

COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, AKWA IBOM NORTH EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT.

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between communication skills in strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness of principals of secondary school in Akwa Ibom North East senatorial zone in Akwa Ibom State. One research question was raised and a null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 alpha level of significance. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised of 86 principals from the 86 public secondary schools in Uyo senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State. A purposive sample of 86 principals was used for study. Two instruments tagged, "Communication Skills in Strategic Plan Implementation Questionnaire (CSSPIQ) and "Administrative Effectiveness of principal Questionnaire (AEPQ) were used to elicit information from the respondents. The reliability coefficient of .83 for leadership skill in strategic implementation and .79 for principal's administrative effectiveness were obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question, while Pearson's products moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis. The finding of the study revealed that, communication skills in strategic plan significantly relates to principal's administrative effectiveness in Uyo senatorial district in Akwa Ibom State. It is therefore recommended that principals should be equipped with effective communication skills through training using seminar, conferences and workshops that would enhance their skill to be able to implement strategic plans to attain administrative effectiveness in their respective schools.

Key words: Communication skill, leadership skill, administrative effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The latest venture by the Federal Government of Nigeria is the emphasis on promoting effective use of strategic planning among others, to improve the quality of education provision and service delivery (FRN, 2013). The emphasis is on the development and implementation of transformational leadership, the shift from quantity to quality and the achievement of system-wide transformation as a desirable goal. Strategic planning is about developing a good match between the activities of an institution and the demands of the environment in which it operates

(Nte, 2007). It focuses on the institution's mission, objectives, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In essence, strategic planning aims at ensuring internal efficiency of an organization or institution.

Strategic planning is advocated for by organizations, because many institutions and organizations have seen the need to change from old methods of planning and management to new and effective ways of dealing with the future. Strategic plan and its implementation is the focal point of any business organization and operation, especially the education system. People understand the commitment, time, emotion and energy needed to overcome inertia in their organization and translate plans into action. Strategic plans can only impact an organization positively if it's successfully implemented. To enable a school to strive, remain competitive and grow, strategic plan implementation must be the core part of the overall growth and success, whereby leaders need to learn to set goals that are worthy of commitment to create a shared vision for the organizational strategy. Ralph (2008) noted that an effective strategic plan implementation process involves devising a well-crafted objective and mission statement, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation mission and control. The principal as a chief executive of the school plays a critical role in this engagement, through effective communication. The principal is required to effectively communicate the strategic plans of the government based on the available resources and time to all stakeholders within and outside the school, towards administrative effectiveness.

Administrative effectiveness in school to Adesina (1981) is a function of leadership, that is, quality of leadership which a principal is practicing to motivate and inspire other staff to adapt to. It is the extent to which the set goals and objectives of a school programme is achieved with the help of an administrator as well as the ability of the school administrators to maximise school inputs in an endeavour to produce optimum educational services. The key to a successful strategic plan implementation includes widespread perceived needs for the strategic planning, communication, effective leadership skills, resource allocation and organisational culture of the school. Although there are other factors that may impact positively or even negatively on strategic plan implementation, but this study is more interested in how communication skills relates to strategic plan implementation in secondary schools leading to successful implementation of strategic plans.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed over the years that the challenges facing public secondary schools have been those of poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing, inadequate funding, and poor quality assurance owing to various training limitations (e.g. lack of facilities, equipment and essential reading materials, etc.) unsuitable policy, environment as well as other organizational and management issues pertaining to school administration, manpower requirements and curriculum development. Other observed trends of administrative problems are reflected in conflict situations such as teachers' uncooperative attitudes, lack of commitment, absenteeism, confrontational behaviours as well as constant lateness to work. These unfortunate situations could be attributed to ineffective or poor communication in strategic plan implementation by the principals, and must have affected their administrative effectiveness. The foregoing problems of administrative effectiveness has been a source of concern to researchers, teachers, parents, students, principals of secondary schools and the society at large.

In the course of this study, the researcher's observation and interaction with some teachers and principals in government owned schools revealed the poor environment as well as poor administrative practices. This has created a gap in knowledge and information, which has led to this study titled, Communication in Strategic Plan Implementation and Principals' Administrative Effectiveness in Akwa Ibom state secondary schools in an attempt to fill the gap. The question therefore is; what is the relationship between communication in strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the relationship between communication in strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness of principals. Specifically the study sought

1. To determine the relationship between leadership skills in terms of strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness of principal.

Research Questions

To guide the study, one research question was raised

1. What is the relationship between principals' communication skills in strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness of principals?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between communication skill in strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness of principals.

Literature Review

Concept of Strategic Plan Implementation

Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its strategy or direction of making decisions; on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. Johnson and Scholes (2002) define strategic plan as a means that determines the direction and scope of an organization over the long term, matching its resources to its changing environment and in particular, its markets, customers and clients so as to meet stakeholders' expectations. Yepwi (2007) asserts that basically, strategic plan is a comprehensive statement of an organization's mission objectives and strategies, a 'detailed road map' of the direction and course that an organization intends to follow in conducting its activities. Goodstein, Nolan and Pfeiffer (2008) defined it as the process by which the guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future. This involves a belief that aspects of the future can be influenced and changed by what we do now, which helps the organization to create its future. Strategic planning as a reiterative process builds the strategic management capacity of the organization.

Bryson, (2011) defines strategic planning as a set of concepts, procedures and tools, designed to assist leaders and managers with their tasks. It is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization or other entity is,

what it does and why it does it with a focus on the future. Bryson is more technical in describing it as “a set of concepts, procedures, and tools designed to help leaders, managers, and others think and act strategically on behalf of their institutions and their stakeholders. Strategic planning forms a bridge between where an institution is now, and where it wants to be in future, in the light of analysis of the environment. It analyses internal strengths and weaknesses; external opportunities and threats, generates alternative strategies, chooses from alternatives in the light of predetermined criteria, sets measurable goals and objectives, draws up implementation plans, which include action plans, people responsible, time frames and draws up evaluation criteria. Bryson (2004) states that Strategic Planning is a process whereby an organization makes choices through asking the following questions: Why do we exist? What are the major goals of this organization? What resources do we need for a successful future? Who will be our customers?

Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) defined implementation as a process that establishes a desired organizational behaviour, in accordance with the strategy content. These scholars see implementation as the process of causing the firm to behave in accordance with the purposes, guidelines and strategies. Merriam–Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (2001) defines implementation as the completion of the actions and tasks of the plans laid out. It can be deduced from the various views of scholars about implementation that, it is the actual putting to action, execution, practical practice of a plan or design for doing something. Strategy implementation is translating strategic thought into organizational action or moving from planning their work to carrying out their plan as they shift their focus from Strategy formulation to strategy implementation (Pearce & Robinson, 1991).

Administrative Effectiveness

Effectiveness to Mullins (2010) is related to the achievement of some purposes, objectives or tasks to the performance of the process of administration and the execution of work. Carter (2010) viewed administrative effectiveness as the extent to which satisfactory results have been produced through the control, directions and management exercised by the executive authority. Satisfactory result could be judged in terms of the objectives of the activity. Adeniyi (2012) sees administrative effectiveness as the ability of school principals to carry out administrative task related to instructional management, international relations, organisations’ internal relation, organisational management, administration, students’ performance and school community relation towards achieving goals and objectives of the school. It is the degree to which secondary school principals achieve their goals and objective. Cameron and Welton (2001) had found in their study on administrative effectiveness in higher education that effectiveness has a strand of orientation as proactive leaders gave feedback and constructive criticism, support team and team members to work through their problems and arrive at successful solutions. When subordinates and supervisors or team members make mistakes, rather than reprimand them, they are instead helped to learn from their mistakes. This according to them has no restrictions and is not affected by the type of institution (either conventional or specialized university) involved. Administrative effectiveness can result from a combination of personal attributes and dimensions of the principals’ job in meeting the demands of the situation and satisfying the requirements of the department. Administrative effectiveness is the positive response to administrative efforts and actions with the intention to accomplish stated goal. The administrative performance in decision making, delegation of duties to subordinates, and setting good examples and motivating the teachers and students alike in an effort to create a conducive

working environment to accomplish school goal and objective seem to enhance subordinate performance for school success. The administrative effectiveness of secondary school principal has been observed by Adegun (2002) as a factor inhibiting attainment of goals in secondary schools.

Tess (2003) claimed that administrators must motivate staff to use their creativity and initiative as necessary in making inputs, towards the accomplishment of institutional goals. An effective principal is always aware in planning, decision-making, budgeting and relation with teachers and parents. He gives freedom of work to subordinates and trust in them. His behaviour is a balance between his personal traits and the expectation of the Institution.

Communication in Strategic Plan Implementation and Administrative Effectiveness of Principals

Communications is the life blood and the backbone of any organisation. Communication system in any organisation like the school, is very vital for the survival and smooth running of the organisation. Effective communication is therefore a necessity for effective strategic plan implementation. Communication is deeply connected with strategic plan implementation, because everybody in the school must know the objectives and the direction the organization is going, knowing the vision and the ideal state. Principal's task is to ensure that this communication takes place, between themselves and middle management, between different functions and between other important connections in the organization. For strategic plan to be clearly understood by the staff, it should be communicated to all those that will be involved in the implementation of the strategy. It is through communication that the staff will get to understand the content of the strategy and hence easy to implement. While all types of communication are useful in implementing strategic plans, oral communication is very vital as it involves a face-to-face method, thereby enhancing strategic plans implementation directly through its impact on the individuals involved in implementation. It encourages participation in strategy formation, refinement and implementation. Open and collaborative dialogue helps in the strategic management efforts in many ways. In addition to reaffirming the personal involvement of top management, it provides a mechanism for clarifying concepts during plan development, adapting overall organization plans to operational needs on a timely and detailed basis, helping those operating managers unfamiliar with strategic planning techniques to acquire strategic planning skills, coordinating and controlling the planning effort. Open and cooperative dialogue also enables the strategic management process to foster strategic thinking among key operating managers.

No institution can meet the need of its people without proper communication. Information has to flow from the principal to the staff and students. Hannagan (2002) defines communication as a way of passing on information about the effectiveness of particular work behaviours, and it is thought to perform several functions. For example, it is directive, by clarifying specific behaviours that ought to be performed; it is motivational, as it stimulates greater effort; and it is error correcting, as it provides information about the extent of error being made. Pritchard and others in Hannagan (2002) indicates that, communication by itself can lead to higher level of performance if it is properly used. He further asserts that communication allows the person to track how well he/ she is doing in relation to the goal, so that if necessary, adjustments in efforts can be made. He further indicates that communication may be in form of memos, telephone calls, messages, posting notices, writing letters and sending E-mail or fax.

Handy (1996) expressed that, for performance to be effective, it is important for employers to communicate what is to be done and how it is to be done. He added that communication may be presented directly or indirectly to individuals to boost their performance.

Principals of secondary school should make judicious use of communication skills to encourage good communication within the school. The importance of communication skills in administrative effectiveness of the principal cannot be over emphasized perhaps, that is why Morgan (2002) lamented that; possibly the most vital and fundamental element in the management process is based on working with people, which is done through some forms of communication. He stated further that the success of an administrator depends to a large extent on the effective use of communication process. Adequate applications of communication skills are imperative in decision-making. The who knows his onion should be able to define problems, generate and evaluate alternative courses of action, implement decisions, control and evaluate results formatively and using the right communication skills (Ahija, 2007).The principal also interacts with public and private organizations as well as law enforcement agencies. In all these interactions, the principal has to establish rapport with all to promote conducive atmosphere necessary for effective teaching and learning. Communication contributes to administrative effectiveness in the sense that principals who are able to create room for open mindedness towards new perspective, express issues, dialogue issues, ensures that staff and students are aware of school goals, visions and objectives as well as give information on strategic issues when implementing strategic plans, leading to achievement of administrative effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHOD

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District

Research Design

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study to establish the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all the 86 principals from the 86 Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial district (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, 2016). The 86 principals were purposively selected as they met the criteria for the study. Three teachers from each school, making a total of 258 were randomly selected to rate each principals' administrative effectiveness.

Instrumentation

Two instruments titled "Communication in Strategic Plan Implementation Questionnaire (CSPIQ)" and "Administrative Effectiveness of Principals Questionnaire (AEPQ)" were used for data collection. "Communication in Strategic Plan Implementation Questionnaire (CSPIQ)"

consisted of 40 items while the “Administrative Effectiveness of Principals Questionnaire (AEPQ)” consisted of 26 items. The both instruments were designed on a 4- point rating scale as follows: very often, often, rarely and never.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish the reliability, the CSPIQ and AEPQ were administered to 10 principals and 30 teachers in another senatorial district, the scores obtained from it were subjected to Cronbach’s Alpha Analysis, with a reliability estimates of 0.83 and 0.79 respectively.

Method of Data Analysis

The instrument titled “Communication in Strategic Plan Implementation Questionnaire (CSPIQ)” and “Administrative Effectiveness of Principals Questionnaire (AEPQ)” were administered to the respondents in their respective schools by the researcher within 2 weeks with the help of two research assistants after duly obtaining permission to carry out the study. The data collected for the study was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. All the hypothesis generated was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05level of significance.

Results and Discussion of Finding

Answering of Research Question

To what extent does communication skills in terms of strategic plan implementation relate to administrative effectiveness of principal?

Table 1: The nature of relationship between communication skills in strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness of principals (N=83)

Variables	Mean	S.D	r
Communication skills	25.36	5.10	
Administrative effectiveness	49.34	11.40	.227

Table 1 presents the answer on the relationship between communication skills in strategic implementation and administration effectiveness of principal, showing the calculated r value of .227. This implies that, there is a positive relationship between communication skills and administrative effectiveness of principal.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between communication skills in strategic planning implementation and administrative effectiveness of principal.

Table 2: The nature of relationship between communication skills in terms of strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness of principals (N=83)

Variables	Σx Σy	Σx^2 Σy^2	Σxy	r-cal	Crit. r
Communication skills (X)	2105	105201			
Administrative Effectiveness (Y)	4096	212800	12507	.227*	.217

* Significant at 0.05 level; r-cal = .227; Crit r = .217; df = 83

Table 2 reveals that the calculated r – value .227 is greater than critical r-value of .217 at .05 alpha levels with 83 degree of freedom. The result is significant; therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between communication skills in terms of strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between communication skills in terms of strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness. Summarily, the finding of this study revealed that, communication skill in strategic plan implementation relates significantly to administrative effectiveness of principals of secondary school.

Discussion of Finding

The result of the analysis on communication in strategic plan implementation and administrative effectiveness reveals that there is significant relationship. This is because the calculated value is greater than the critical value. The result may be attributed to the fact that communication is like the brain-box of every activities in any organization, including schools, and so directs the actions and behaviour of people within the organization. This result is in line with the study of Nwangwu (2012) who stated that effective communication clarifies teacher’s task to be done, enhances productivity and makes teachers to be focused. To ensure administrative effectiveness, information must flow from the principal to staff and students. Principals of secondary schools are confronted with situations that involve a lot of communication in implementing strategic plan. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of Bass (2005) whose study on a Guided Organizational Communications revealed that effective communication in school is necessary so as to organize both man and material resources to ensure the attainment of the stipulated objectives. This means that communication of school vision; mission and goals contribute to school effectiveness, else a good strategy is meaningless if it is not effectively communicated and acted upon.

Conclusion

It was concluded based on the finding that, Communication in Strategic plan implementation significantly relates to administrative effectiveness of principals of secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial Zone.

Recommendations

It was also recommended based on the finding that:

1. Experienced principals should be appointed as head of secondary school in order to ensure that they employ effective communication tool such as commitment to two-way communication.

2. Principals should employ face-to-face communication that will promote a positive, supportive assessment process to help teachers set goals when strategic plans are implemented for effective administration.

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