



Educators' perceptions of the influence of administrative communication on effective teaching in a selected school in South Africa

 Kemi O. Adu ^{(a)*}  Ntombozuko Duku ^(b)



^(a) Postdoctoral fellow, Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, South Africa

^(b) Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the educators' perceptions of the influence of administrative communication on effective teaching in a selected school in South Africa. The paper adopted a case study research design of a qualitative research approach. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select eight (8) participants that comprises of 4 (four) educators and 4 (four) principals of some selected public schools in Buffalo City Metropolitan. A semi-structured interview was used to elicit information from the participants. The findings indicated that administrative communication influences educators' task performance and communication is revealed to influence the attainment of goals and school objectives. Also, the principals make use of different communication channels according to the skills of their educators to make valuable decisions. Educators performed better when they have a sense of belonging and when they receive constant communication from the principal. It is however recommended that the principals should endeavour to understand the type of communication skills possessed by the educators so that such skills will be used constantly to promote effective teaching.

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Introduction

Education in any nation can exploit the environment's natural resources for growth while also providing the fundamentals for literacy, skill acquisition, and technological improvement. Education is seen as the cornerstone of holistic development (Agih, 2015). Economic, social, cultural, and intellectual empowerment are the forces of education. Education according to Agih (2015) can bring about attitudinal and character change as well as reshape human potential for desired development. To actualize the potency of education, school organizations must be properly managed.

The major role players in any school organization are the educators, for their effectiveness during school activities, there is a need for a thorough evaluation of the types of administrative communication within and outside the school setup. In the context of South Africa, the foundation of any learner in school is built at the foundation phase level, the first stage of formal education. It is also an important level of education that has attracted much attention and concern from education stakeholders, like the government, educationists, and parents (Faremi, 2020). This level is more crucial and fundamental to South African basic education as it promotes educational stability, it also serves as the springboard and holds the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system in South Africa.

Omede (2015) observed that the ownership of educational institutions in many countries is between the private and public sectors. School is an organization of complex activities coordinated by different persons and carried out by people. Schools that are established and run by the governments are called public schools while those established by individuals are referred to as private schools. Private schools are distinguished from public for different reasons, such as; they are supported and financed by private

* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7787-0157

individuals, they are independent schools that are supported by payment of tuition (school fees), they are not run by the state or government, they retain the right to select their learners in line with the policy that governs all schools in South Africa like South African School Act (SASA) to mention but a few (Faremi, 2020).

To create a positive environment for the school, and to attain the school objectives by developing high qualities and maintaining school culture, there is a need to improve the communication system and process in the school. The school leadership like the principal, head of department and units must be able to work with others cooperatively and communicate effectively (Mohammed, 2016). The administrative communication system ranges from school to school based on the setup objectives, in many schools, this includes, writing memos, reports, notices, letters, speaking in the meeting, presentations and listening.

It is not far-fetched to say that administrative communication involves some basic skills like speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These skills are essential to enhance the effectiveness of the school organization's goals. The administration of the educational organization is the basis on which goals are attained and used to maintain the standard and improve the quality of teaching and learning for educators and learners (Mohammed, 2016). To coordinate the various activities of the units in school, there is a need for administration, and communication is the life wire to the attainment and success of any school organization. Therefore, the process of working harmoniously with educators, learners, and non-teaching staff to get things done effectively is administration in a school.

The school head and manager oversee the administrative functions of the school. During the staff meeting and to provide a forum for direct communication with both teaching and non-teaching staff, the school head must summon a regular meeting so that the teaching and learning goals could be achieved (Agih, 2015). Usen (2017) reiterated that school efficiency and effectiveness can only be enhanced if there is a collaboration between the principal and teaching staff as well as good use of administrative communication between educators and learners. A principal or headteacher is expected to be effective by encouraging teamwork, creating constructive knowledge and a learning community in which each member develops.

It has been empirically proven that a school head that improves measurable and significant contributions to communication with educators makes a huge difference in learners' learning and promotes academic success (Usen, 2017). Teacher effectiveness is very important to learners because, literature has shown the characteristics of teacher effectiveness such as the good quality of instructional delivery, learners; assessment, conducive learning environment, personal quality, subject content knowledge and motivation and veritable vehicle for achieving the goals and desirable learning outcome. (Aina, Olanipekun, & Garuba, 2015). This empirical study concludes that the hallmark of teachers' effectiveness is the professional focus.

According to Faremi (2020), an effective educator allows the learners to create the image on their own by understanding the problems of the learners and helping the learners by making teaching interesting through proper controlling and management of the classroom rather than creating the image for the learners. An effective educator is always passive in the class and uses many learning-centred methods to drive home the subject matter and allow the learner to move from known to unknown, abstract to concrete, and simple to complex.

Teaching effectively at the foundation phase and school organization, in general, must include good questioning skills, good subject knowledge, clear objectives, a balance of grouping strategies, good time management, effective planning, good classroom organization and well-established classroom routines (Faremi, 2020; Sammons, Ko, & Bakkum, 2014). It is interesting to know that in South Africa, primary schools consist of foundation and intermediate phases. The foundation phase (FP) is from Grades 1-3 while the intermediate phase (IP) is from Grades 4-6. They are headed by a principal and monitored by the basic education department. The principals are the most important partners in education. They are the managers of the schools and key delivery agents of the education system. Principals are the biggest driver of education outcomes. They are responsible for the following among others, leading the teaching and learning; managing the quality and security of the school; managing the school as an organization; shaping the development and the direction of the school; working with the community; managing human resources (educators and non-teaching staff) in the school and so on, they need to make use of proper administrative communication channels to perform above alluded tasks and more for effective administration (Faremi, 2020).

During COVID-19, principals adopt different channels of communication, especially during the lockdown. The principals need to retain the professional values of the school. They must deal with curriculum and human resources matters during this crucial period. They must make sure that whatever action is taken must be aligned with education policies according to South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS).

Thus, for the effective administration of any organization especially the school system, communication is central and a *sin qua non* to proper management of the school. Failure to apply effective communication administratively will mar the goals of such an organization and can inevitably lead to the stagnation of teaching-learning process activities. School organization does not exist in a vacuum, there are individuals (school personnel) whose individualistic and personal goals must be aligned with the overall goals and objectives of the school. The alignment is possible if the school leadership uses appropriate communication.

Usen (2017) reiterated that it is expedient for school principals to demonstrate good interpersonal communication skills to make the educators under them function above expectation. The transmission of information and understanding from one person to another is referred to as communication. Communication between two or more people wherein the intended message is successfully delivered,

received, and understood is known as effective communication (Alabi, 2018). According to Faremi (2020), effective communication creates mutual and cordial understanding between workers and administrators, which helps mould relationships among them.

Administrative communication is a function through which administrative processes are prepared, justified, controlled, and enforced. School organization includes all communication services within the area of educators' responsibility. To maintain effective communication at school, the principals who are responsible for education settings must play a fundamental role in shaping the learners who have the potential to shape the entire world and their families and their social beings (Alabi, 2018).

Administrative communication skills in the context of this paper depict various strategies of communication by the principal to the staff members (educators) within the school organization. The principal or the head teacher must possess and use the following communication skills; written, listening, verbal, non-verbal, and feedback skills. The ability of someone to communicate and the recipient to pay apt attention to decoding the message properly is known as a listening skill. Written skill in the context of this paper shows the ability of the communicator to document information that is needed to be conveyed or passed to other people or person(s) (Faremi, 2020). The verbal skill involves the ability of the communicator to be an orator or outspoken so that the recipients can hear and understand what is being communicated while non-verbal skill means the ability of the communicator to decode unspoken words, signs, gestures, and body expressions such as eye contact and facial movement. Whenever the recipient fails to respond appropriately to the message being communicated, it shows that some skills are lacking (Onuma & Eze, 2016). The researcher observed that in some schools, interaction gaps and poor relationships between principals and educators lead to misinterpretation of information.

Studies like Usen (2017); Alabi (2018) revealed that there is a significant relationship between principals' communication skills and educators' task performance and accomplishments. Their studies also revealed that there is a significant relationship between supervisory effectiveness in assessing teachers' notes of lessons, teachers' instructional delivery method, students' records, non-academic activities, and principals' effective communication. Similarly, Fashiku (2016) observed a significant relationship between leaders' communication patterns and lecturers' performance and another significant relationship exists between communication and effective supervision of lecturers' task performance in the college of education (Faremi, 2020).

According to Nebo, Nwankwo and Okonkwo (2015), the remedy to ineffective and inefficient supervision and management of employees in the school organisation is effective communication while Faremi's (2020) study showed that teachers who are at the top of performance are involved in decision making by their head teacher. Teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by the low level of participation they had in administrative creative decisions. Additionally, it was discovered that their attitude toward homework was significantly impacted by their limited engagement, which undermined the achievement of the established educational goals.

From the aforementioned points, it is very clear that the managerial ability of the school principals will lead to the success of any school system, to effectively fulfil the school's objectives, the principals must plan the school's activities, create tasks that are in line with those activities, organize instructors according to those tasks, and communicate with, lead, and motivate all of these parties. (Usen, 2017, P.20; Faremi, 2020)

Communication breakdown causes a significant deal of chaos in the classroom, which is why school administrators have been so concerned about it. Sometimes messages are not adequately decoded, and the intended meaning is not appropriately interpreted. The best in educational objective delivery is demanded of school organizations. Furthermore, administrators of schools are expected to perform major roles in the school to promote the attainment of school goals. Correspondingly, teachers who facilitate the attainment of goals are expected to have cordial relationships in terms of communication with the school principals. The literature revealed that school administrators are lagging in promoting good rapport among teachers and failed to influence teachers' effectiveness in school organisation (Faremi, 2020). There is also minimal administrative communication and teachers' effectiveness in public schools. Hence, this paper examines educators' perception of the influence of Administrative Communication on effective teaching in a selected school in South Africa.

The general objective of this paper is to explore the educators' perception of the influence of Administrative Communication on effective teaching in a selected school in South Africa. Specifically, the paper investigates how administrative communication influences educators' performance in public schools and examines how and why an educator needs to be involved in decision-making rules for better performance. The research questions:

- i. How does administrative communication influences educators' task performance in public schools?
- ii. Why do principals involve educators in decision-making for better task performance the way they do?

Research and Methodology

This section focuses on the ways and manners by which the whole research is carried out. It involves the selection, analysing and reflection on how the research work is performed. This section specifically talks about the research paradigm, approach, design, sample and sampling techniques, an instrument for data collection and data analysis (Adu & Olowu, 2022).

Research Paradigm

This paper adopted an interpretivism paradigm which assumes that reality is socially constructed and subjective and that reality is only understood through the experience of that reality which may be different from another person’s shaped by the social and historical perspective of individuals.

Research Approach

The qualitative research approach is used in this paper because it involves a social and natural setting of how people experience the aspects of their lives and interact with selected persons in their settings (Adu & Olowu, 2022). It also connotes how organisations' function and interaction shape their relationship.

Research Design

A case study was selected for the design of this paper to elicit information about Educators’ perceptions of the influence of Administrative Communication on effective teaching in a selected school in South Africa. As Fashiku (2016) expounds, case studies are used in qualitative research to carefully describe each case within its context, and it is used to generate an in-depth understanding of multifaceted issues in their real-life context (Adu & Olowu, 2022).

Sampling and Instrumentation

Purposive and judgement sampling methods were employed to pick four (4) teachers and four (4) principals from four schools in Buffalo Metropolitan City, East London, South Africa, for this study. An open-ended interview guide is a method used to obtain information from the respondents.

Trustworthiness

When participants are given the chance to access the research's findings and express their consent, the reliability of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are all secured (Adu & Olowu, 2022). The researchers made an effort to avoid any type of data manipulation and convey the research participants' opinions as accurately and objectively as possible using the data they had collected.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using a thematic method that includes familiarization with the data, generating code, searching for the theme, and transcription. The theme was derived from the research questions and the sub-themes emanate from the responses of the respondents.

Findings and Discussions

The data is analysed using different codes, sorting and categorisation. The table below shows the coding, sorting and categorization of the 8 participants from 4 schools that were purposively selected from Buffalo City Metropolitan.

Table 1: Coding, sorting and categorization of participants

Code and sorting ID	Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria
EdrS1	Educator in school 1
EdrS2	Educator in school 2
EdrS3	Educator in school 3
EdrS4	Educator in school 4
PnrS1	Principal in school 1
PnrS2	Principal in school 2
PnrS3	Principal in school 3
PnrS4	Principal in school 4

Research question 1

How does administrative communication influences educators’ task performance in public schools?

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes concerning administrative communication and its influence on educators’ task performance

Theme Sub-themes Activities		
Themes	Sub-Themes	Issues raised
Administrative communication and its influence on educators’ task performance	Improvement in the teaching process	Classroom activities are enjoyable Learners pay apt attention to the teaching and learning The use of the right pedagogy is influenced
	Finishing the curriculum on time	We cover the curriculum at the expected time. More time for revision with the learners
	The achievement of the school visions and objectives	Teaching and learning are very smooth. It assists instructional delivery. Cordial relationship between principal and the educators. Goal attainment. Sense of belonging.

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Theme 1: Administrative communication and its influence on educators’ task performance

All the participants agreed that administrative communication has a lot of positive influence on how they operate and perform numerous assigned tasks by the principal. However, some of the participants specifically reiterated the following:

EdrS1: I cherish communication in my life, whenever I receive any communication from the school principal, I feel very happy and encouraged to act promptly to all issues in the communication. Administrative communication assists me to improve my teaching skills and to achieve the laid down goals.

EdrS2: My relationship with my principal or head teacher is very cordial due to constant communication that gives me information. Communication promotes the attainment of the goals and objectives of the school. My interaction with my learners is very cordial due to effective administrative communication. Learners are adequately informed and learners’ views or feedback are sent back to the head teachers for action.

EdrS3: whenever I have issues with my notes of lessons, delivery methods and student records, I quickly communicate it to my line manager, this enables me to get quick feedback and make necessary corrections.

Discussion

The findings from the above theme and the view of the participants are in line with the work of Usen (2017), which observed that effective communication between two or more persons promotes mutual understanding and help to build a genuine relationship among the parties in the same school organisation. Similarly, Onuma and Eze (2016) said that poor relationship and interaction gaps between educators and principals can be bridged by effective communication. Majority of the educators are at the top of their performance and make good decisions with the help of effective communication and communication is the central and sine qua non to proper management (Arop, Owan, & Ekpang, 2018).

Research question 2: Why do principals involve educators in decision-making for better task performance the way they do?

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes concerning how principals involve educators in decision-making for better task performance.

Theme Sub-themes Activities		
Themes	Sub-Themes	Issues raised
How principals involve educators in decision-making for better task performance.	Regular communication	We send constant communication through email, WhatsApp, writing memos, reports, notices, and letters
	Constant feedback	We do request feedback by giving deadlines Feedback is discussed at the meeting with the staff member
	Regular Meeting	We meet with staff members weekly. We meet also with the head of the units We requested suggestions before a decision is made. We ensure that we organise meeting to receive new information from the department that governs schools

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Theme 2: How principals involve educators in decision-making for better task performance.

The participants (principals) reiterated that they make sure they involve their educators in decision-making through regular communication, constant feedback, and regular meeting with the educators. The principals believe that to maintain the school culture and achieve the school objectives, they need to carry their educators along. They work harmoniously with the educators, subject heads, and educators through regular communication.

PnrS1: I believe that for better decision-making, I need to improve my communication system and process in the school, I work with my educators cooperatively and communicate with them effectively.

PnrS3: I use a bottom-up approach style with my educators before a decision is made. I use different administrative communication systems based on the understanding of my educators, their skills are different, some have written skills, and listening skills while some have verbal and non-verbal skills.

PnrS4: Since I know that administrative communication has the potential to control, enforce, and justify every decision that is made, I communicate with my educators constantly, and this has promoted the smooth running of the school.

PnrS2: I carry all my staff members along in making decisions. I did not exempt the non-teaching staff (the secretary, administrator, gardener, messenger, gateman etc) because they are also relevant in decision-making.

The above findings show the different positive effects of administrative communication in proper decision-making. The principal believes that the best way to ensure the smooth running of the school and the achievement of the school's objectives, there is need for the principal to develop the right skills that are commensurate with the knowledge and understanding of their educators. Some have interpersonal communication skills, listening skills, writing skills, feedback skills, and verbal and non-verbal skills to mention but a few (Faremi, 2020).

Conclusions

The paper examines the educators' perceptions of the influence of administrative communication on effective teaching in a selected school in South Africa, the findings indicated that administrative communication influences educators' task performance and communication is revealed to influence the attainment of goals and school objectives. Also, the principals make use of different communication channels according to the skills of their educators to make valuable decisions. Educators performed better when they have a sense of belonging and when they receive constant communication from the principal. The principals frequently involve the educators in decision-making due to constant meetings and regular communication which facilitate the smooth running of the day-to-day activities and the achievement of the set instructional objectives and educational goals. The success of any school system is a function of the managerial ability of the principals who have restricted responsibility to organize the activities of the school. It is thus recommended that educators should be involved in decision making and the principal should understand the type of communication skills that suit the school organisation to facilitate and improve the effectiveness of the educators in discharging their professional duties.

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