



## IMPROVING PRINCIPAL TEACHER RELATIONSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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### Abstract

*This study was aimed at determining effective communication techniques for improving principal-teacher relationship in Secondary School in Ebonyi State. Three research questions were stated. The study was a descriptive survey involving a stratified random sample of 30 principals and 275 teachers. Data was collected through a 28-item researcher developed questionnaire, structured on a 4-point scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Data was analyzed using mean and Standard Deviation scores from the research questions. From the findings, the communication forms and channels for enhancing principal-teacher relationships include the use of phatic, persuading, corrective, entertainment, informing and direct oral face to face communications. Effective communication would improve principal-teacher relationship by enhancing trust, teamwork, respect, positive working relations, among removal of interpersonal conflicts among staff. It was recommended among other things that principals and staff in Secondary School should avoid reliance on cathartic, grapevine communication and use of body expression to avoid communication misinterpretations, which is likely to put strain in principal-teacher relationship*

### Introduction.

Communication involves the process of conveying information with the aim of influencing the attitudes and actions of others through proper expressions, guidance and directives to achieve a desirable goal. Awotua and Efebo (2001) defines communication as the conveying of information or knowledge from one to another. It involves a sender transmitting an idea to a receiver. Effective communication as the name implies, involves the use of appropriate and relevant communication techniques. Barnette and Greenough (2004) explained that communication effective when the information is properly and appropriately relayed and clearly understood using appropriate forms and channels. Communication forms are the manner in which people communicate such as the use of phatic, entertainment, informing, and persuasive forms of communication. Akpawusi (2002) describes communication channels as these mediums of communications that the principals employ to convey vital information to their subordinates, which could be verbal and non-verbal.

Effective communication is important to develop good principal-teacher (staff) relationship needed for goal achievement. Goodlad (1998) points out that much of what happens in school, including how staff act and react, are influenced either positively or negatively by the nature of principal-staff relationship. Lack of effective communication according to Obi (2002) and Okezue (2001) account for most of the problems in administration and implementation of schools programmes. It is very important for principals and staff to use effective communicative to foster good relationship among them.



Despite the indispensable value of effective communication for fostering principal-teacher relationships in schools, studies in Secondary School administration in Ebonyi State is not cordial among them. (Okezue, 2001, Onyekwu, 2005 ) reported the prevalence of conflicts and disagreement between principals and staff. Poor decision making skills of principals such as not involving teachers and non-teaching staff in effective communication, non-utilization of reliable information sources in communication and not conveying decisions to teachers have also been reported (Nwachukwu, 1998). Where these situation apply, teachers and principals often clash and fail to achieve the school objectives. It thus appears that effective communication for fostering principal-teacher relationships have not been achieved in many secondary schools in Ebonyi State and this may be a major reason, why conflicts anarchy and poor students' performances characterize most secondary schools. It follows therefore, that if principal-teacher relationship is to be fostered in schools, principals and teachers need to use effective communication in running the affairs of the schools. It is against this background of obvious need for effective communication in fostering principal-teacher relationship that the researchers intends to undertake this study.

### **Problems of the study**

Communication in many secondary schools in Ebonyi State leaves much to be desired in terms of cohesion and understanding. Some principals usually give insulting orders to staff, shout at them, criticize them in front of the students. Nworah, (2005) observed that some principals hoard vital information from staff and use unclear sentences in delegating tasks. In similar dimension, some teachers gossip against their principals. Rather than seek first-hand information from principals, some teachers prefer gathering what Barnette and Greenough (2004;12) called "Painted information" from students or even typists; messengers, and grapevine. Manners of reporting, making enquires, giving information and responding to memos have been criticized as ineffective communication and poor principal-teacher relationships in schools that are incapable of ushering in a school environment where observation, guidance inquiry and interactions among staff would bring about desirable instructional improvement. It is therefore the problem of this study to identify effective communication that will be essential for fostering principal-teacher relationships in Ebonyi State public Secondary School?.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study, is to determine how effective communication can be adopted to bring about a good relationship between principals and their teachers in the area under study by the researchers.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the effective communication forms for improving principal-staff relationships?
2. What communication strategies would be effective in improving principal-relationship?
3. How would effective communication improve principal-staff relationship?

### **Research Design**

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study because the researchers collected data from a sample of secondary school principals and teachers on the effective communication means of improving principal-teacher relationship in Ebonyi State.

### **Population of the study**

The target population for the study consisted of all seventy-six (76) principals and one thousand, three hundred and sixty-three (1,763) Secondary School teachers who were teaching in the 76 state government owned Secondary Schools in Onueke ( Ebonyi State) Education zone as at the time of the study. Altogether, the target population comprised one thousand, four hundred and thirty-nine serving Secondary School staff in Onueke Education zone of the state.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample for the study was 305 respondents comprising 30 principals and 275 teachers selected through proportionate stratified –random sampling technique. Stratification was done at school level. Two



schools were stratified according to the four Local Government Education Authorities in the zone. From each Local Government Education Authority, approximately 40 percent of the schools were selected, and all the principals in these selected schools, 40 percent of the teachers were randomly chosen as shown in table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Population and sample distribution of principals and teachers in secondary schools in Onueke Education zone**

LGEA	No of Schools	No of Principals	40% of Principal	Total of teachers	No of teachers	40% of teachers selected	Sample size
Ezza North	16	16	6	288	93	37	43
Ezza North	20	20	8	378	239	96	104
Ikwo North	17	17	7	306	160	64	71
Ikwo South	23	23	9	391	194	78	87
Tota	76	76	30	1363	686	275	305

Source: Ebonyi State Secondary Education Board, Abakaliki (2022).

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument the researchers used for this study is a constructed questionnaire titled, “Effective Communication for Good principal-staff Relationship (EFGPRS)”. This instrument that contained 28 items spread into four sections. While section A had three items on the respondents’ gender, job designation and school location, Section B and C had 10 items each on the communication forms. In Section D, 10 items on how effective communication would help improve principal-teacher relationship in schools, were stated. All the items in section B to D were modeled on a 4-point scale of strongly agree (SA), 4-point agree (A), 3-points Disagree (DA), 2-points, and strongly Disagree(SD), 1-point.

### **Validation of the Instrument**

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, the researchers presented three copies of questionnaire to two experts who were lecturers in educational administration and an expert who is a lecturer in measurement and evaluation in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State of Nigeria. The experts were also presented with the research purpose and questions as a guide. These experts made some corrections, which led to some modifications in the final copy of the instrument.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

The Cronbach alpha procedure for testing reliability was applied. This involved administering copies of the questionnaire to 10 principals and 10 teachers in secondary schools in Enugu State, which is outside the area for the final study. The respondents were given some hours to complete the copies of the questionnaire before retrieval. The mean rating for item were coded and subjected to statistical analysis. Correlation of the set of scores for the items yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient value 0.83. This coefficient value was considered adequate for the study.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researchers used six research assistants to visit the sampled schools and distribute the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. These research assistants were trained on how to administer the questionnaire. Training involved explaining properly the location of the sampled schools, how to politely approach the respondents, and how to collect the filled copies of the questionnaires. All the copies administered on the respondents, were retrieved.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The research questions were answered using the arithmetic mean. Based on the 4-point rating scale, the mean of the scale is 2.5. Therefore, mean scores up to and above 2.5 were regarded as indications of agreement with the statement, while mean scores below 2.5, were regarded as indications of disagreement.



## Data Analysis and Presentation

**Research Question 1:** What are the effective communication forms for enhancing principal-teacher relationship in schools.

**Table 2**

**Mean scores of principals and teachers on effective communication forms for improving principal-teacher relationship**

S/N	Items	Principals Mean	Teachers Mean	Remarks
1.	Phatic communication: Principals and teachers should extend and accept greeting from one another liberally	3.23	2.86	Agree
2.	Persuading purpose: Principals should be polite in convincing teachers to accept and implement ideas	3.16	3.64	Agree
3.	Cathartic communication: staff should be rude to one another when provoked.	1.56	1.22	Disagree
4.	Corrective communication: should Principals correct teachers' classroom weakness privately without anger or personal attack.	3.12	3.00	Agree
5	Entertainment: The Principals should use humor to sustain the communication links between them and staff.	2.95	3.00	Agree
6.	Informing purpose: Principals should always inform teachers of major issues and decision on time.	3.46	3.13	Agree
7.	Direct communication: Principals and staff should try to use face to face communication often.	3.22	3.33	Agree
8.	Personal written memos: Notices should be used by Principals to let staff members know how they are doing their jobs.	2.53	2.59	Agree
9.	Body expressions: Principals and teachers should be sincerer to use eye contact to communicate interest and praise to appreciate one another	1.23	2.56	Disagree
10.	Direct conversation through e-mail and telephone should be employed by Principals and staff to communicate information	3.00	2.76	Agree

The data in table 2 above showed that the mean score items 1,2,4-8 and 10 exceed 2.50 which show that both principals and teachers agreed that all the technique should be used to enhance principal-teacher relationship in secondary schools. Item 3 scores below 2.50 which means suggesting that staff should not be rude to one another when provoked. Item 9 score less than 2.50 indicates that principals disagree with use of body expressions while the teachers agree with it. By this this analysis, the communication forms for enhancing principal-teacher relationships are the use of phatic, persuading, corrective, entertainment, informing, direct oral, memos, e-mail and telephone communication.

**Table 3**

**Mean scores of Principals and Teachers on effective communication channels for improving Principal-Teacher relationship.**

S/N	Items	Principals Mean	Teachers Mean	Remarks
11	Staff should orally encourage one another in time to delayed salaries	3.42	3.24	Agree
12	Principals should grant written approval for visit in time of wedding, bereavement, sickness etc	3.59	3.38	Agree



13	Staff should avoid using rumor mongering and back biting of a fellow staff to seek favor from Principals.	3.62	3.60	Agree
14	Every decision reached on a goal implemented and timely, should be communicated teachers.	4.01	2.75	Agree
15	Principals should permit upward communication from the staff.	3.47	3.42	Agree
16	Grapevine communication should be used as an effective source of communication for staff	2.11	2.36	Disagree
17	Principals should delegate communication tasks to only competent staff to avoid contamination of information.	2.58	2.42	Disagree
18	Vital information should be pasted on the notice board where every staff could read it.	2.67	3.99	Agree
19	Teachers should regularly be reminded of new policies through memos and notices.	3.55	3.08	Agree

In table 3, the mean rating of item 16 is below 2.50. This indicates that in the opinion of principals and teachers, grapevine communication should not be used as an effective source of information for school staff. Principals also agree with item 17 (principals should delegate communication task to only competent staff to avoid contamination of information), but the teachers disagreed with it. The mean score of the remaining items exceed 2.50 which indicates that both the teachers' and the principals agreed. This shows that both principals and teachers agreed that the listed items are effective communication strategies for enhancing principal-teacher relationship in secondary schools.

### Research Question 3

**How would effective communication improve principal-teacher relationship?**

**Table 4**

**Mean scores of principals and teachers on effective communication for improving principal-teacher relationship.**

S/N	Items	Principals' Mean	Teachers' Mean	Remarks
20	Making Principal staff trust another	3.19	3.01	Agree
21	Enhancing teamwork between Principals and Teachers	3.79	3.12	Agree
22	Encourage staff to care for the wellbeing of their colleagues.	3.01	3.71	Agree
23	Earning respect for Principals from staff	3.07	3.01	Agree
24	Nurturing staff members to achieve their potentials	3.48	3.21	Agree
25	Making staff to know one another more closely	3.77	3.89	Agree
26	Helping to create a positive working relationship between Principals and staff	3.54	3.56	Agree
27	Facilitates the removal of interpersonal bias among staff	3.67	3.71	Agree
28	Helping staff to work collectively in achieving schools goals	3.98	3.36	Agree

The data in table 4 above showed that the Principals and Teachers agreed with the principles of been united. This means that the respondents agreed that effective communication would improve Principals relationship in the above stated ways.





## **Discussion of findings**

The presentation and analysis of data relating to the first research question showed that several effective communication forms should be used to enhance adequate Principal-Teacher keen relationships in secondary schools. These includes, the use of phatic, persuading, corrective, entertainment, informing, direct oral, e-mail and telephones communication. Nworah ( 2005), stresses the need for principals to communicate and precise information if they expect teachers to keep to goal requirements.

The findings also indicates that cathartic body expression are not effective communication forms for enhancing principal-teacher relationship. This may be because the use of cathartic communication manifests in anger and the use of rebukes which Egboka (2004) observed, might create a climate of rancor and bitterness between principals and staff. In addition, there is a tendency for principals and teachers to misinterpret body expression.

In research question 2, the respondents indicated that grapevine communication should not be used as an effective source of information for school staff. However, the use of several written memos, oral, direct face to face, approvals, and notice boards are effective communication channels for enhancing effective principal-teacher relationships in secondary schools. This finding agrees with the views of Woodward (2004) who stated that written, oral, and visual channels of communication have been empirically established as effective means of communication in many circumstances.

From the findings of this study, the teachers disagreed that principals should delegate communication tasks to only competent staff to avoid contamination of information. This finding may because it is difficult to say who is a competent communicator or not. Anohu (2004) observed that some school principals were found of delegating oral communication to those they feel are competent staff. Often times, by the time the information may be communicated to the staff, such information may be filtered and other bits added to it. This results in conflict and ambiguities in communication. In addition, grapevine communication should not be used as an effective source of information for school staff. The reason for this finding is because rumors and counter rumors are carried out through the grapevine. When the principals and staff use such grapevine information for action without actually ascertaining the true information from reliable source, such information might lead to strains in principal-teacher relationship.

In the last research question for this study, the views of principals and teachers indicate that communication could lead to improve trust, teamwork, respect, positive work relationship, and nurture staff members to achieve their potentials. Furthermore, effective communication could encourage staff to care for the wellbeing of others, facilitate and remove interpersonal bias among staff, make principals accessible to staff, and help staff to work collectively towards achieving school goals.

It is commendable that principals and teachers recognize the importance of effective communication in principal-teacher relationship. In line with this findings, Onyekwelu, (2005) also observed that in effective communication, a principal who establishes such relations with his staff members is likely to operate in an environment full of trust, acceptance, support, confidence, respect and free from tension and hostility or alienation from his staff. Such a principal may hardly find it difficult exercising group loyalty, compliance, and hard work toward accomplishments.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Secondary school principals and their staff should employ phatic, informing, persuasive, corrective and entertainment forms of communication with one another.
2. Principals should also use direct oral, written, telephones, and notice board communication channels to disseminate idea, proposal, and thoughts to staff. This would reduce ambiguities in communication and improve principal-teacher relationship.
3. Principals and staff in secondary schools should avoid reliance on cathartic, grapevine communication and use of body expression to avoid communication misinterpretation which is likely to put strain o principal-teacher relationship.
4. Regular seminars and workshops should be organized for principals and teachers , aimed at explaining and inculcating in them, the importance of using effective communication forms and channels.
5. Every principal should ensure that there is always effective communication him and the school staff, so that he/she would operate in an environment of trust, acceptance, support, confidence, respect and free from tension and hostility or alienation from his staff.



## Conclusion

In this study, it was the opinion of principals and teachers that several communication forms, and channels should be used to improve principal-teacher relationship in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. It was also found that effective communication could improve principal-teacher relationship in several ways. Therefore, schools' best interest could be saved when principals and teachers design and apply desirable communication forms and channels to sustain their relationship.

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