

COMMUNICATION SKILL: A STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING EFFECTIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN KWARA STATE**BY**

Dr. (Mrs.) R.M. Oladimeji: Department of Educational Management and Guidance and Counselling, Al-hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State, rashdupe@yahoo.com
Laoye, Oyindamola Yetunde: Kwara State University, Malete, laoyeoyindamola.y@gmail.com

Abstract

Communication is the process of passing information from one person to another with appropriate feedback. This paper examined communication skill as a strategy for achieving secondary school administration in Kwara State. Concept of communication and developing an effective communication skill in Kwara State secondary schools were discussed. It was concluded that communication is very important in secondary school administration in order to attain predetermined goals and objectives. It was also suggested that school administrators should lay more emphasis on effective communication in order to attain effective school administration.

Keyword: *Communication Skill, Effective Secondary School, Administration, Kwara State*

Introduction

Communication is the transfer of message or information from one person to another or a group of people for common understanding (Canary, 2011). Effective communication skill is of the utmost important within and organization for effective dissemination of information, and in the secondary school system. The manager of the system is the principal, who with the help of the heads of departments gets to pass information down to the teachers on how studies, methods and approach of teaching are arranged in order to meet the needs of the students academically. A school manager cannot organize his staff, coordinate and control their activities as well as delegate responsibilities without effective communication (Ijaiya, 2000). And a successful educational system is basically a reflection of a well-organized system, and for a system to be well-organized, the communication channel must have been well structured. Also, a well-structured communication channel within a secondary school system will lead to achievement of goals, and that will surely be seen in the quality of students produced.

Okoli (1990) carried out a research to develop an instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of secondary school teaching by students and principals. He came up with six criteria of teacher effectiveness summarized thus:

1. Personal attributes; he should be regularly, punctual and healthy.
2. Teaching Principle and skill; he should write clearly, be audible, logical and involve students. He should use instructional materials and prepare well.
3. Knowledge of subject; explains well, teaches all topics, use more than one book and is confident.
4. Knowledge of the learner; seeks to understand students, uses increasing activities, gives clear instructions and is available to students.
5. Inter-personal relations; Objective in marking, rewards and punishment concerned with student poor performance, sympathetic, approachable.
6. Evaluation method; tests regularly, tests only matter taught; fair in grading, returns and discusses test. These items are example from the instrument and they summarize the overt and observable attributes of an effective teacher

Moreover, effectiveness as regards teaching can be viewed from two distinct perspectives; the quality and methods of the tutor, while teaching and the rate of learning shown by the students in assessment tests. This is only natural to Farrant (2000) who states that teaching and learning are opposite sides of same coin, for a lesson is never taught until it has been learnt. Everything being equal, an effective teacher knows what to

teach, how to teach it and then assess students' level of understanding and if necessary reteach it to make sure more than three quarters of the students have understood it and are capable of passing any examination on it.

Recently, one could tell that secondary schools in Nigeria, especially those in Kwara State and to be precise public schools are doing poorly, administratively and student performance are not encouraging and this could be pinned to a lot of factors, with few including, poor administration, employments of unqualified staffs, low staff morale, low salaries, indiscipline among staffs and students, bad states of classrooms and low morale to study among the students and many more. With the little mentioned to be the problem facing the educational standard in the state, it is easy to say that this will surely have a negative effect on the effectiveness of teaching and expected results. Ofoegbu (2004) observed that poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teachers' effectiveness in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits. And as a result of this, developing a model worthy of shaping the educational system at the secondary level in Kwara State through an effective communication medium has become imperious.

Concept of Communication

Communication as a concept simply means the basic ideas and facts about the transmission of messages from one person or group of people to another. That is, passing the information within the school system for effective administration. With this, attempts have been made to delimit the term communication. According to Cole (1996), communication could be defined as the process of creating, transmitting and interpreting ideas, facts, opinions and feelings. To him, communication is a process that involves creating and transmitting of ideas, facts, opinions and feelings in form of a message from one person (encoder) and the message is translated and interpreted by another person (decoder). For instance, in the school settings, a principal would create a message in form of objects, transmitting the message through heads of departments to the teachers. These objects are translated and interpreted based on the facts and ideas.

Peretomode (1991) affirmed that communication, at any point in time within an organization, is successful to the extent that the sender of a message and a receiver have a very similar comprehension of the content of the message. Meaning that for encoder to create a message and for a decoder to translate it, there must be a sound knowledge of facts and ideas about the message. He also buttressed the fact that communication does not take place unless the receiver correctly interprets the information being transmitted. Nevertheless, communication is not effective until the message is properly and accurately decoded by the receiver. Ogunsaju (1990) considered communication as an event that occurs whenever people assign meaning to each other's behaviours. A school manager, however, needs to take caution and ensure that wrong interpretations are not assigned to information communicated especially in behaviour. There have been cases where actions of school managers are misconstrued for lack of interest in the students' welfare. For example, a principal of a school having an audience with the deaf and dumb students on issues relating to the students welfare. The students on their part saw the principal's action/behaviour as lack of interest in them. This heated up their relationship which eventually led to the chasing out of the said principal from the school by the students. Communication is an active task and a purposefully shared experience involving two or more people and the school administrator should see it as such. The school administrators interact with many different people during the day, including other administrators, teachers, parents, and students etc.

The ability of an administrator to contribute to the improvement of the school system will depend on his or her communication skills. For example, communication is essential for: understanding roles and assignments; planning and carrying out learning activities; coordinating approaches with students; providing information to teachers on student progress and behaviours; and building a positive relationship with students, teachers and other staff. Effective communication promotes awareness of others' interest and needs. Being aware of the necessary skills that will encourage open communication is important when working with others. Consequently, issues such as road blocks to communication, using accepting language and listening strategies which will relay information that lead towards more positive interactions with others will be examined.

Developing an Effective Communication Skills in Kwara Secondary Schools

The management of secondary schools in Kwara State needs to see it a necessity to look into improving the communication skills within the system, even if the infrastructures are of the best designs, the quality of teaching and the ability of those students under their tutorship should be investigated and evaluated annually to ascertain the quality of graduates they are producing. Few points and strategies seen to tackle and help implement the success of having the system rigged with effective communication skills will be discussed below.

Management and Structure

The management and leadership structure of secondary schools is very important, a standard secondary school system must be well organized and well arranged in a manner that communication will be flowing within the system effectively, aside from the academic region, the schooling system must have departments and heads who will make it easier for the adequate management of staffs and students. The principal will be in-charge of both academic and nonacademic activities, the principal must be provided with deputies in the academic and nonacademic departments as this will make the easy dissemination of directives down to every staffs, also they will help to manage the staffs under them and give periodic reports to the principal for assessments. This will help to keep a judicious record of how the management of the school seems to be going.

Academic Board and Non-Academic Board

Academic board will be a number of staffs that plans the method of teaching to be adopted and the kinds of materials seen worthy to be used for the making of students note and how assessments will be designed to examine the rate of learning by the students. And, the nonacademic board plans the activities of the school outside the academic aspect, like the sport department, accounting department and many more, and these departments make a balance within the system by maintaining the happiness level within the student and also the accounting department that takes care of the needs of the teachers.

Monitoring Team within the System

Monitoring teams selected by the management that will be tasked with the monitoring of led down regulations, study plans, and also statistical representation of results annually to see the effectiveness of the policies led down if it needs a review, to be abolished or to be applauded. A monitoring team will help to make sure that those led down polices by the management are well executed.

Disciplinary Department/ Committee

Discipline should be taken serious and a department or committee should be dedicated to that area, as this will help to keep the staffs and students modest and well behaved, the department od committee will be tasked with the penalizing of staffs and students found guilty of offences within the schooling system, and this will get to make the culture a standard one with people with a mindset of doing things in ways that will get the system into attaining its set goals.

Teachers / Non-Teaching Staffs Training and Evaluation

Annually, the teachers and other non-teaching staffs needs to be constantly trained and evaluated, they need to be educated with the new trends of teaching, new materials that will benefit the students and also to be conversant with the newly improved topic and textbook, as to keep students updated and not to keep teaching outdated materials that would not benefit the student or make them under-informed.

Likewise, they should be examined, academically and mentally, to now if they are fit to be in the classroom, as a teacher who is not fit mentally and academically should not be allowed to take up classes, as this will after teaching and communication between the student and the tutor.

Award Packages

Constantly, the staffs should be encouraged not just with the salaries alone but with award of recognition to show that they are appreciated and that results of dedicated teaching is seen, and for those who have students

with good result, which is a reflection of their communication skills in class, they should be applauded so that it will give to them more confident and encouragement to do better and this will also help to boost their morale towards giving the best of teaching to the students.

Conclusion

Communication is very important in secondary school administration in order to attain predetermined goals and objectives. Effective communication as a result of well-organised secondary school system based on the laid down structures will help get the shape and project the secondary schools in Kwara State to a higher height and abring about more effective mode of communication among the teachers and students which will have an effect on the quality of the students that will be graduating from such schools.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made:

- i. School administrators should lay more emphasis on effective communication in order to attain effective school administration.
- ii. Policies should be made and enforced by the Ministry of Education in Kwara State that will ensure that principals of secondary schools draft out a plan and strategy for implementation.
- iii. School heads should put in place a well-organised structure in their schools that will help to see loopholes and get to straighten those areas that are not well looked into. And with this, positive change with a good report will be seen projecting annually.

References

- Canary, H. (2011). *Communication and organizational knowledge: contemporary issues for theory and practice*. Florence, Ky: Taylor & Francis
- Cole, G.A. (1996). *Management: Theory and practice*. London: DP Publications. 5th Edition
- Ijaiya, Y. (2002). *Communication on School Management*. Kwara: In demac Print Media.
- Okoli, A. C. (1990). *The Development of instrument for evaluating teacher effectiveness by students and principals in secondary schools in Awka education zone of Anambra state*. Unpublished M. ed Thesis Faculty of Education university of Nigeria Nsukka.
- Farrant, J. S. (2000). *Principles and practice of education*. London: Longman.
- Ofoegbu, F.I. (2004). *Teacher motivation: A factor in classroom effectiveness and school improvement in Nigeria*. Alabama: Project Innovation Publishers.
- Peretomode, V.F. (1991). *Educational administration: Applied concept and theoretical perspective*. Lagos: Joya Press.