corresponding hypotheses as follows:

Research question 1: To what extent does open communication strategy correlates with effective management of secondary schools?

Table 4.1 Correlation matrix of extent of relationship between open communication strategy and effective management of secondary schools.

		Open communication	Effective Management
Open communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.629**
	Sig.(2.tailed)		.000
	N	727	727
Effective Management	Pearson Correlation	.629**	1
	Sig.(2.tailed)	.000	
	R ²	.523	
	N	727	727

****Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2.tailed)**

Data in Table 4.1 indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of .629 which is a positive correlation and is within the coefficient limit of +/- 0.60-0.79 as high extent relationship. This indicates that open communication strategy relate to effective management of secondary schools in South East Nigeria. The percentage coefficient of determination (R^2) .523 shows that

52.3% of the variance observed in open communication could be attributed to effective management. The result here is that there is a high positive relationship between open communication strategy and effective management of secondary schools.

A corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is:

Hypothesis 1

Open communication strategy does not significantly relate to effective management of secondary schools.

Table 4.2 Regression analysis of relationship between open communication and effective management of secondary schools.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2369.172	1	2369.172	14.557	.000 ^a
Residual	200178.236	725	162.747		
Total	202547.408	726			

a. Predictors: (Constant), open communication

b. Dependent variable: effective management

1. Df= degree of freedom, F= f-calculated, correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 4.2 revealed that F-calculated value of 14.557 at 0.05 level of significance. The table also shows that the P-value of .000^a which is less than the alpha value at 0.05; thus null hypothesis which states that Open communication strategy does not significantly relate to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria is rejected and upheld that Open communication strategy significantly relate to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This implies that open communication strategy to high extent relates to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Research question 2: To what extent does inclusive communication strategy correlates with effective management of secondary schools?

Table 4.3 Correlation matrix of extent of relationship between inclusive communication strategy and effective management of secondary schools.

	Inclusive communication	Effective Management
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Inclusive communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.857**
	Sig.(2.tailed)		.000
	N	727	727
Effective Management	Pearson Correlation	.857**	1
	Sig.(2.tailed)	.000	
	R ²	.573	
	N	727	727

****Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2.tailed)**

Data in Table 4.3 indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of .857 which is a positive correlation and is within the coefficient limit of +/- 0.80-0.99 as very high extent relationship. This indicates that inclusive communication strategy relate to effective management of secondary schools in South East Nigeria. The percentage coefficient of determination (R²) .573 shows that 57.3% of the variance observed in inclusive communication strategy could be attributed to effective management. The result here is that there is a very high positive relationship between inclusive communication strategy and effective management of secondary schools.

A corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is:

Hypothesis 2 : Inclusive communication strategy does not significantly relate to effective management of secondary schools.

Table 4.4 Regression analysis of relationship between inclusive communication strategy and effective management of secondary schools.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	4981.221	1	4981.221	31.012	.000 ^a
Residual	197566.187	725	160.623		
Total	202547.408	726			

a. Predictors: (Constant), inclusive communication

b. Dependent variable: effective management

2. Df= degree of freedom, F= f-calculated, correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 4.4 revealed that F-calculated value of 31.012 at 0.05 level of significance. The table also shows that the P-value of .000^a which is less than the alpha value at 0.05; thus null hypothesis which states that inclusive communication strategy does not significantly relate to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria is rejected and upheld that inclusive communication strategy significantly relates to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This implies that inclusive communication strategy to high extent relates to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings revealed that there is a high positive and significant relationship between open communication and effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

It was also found from the study that inclusive communication strategy significantly relates to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria to a very high extent. This is in line with findings of Katolo (2016) who opines that effective open communication enables principals to enhance sound school administration which motivates students' discipline and consequently leads to continuous improvement in quality learning. Ezenwekwe (2013) affirms that an open communication style is a style of communication in which the leader consciously creates an atmosphere where all individuals within an organisation express their views and opinions on issues affecting the running of the organisation.

The study shows that there is a very high tendency for inclusive communication strategy to improve effective management of secondary schools. The corresponding hypothesis tested revealed that inclusive communication strategy significantly relates to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This means that inclusive communication could influence effective management of secondary schools positively. This is in line with the finding of Ezenwekwe (2013) who opines that principals' adaption of inclusive communication strategy

enhance effectiveness and efficiency or the smooth running of any organization including schools and there is a relationship between principals' communication strategies and teachers job performance.

Conclusion

Based on the analyses carried out and the results of the study, it could be concluded that open and inclusive communication strategies significantly relate to effective management of secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made as follows:

1. The Ministry of Education should strengthen their monitoring theme to ensure that the head teachers' are executing their mandate as required by law and that effort are made to ensure that there is total adherence to set communication standards and practices.
2. The Ministry of Education should organise training for principals and head teachers to enhance their communication competencies as well as encouraging the utilization of these competencies in promoting effective management of schools

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