

**SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' VERBAL AND LISTENING
COMMUNICATIONS AS CORRELATES OF TEACHERS' JOB
PERFORMANCE IN UNITY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA.**

By

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to assess the extent to which school administrators' verbal and listening communications correlate with teachers' job performance in unity schools in South-South, Nigeria. A correlational design was adopted for the study. The research area was South-South Nigeria. The population of this study was 1,644 respondents which comprised all the 17 principals and 1,627 teachers of all the seventeen (17) unity schools of 2020/2021 academic session in South-South education zone, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of was 510 respondents which comprises of 50 teachers from the 10 selected unity secondary schools and 10 principals from each of the 10 selected unity secondary schools. The instruments for data collection were 'School Communication of Administrators Questionnaire (SCAQ) and 'Teacher Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ). The data obtained were analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. Linear Regression analysis (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Conclusions made from the study states that on the overall that school administrators' communication; (verbal and listening) to a high extent relate to teachers' Job performance in unity secondary schools. This implies that communication of school administrators predicts teachers' job performance. One of the recommendations made from the study was that school administrators should be trained on the use of verbal and listening communications in order to enhance teachers' job performance, meaning that they should have a good command of spoken English and be eloquent in their speaking.

KEYWORDS: Unity Schools, Verbal Communication, Listening Communication and Job Performance

INTRODUCTION

Unity schools are secondary schools financed and managed by the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Education. They are established in each state of the federation including the FCT. In South-South zone, there are seventeen unity schools spread among the six States that make up the zone. Once considered as some of the best schools in Nigeria, unity schools, over the years have glided from glory to mere public schools (Lawal, et al, 2021). On the outside, *it is a symbol of pride and privilege*. Inside, it lurks rot engendered by corruption.

In general, communication skills are attribute of all living things, and the source of all human interactions. According to Sikiti (2018), communication is a purposeful process of expressing, receiving and understanding messages containing factual information, feelings, ideas and needs by two or more individuals through common symbols. Communication is the force with which the human mind interacts with its social and natural environment. It may be very difficult to express one's thoughts, ideas and feelings without communicating, and the success of all formal and informal relations depend mostly on the ability to effectively communicate. Indeed, Communication covers all spheres of human endeavours so much that life itself may have little or no meaning without communication. Verbal skill is the ability of the principals to express or exchange thoughts or information through sound, words or speech. This communication type enables the principals to orally disseminate information to members of staff. Principals' application of verbal type 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.

Listening is one of the communication skills. Hacicaferoğlu (2014) stressed that listening carefully and with interest to the other person's words and observe her/his behaviour is an essential skill of communication. Listening skill is the ability to pay attention so as to accurately receive and interpret information or ideas. 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.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Unity schools' teachers are personnel trained in knowledge, skills, attitude and values, in formal training institutions, to teach or impart same to the learners in the most acceptable way. They are the human catalyst whose interaction intentionally influence the learners and the environment of the learner by restructuring the environment in such a way that the learners acquired the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes; and meaningfully contribute to the development of humanity at an appropriate time.

The issue of poor task performance of unity school teachers in South-South, Nigeria has been a long-standing problem that has received concern of government and other stakeholders. This is manifested through their negative attitude to work in form of absenteeism, irregular class attendance, lateness to classes, non-preparation of lesson notes, non-usage of instructional materials during classes, lack

of interest in students' discipline within the school, lateness to classes, poor assessment of students, leaving school before dismissal time for their private business among others. Students in attempt to improve on their grades embark on examination malpractice in external examinations in school. In view of this, some educational managers attributed this obnoxious trend to lack of professionalization of teaching, lack of job prestige, poor condition of service and poor principals' communication typology

This cannot be accepted considering the relevance of teachers' job performance to the school system. It was on this basis that the researcher deemed it pertinent to raise a query which this study sought to answer: to what extent do school administrators' communication typology which is verbal and listening correlate with teachers' job performance in unity schools in South-South, Nigeria?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study sought to:

- Find out the extent to which school administrators' verbal communication relates with teachers' job performance in unity schools.
- Find out the extent to which school administrators' listening communication relates with teachers' job performance in unity schools.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- To what extent do school administrators' verbal communication relate with teachers' job performance in unity schools?
- To what extent is the relationship between school administrators' listening communication and teachers' job performance in unity schools?

HYPOTHESES

- There is no significant relationship between school administrators' verbal communication and teachers' job performance in unity schools.
- School administrators' listening communication have no significant relationship with teachers' job performance in unity schools.

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

Communication process is a very important aspect of school organization. The concept of communication in formal organization has received consideration attention in recent years. Education is one of the organizations whose functions depend on effective communication and coordination in the educational management, interactions and between the teachers and principals (Ibiam, 2015). Educational administrators spend ample time communicating. As a result, the critical role communication plays in school and the effort devoted to it means that effective communication skill is an essential process in school life. This means that school administrator should understand communication because it permeates the instructional, interpersonal and administrative processes of schools. Consequently,

for school administrators to boost the job effectiveness of their teachers, they must be versed in the acquisition and utilization of effective communication.

Wentz (2018) stated that effective communication involves more than speaking. People communicate by writing, listening, and using non-verbal signals to get their message across. What people do not say while speaking could be just as important as what they do say, and how our body language supports or refutes what we are saying could mean the difference between communicating and just speaking. School administrators, according to Laud (2018), spend the vast majority of their days communicating. How they address their faculties can set the stage for effective communications and excellent teachers' performance within a school.

PRINCIPALS' VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Verbal communication is one of the foremost expertise principals must develop to elicit positive work behavior and performance from teachers. Knowing which verbal communication behaviors are routinely used at schools would allow training and job performance evaluations to be more specifically focused, and for communication planning to improve teachers' effectiveness (Riedlinger, et al, 2014). Verbal communication includes sounds, words, language and speech. This form of communication is further conceptualized into intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, small group communication and public communication (Maes, et al, 2017). Verbal Communication is done by words of mouth or oral speech. It could be face to face discussion between individuals or within group of people.

Cogently, verbal communication is used to pass quick information and to solicit quick response from people and for the management of classroom climate. Webster and Johnson (2017) explored teacher-student verbal communication patterns in regular and special classrooms. The study used observation and interview method to illicit information from behaviorally and emotionally handicapped students. Their study found that effective use of verbal communication enhances student management, more time on-task for learning influence classroom environment enhance quality of instructional programmes, and student team work. Verbal communication can be face-to-face or distant. This communication can be formal as well as informal. The individuals communicate face-to-face within the organizations with other members and outside the organizations, it takes place with family members, friends, relatives, community members etc. In face-to-face oral communication, there are various factors, which need to be taken into accounts. These include, maintaining eye contact, keep the tone and expressions decent, they need to suit the message that needs to be conveyed, one should not depict any negative feelings such as, anger and frustration and develop confidence. When the individuals are delivering lectures, speeches and presentations, they need to be confident and not depict any kind of vulnerability and apprehensiveness. When these factors are put into operation, the individuals are able to hone their oral communication, when communicating face-to-face.

Oral communication that takes place face-to-face is regarded as most common and recognized type of communication. When the individuals are communicating with each other face-to-face, they aim that through words, they are

able to express directly to others. According to Webster and Johnson (2017), oral communication can take place among the individuals in an appropriate manner, when they are located at a distance. This communication is common and is an integral part of the lives of the individuals. In communicating orally with individuals, who are located at a distance, there are number of methods and technologies, which are utilized. These include, mobile phones, VOIP, video-conferencing, 2-way webinars and so forth. These are regarded as modern and innovative methods, through which oral communication can be promoted among individuals, when they are located at a distance. In the effective implementation of this type of communication, tone of voice and pace of delivery are regarded as crucial. The important factors that need to be taken into accounts in promoting oral communication at a distance are, listening, speaking slowly, reiterating the information that is understood and keeping the tone of voice open and receptive. In some cases, when the individuals are unable to understand the concepts and other information clearly through oral communication, they may ask to send them through email.

PRINCIPALS' LISTENING COMMUNICATION

Listening has been defined in a variety of ways. However, it is posited that listening is the most important of all communication. To define listening, the role of cognition must be recognized, as well as the behavioral aspect. There is no consensus among communicators on a single definition for listening, though there are similar elements scholars agree should be included in this definition. These five elements include perception, attention, and interpretation, remembering and responding. These common elements have been a part of the definition of listening for over 60 years (Janusik, 2010). The ability of managers to pay attention to suggestions and questions of others and understand them is known as listening.

It is vital to say that message recipient must know the art of good listening. Anthony (2015), in his listening with all six senses, agrees that "listening is integral to our lives. It provides us with important information and insights. It keeps us focused, balanced and connected. Listening is essential to how people relate to one another and nature. He further argues that listening is the key to building trust, gaining understanding and creating conditions for taking actions. Listening is an art and a technique an attitude and an activity. It is a difficult skill to master because it requires much more than the use of one's ears and merely "hearing the words". Nunan in Newhill (2014) aptly said that a listener can be compared with a tape recorder because the listener takes in and stores messages sequentially, in the same way a tape-recorder does. There are many different types of listening that can be classified according to a number of variables, including purpose for listening, the role of the listener, and the type of text being listened to. These variables are mixed in many different configurations, each of which will require a particular strategy on the part of the listener.

Listening to a news broadcast to get a general idea of the news of the day involves different processes and strategies from listening to the same broadcast for specific information, such as the results of an important sporting event. Listening to a sequence of instructions for operating a new piece of computer software requires different listening and strategies from listening to a poem or short story. Fowler

(2015) highlighted that listening and hearing are not the same. Hearing is actually just one stage of listening, which occurs when your ears pick up sound waves and transmit these waves to the brain, while listening is a whole communication process. By understanding the process and utilizing the right tools, one can improve his /her listening skills, ensuring one to do more than just hear the words. Listening requires one to understand and evaluate every spoken message, and to follow this with the appropriate action, that is to say, a response that confirms the spoken message. It is very wrong for a listener to work while listening to a message.

According to Miller (2012), effective listening skills can be improved by working hard to keep ones focus on the message and make a determined effort to return to focus when his /her mind begins to wonder. To help in maintaining focus, the listener should make mental summaries of the speaker's main ideas and try to predict the speaker's next main idea. These two hints will help to keep one actively involved in what the speaker is saying. Similarly, he further opined that active listening is designed to overcome poor listening practices by requiring parties to listen to and then restate their opponent's statements, emphasizing the feelings expressed as well as the substance. The purpose is to confirm that the listener accurately understands the message sent and acknowledges that message, although the listener is not required to agree. While dialogic listening emphasizes conversation as a shared activity and stresses an open ended, playful attitude toward the conversation.

Furthermore, De-Boer (2015) is of the opinion that people spend approximately 9% of their time writing, 16% of their time reading, 30% of their time talking and 45% of their time listening. Listening is a fundamental part of the communication process. Regardless of the type of job one does or the industry in which one works, it is important to understand the listening process, have an awareness of barriers to listening effectively, and learn how to listen actively. Attention is important in listening so that people can hear what is being said to them, but often difficult due to distractions such as noise intrusion or internal distractions such as thinking about something else rather than what is being said.

People need to understand the context of the message, and understand the significance of any verbal or non-verbal clues from the speaker. Having a degree of background knowledge regarding the speaker or the subject is also helpful. Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish (2011) asserted that a "speaker has some message in mind that she wants to communicate to a hearer. The speaker then produces some expression from the language that encodes the message as its meaning. Upon hearing the beginning of the expression, the hearer begins identifying the incoming sounds, syntax, and meaning; then, using her knowledge of language, he composes these meanings in the form of a successfully decoded message". That is to say, communication is successful if the listener receives the speaker's message. It works because messages have been conventionalized as the meaning of expressions and by sharing knowledge of the meaning of an expression, the listener can recognize a speaker's message or communicative intention.

Communication in the school system is very essential to humanity such it deals with interaction between one person and the other. Okoro (2017) supported that communication does not merely mean talking or writing to people. It means

transmitting a message to evoke a discriminating response. Listening is a part of communication as talking. Surprisingly, many people do not regard listening as an indispensable part of communication. Okoro (2017) stated that listening, whether in a social conversation or around the table at a conference, is just a pause people feel obliged to grant a speaker until they again have a chance to air, their opinions. He further highlighted that, this is not real listening in any sense of the word". According to him, to actively listen to another requires will power, concentration and great mental effort, only then do people really learn something about the other person, his feelings, his ambitions, his hopes, his aspirations, what his complaints are and his needs. Consequently, as seen from the above views, listening as a skill in effective communication enables people to have full knowledge of whatever is being discussed. People do not just learn about what is being discussed but also the language of discussion. When a principal is equipped with listening, he or she is positioned for further and expansive knowledge of ideas in a deeper perspective. Effective listening is very important communication skill. It entails cognitive and behavioral progressions in gaining information (Bostrom, 2016). Active listening is regarded as one of the types of communication that is of utmost significance. It is regarded as the type of communication and it is also an important characteristic that needs to be put into operation in order to make the communication processes effective and meaningful. When the individuals are implementing this form of communication, they are able to benefit in number of ways. In addition, when one actively listens to others, they are able to create amiable terms and relationships with them and generate the feelings of pleasure and contentment. Within educational institutions, when the instructors are imparting information in terms of lesson plans and academic concepts, when the supervisors and managers are imparting information in terms of job duties, when there are organization of workshops, seminars and conferences and when the individuals are engaged in oral communication, whether face-to-face or distance, then it is vital for them to promote active listening. Therefore, it can be stated, when one satisfactorily puts into operation this form of communication, they are able to benefit in number of ways.

In a study, Haas and Arnold (2015) asked employees to speak about proficient communicators, that one third of employees' descriptors were listening-related. Payne (2015) found relations between listening skill and job intensity, upward mobility, empathy and attentiveness. Bostrom (2016) described empathy as the capability to respond, send verbal feedbacks presenting sympathetic thoughts for others, and keenly listen. Listening and understanding are ways of being a thoughtful communicator. School leaders are good listeners and listening effectiveness is an important skill as effective listening is influential (Bechler & Johnson, 2015). Listening is a core component in successful leadership. In fact, several studies support the idea that individuals who demonstrate solid listening, hold higher organizational positions, and are promoted more often. They posited that to be a successful listening leader, a person must listen and lead oneself and others; as well as teach others how to engage and teach other leaders to be successful.

Principals should cultivate the listening habit to enable them develop the critical ability required to process what they hear. This is the heart of listening as a communication action. According to Holmes (2014), most people think that they are good listeners, but in fact, they are better talkers than listeners. To him, listening is rated as the second most effective way to communicate and gain one's objective.

Effective listening is hard work. It takes a real effort to make it happen. It takes much more energy and concentration to listen than it does to talk. The mind, the body, and the heart play major roles in listening. One needs to be disciplined to become a natural listener. Some people tend to listen with their hearts, others tend to depend on the reasoning process. The heart listeners will respond quicker to an emotional appeal, while the reasoning listener will respond more rapidly to logical approaches.

Listening is clearly an essential skill for effective communicators. The importance of listening is even clearer when people consider how they use it in their personal and professional lives. Listening help principals and teachers to build and maintain relationships and can even help them to determine whether the person we are talking to is being deceitful (Durotulu, 2012). Because of effective listening, organizations are able to improve workplace relationships and become more productive. It is easy to see how effective listening influences school administrations. Giving and taking messages, conducting and participating in meetings, making and listening to formal presentations, giving and taking spoken directions. All these important school managements involve oral communications. Effective Listening is both an attitude principal can learn and a set of techniques they can master with practice. The merits of effective listening are tremendous, and they transcend just acquiring information. Good listeners encourage speakers to do their best. Good listeners also enhance their own ability to speak by improving their concentration. Best of all, they learn to think better. Listening is a thinking skill which requires one to be selective with his attention, to classify and categorize information, and to sort out important concepts from facts, jokes, and stories.

JOB PERFORMANCE

Job performance as it relates to the teaching profession is an index of teachers' effectiveness which refers to the relationship between characteristics of the teachers and their effects on educational outcomes of classroom teaching (Nwosu, 2017). He revealed further that teachers' performance refers to actions or procedure a teacher embarks upon in order to attain specific school goals. Performance very much depends on perception, values and attitudes. There appear to be many variables influencing job performance are perception, values and attitude.

Teachers are expected to render a very high job performance, and the Ministry of Education is always curious regarding the job performance of its teachers. Also, the Ministry of Education demands a very high measure of loyalty, patriotism, dedication, hard work and commitment from its teachers (Ayeni, 2014). Similarly, the roles and contexts of educations' motivational methods and tools cannot be underemphasized because high motivation enhances productivity which is naturally in the interests of all education.

METHODOLOGY

A correlational design was adopted for the study. The research area was South-South Nigeria. The population of this study was 1,644 respondents which comprises all the 17 principals and 1,627 teachers of all the seventeen (17) unity schools of 2020/2021 academic session in South-South education zone, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of was 510 respondents which comprises of 50 teachers from the 10 selected unity secondary schools and 10 principals from each of the 10 selected unity secondary schools. The instruments for data collection were 'School Communication of Administrators Questionnaire (SCAQ) and 'Teacher Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ). The data obtained were analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. Linear Regression analysis (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT AND HYPOTHESES

Research Question 1

To what extent do school administrators' verbal communication relate with teachers' job performance in unity schools?

Table 1: Correlation matrix on the extent school administrators' verbal communication relate with teachers' job performance in unity schools

		School administrators' verbal communication	Teachers job performance in unity schools
School administrators' verbal communication	Pearson Correlation	1	0.72*
	N	510	510
Teachers job performance in unity school	Pearson Correlation	0.72*	1
	R ²	0.49 (49%)	
	N	510	510

* Correlation Significant at 0.05 level, N = Number of respondent R² coefficient of determination

Data in Table 1 reveal that there was a high extent of correlation between school administrators' verbal communication and teachers' job performance in schools in South South, Nigeria as indicated by the correlation coefficient of (0.72) which is positive and within the coefficient limit of +/-0.60 to 0.79 as established by Creswell (2008). Similarly, the coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.49 indicated that 49% of the variance observed in teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South South, Nigeria was accounted for by school administrators' verbal communication. Meanwhile, the corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is

Research Question 2

What is the extent of relationship between school administrators' listening communication and teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South Nigeria?

Table 2: Correlation matrix on the extent school administrators' listening communication relate with teachers' job performance in unity schools

		School administrators' listening communication	Teachers job performance in unity schools
School administrators' listening communication	Pearson Correlation	1	0.78*
	N	510	510
Teachers job performance in unity schools	Pearson Correlation	0.78*	1
	R ²	0.61 (61%)	
	N	510	510

* Correlation Significant at 0.05 level, N = Number of respondent R² coefficient of determination

Data in Table 2 reveal that there was a high extent of correlation between school administrators' listening communication and teachers' job performance in schools in South South, Nigeria as indicated by the correlation coefficient of (0.78) which is positive and within the coefficient limit of +/-0.60 to 0.79 as established by Creswell (2008). Similarly, the coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.61 indicates that 61% of the variance observed in teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South South, Nigeria was accounted for by school administrators' listening communication. Meanwhile, the corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between school administrators' verbal communication and teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South South Nigeria.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of school administrators' verbal communication and teachers' job performance in unity schools

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
1	Regression	1786.118	1	1786.118	314.563	.014
	Residual	2890.148	509	5.6781		
	Total	4676.266	510			

Df= degree of freedom, F = F-calculated, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result in Table 3 shows F – calculated value of 314.563 at 0.05 level of significance. The table also shows a p -value of .014 which is less than the significant value of 0.05. Thus, null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between school administrators' verbal communication and teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South Nigeria is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between school administrators' verbal communication and teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South Nigeria. This finding is in line with findings of Safaric, et al (2014) who affirmed that audience management, and emotional intelligence was significantly related to voice speed, and voice volume, and that verbal communication lead to effective audience management and increased teacher's emotional intelligence as well as productivity.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between school administrators' listening communication and teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South Nigeria.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of school administrators' listening communication and teachers' job performance in unity schools

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
1	Regression	1173.174	1	1173.174	190.54	.024
	Residual	3134.111	509	6.157		
	Total	4307.285	510			

Df= degree of freedom, F = F-calculated, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Data in Table 4 show a p-value of .024 which is less than the significant value of .05. This means that there is significant relationship between school administrators' listening communication and teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South South Nigeria. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between school administrators' listening communication and teachers' job performance in unity secondary schools in South South Nigeria is rejected. This finding was supported by Hilderbrand, Bond and Miler (2010) when they asserted that effective listening improved administrator efficiency and increased job performance. Similarly, Okoro (2017) collaborates the findings of Hilderbrand, Bond and Miler (2010) when he affirmed that actively listening to another requires will power, concentration, and great mental effort leading to greater work output and achievement.

CONCLUSION

The study examined communication of school administrators and teachers' job performance of unity schools in South-South, Nigeria. Based on the findings accruing from this study there was a high and significant relationship among the extent school administrators' communication; verbal, listening, and teachers' Job performance in unity secondary schools

In conclusion, the findings show that on the overall that school administrators' communication; (verbal and listening) to a high extent relate to teachers' Job performance in unity secondary schools. Thus, implying that communication of school administrators predicts teachers' job performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made.

- School administrators should be trained on the use of verbal and listening communications in order to enhance teachers' job performance, meaning that they should have a good command of spoken English and be eloquent in their speaking.
- School administrators should be patient when dealing with staff issues. Hence, for effective job performance of the teachers, school administrators should be a good listener and not be in a haste to take decision.

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