

Teachers' Perceived Communication Instructional Skill for Improving Teaching in Primary School in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate teachers' perceived communication instructional skill for improving teaching in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The sample size of the study is 1,196 teachers. Multistage sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample size. The instrument used for data collection was the Teachers' Perceived Communication Instructional Skills Questionnaire (TPCISQ). To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was conducted by administering 30 copies of the questionnaire to 30 public primary school teachers in Awka, Anambra State, which is outside the study area. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items. Result of the analysis yielded an overall coefficients value of 0.87. The data collected in the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Based on the findings of the study, it was revealed that teachers need the following communication skills: listening to the pupils attentively when they ask questions; giving proper feedback to the questions raised by the pupils; repeating instructions orally or in writing and so on.

Keywords: teachers, communication instructional skill, Enugu State, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Communication skill is the ability of the teacher to understand what the pupil is trying to express and be able to express him/herself to the pupil (Smith, 2008). According to Prozesky (2010), communication skill is the ability to impart, especially news, knowledge or idea the science and practice of sharing information between two or more individuals. These definitions clearly show the link between teaching and communication. Teachers are constantly imparting new knowledge and transmitting information to pupils. Communication skills in this study mean the ability of the primary school teachers to use different strategies to impart knowledge, values, ideas and information to pupils in order to bring about effective teaching and learning. According to Deardan (2008), communication skills include both verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication includes vocal speech which gives out information in the form of auditory signals. On the other hand, non-verbal communication includes skills in the use of written signals, body languages, listening skills and gestures. In this respect, communication is a verbal and non-verbal way of giving educational instructions to the pupils. Primary school teachers are therefore expected to possess these kinds of skill to be able to share ideas, thoughts and feelings with their pupils and ensure effective teaching in the classroom. Such communication skill will also help the teacher in the effective management of the classroom.

However, another instructional skill that is important for effective teaching and learning is communication instructional skill. Communication instructional skill is a skill possessed by the teacher for creating and sharing ideas to the pupils (Rosenbaun, 2012). According to Uchenna, Igbokwe and Uchenna (2009), communication instructional skills is a process and also the activity of passing information from the teacher to the pupil, and from the pupil to the teacher This implies that both the teacher and the pupil are involved in the interaction, the teacher will give out, the pupil will receive and sometimes, the pupil will give out while the teacher will be at the receiving end. It involves two or more persons in the classroom

Communication instructional skill means a systematic way of formulating information, knowledge, ideas, opinions, feelings, among others and passing it over to an audience who successfully interprets (decode) it and react to it (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Their research evidence shows that communication instructional skill is a complex process. At any stage of this process things may go wrong, making the communication less

effective. For instance, the teacher may not express well; or the room may be noisy, or the pupils may not understand the words the teacher is using. To be effective, teachers have to try to minimize these barriers to communication, by making sure that the room is quiet; by speaking slowly and clearly; by only using soft words which the pupils should be able to understand. However, the most important way to overcome the barriers is by two-way communication. This means getting regular feedback from the pupils as to ascertain the level of understanding from what the teachers are trying to put across. Research evidences have shown that Communication comes in many forms, it could be verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication is mostly speech, while nonverbal communication is the body language e.g., facial expression, bodily movement, visual images such as picture, painting, photograph and video film. Non-Verbal communication is usually subconscious, we use it without thinking about it; that is why we say that 'it is difficult to lie in body language'. If teachers really attend to the body language of their pupils they will know when they are bored or confused. From the body language teachers and pupils pick up whether they are confident and enthusiastic. Communication skills are important to everyone. They are how we give and receive information and convey our ideas and opinions with those around us.

Rosenbaun further revealed that it is important to develop a variety of skills for both communicating to others and learning how to interpret the information received from others. Teachers knowing their pupils and understanding how they need to receive information is equally important as knowing themselves. Asuzu (2008) stated that communication is a process that involves a shared code or codes of verbal and non-verbal symbols. The meaning of symbols is not observable but within the minds of users. Communication is perceived as all methods of conveying any kind of thought, feelings, and attitude between people (Nwafor & Ugwu, 2012). Peter (2007) defined communication as the process by which information is passed between individuals and organizations using previously agreed symbol. According to Udall and Udall (2009), communication is the process by which one person or a group of persons share and impart information to another so that people clearly understand one another. Chappel and Read (2010) stated that communication is any means by which thought is transferred from one person to another. According to Mylton (2009), communication is an interpersonal relationship, either direct or indirect, involving the transfer of information. Information here means the whole spectrum of messages conveyed through a medium ranging from an explicit statement of facts to the most subtle influences that affect the audience's picture of the world around him. According to Farrell (2009) teachers used communication skill in the classrooms in order to accomplish three things: to elicit relevant knowledge from pupils, to respond to things that pupils say and to describe the classroom experiences that they share with pupils. It is hoped that by looking at the classroom, teachers' communication skills will be identified and teachers will become more aware of their communication skills and communication patterns that currently exist in their classrooms. This will enable teachers to evaluate whether the patterns they are using will provide opportunities for their pupils to learn in the classroom. By focusing on more than one features of communication skills, teachers would be able to practice and monitor the use of communication skills not only as an essential input for their pupils but also to achieve more effective teaching when conducting a lesson in the classroom. Farrell further explained that communication instructional skill is not just giving information rather it is the giving of understandable information, receiving and understanding the message so that it can be acted upon. In all these definitions, there is one common thread running through them and that is that communication is a process of transmitting thought. Communication instructional skills are therefore essential for effective teaching and learning in the classroom for this will help the pupils to interact with their teachers and also to interact among themselves. Pupils are the future of every nation. Therefore, the role of primary school teachers in the educational upbringing of the pupil should not be overemphasized. It is through primary school teachers that generations of youngsters are deeply influenced.

Effective communication is an important ingredient within the school management. Thus, communication instructional skills are of one the important ingredient which the primary school teachers use to impart knowledge to the pupils. Whether planning and organizing or leading and monitoring, school administrators communicate with and through other people. This implies that every person's communication skills affect both personal and organizational effectiveness (Brun & Summers, 2010). It seems reasonable to conclude that one of the most inhibiting forces to classroom management effectiveness is a lack of effective communication (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010).

Moreover, effective communication skills are very important to ones' success as a teacher. It is only when the teacher uses material elements of an organization as a united whole, that the organizational objectives can be achieved. Effective communication skills help the teacher to stimulate enthusiasm and raise the interest and motivation of the pupils in the classroom. Communication is not an inborn thing; every teacher has to learn how to communicate. For example, teachers are trained in various methods of transmitting skill and knowledge to students.

Thus, establishing communication should be the first task of the teacher. Eresimadu (2003) asserts that “no business or activity can take place in the absence of communication”. School activities cannot take place in the absence of communication; it is the root of interaction. It makes the transmission of cumulative knowledge possible. It promotes the transmissions of information, ideas and thoughts. Unfortunately, despite the enormous importance of communication, it is observed that a gap in communication exists in the management of public primary schools in Enugu State.

The communication gap in the classroom is a tool against the teaching of primary school pupils. The problem teachers experience in communication that led to the communication gaps in public primary schools today include: lack of communication skill, having different perceptions, the difference in status, distrust, individual emotions, poor listening skill, gender differences, cultural differences and technological jargon. Other problems are a misinterpretation of the message, bad work relationship and lack of knowledge. Unfortunately, no effort is being made to minimize these problems of communication that teachers in public primary schools experience. The implication of these, if not addressed, is that it will bring about school unconnectedness and dysfunctional system which will lead to failure on the part of the school management. The unique nature of the communication process requires that school teachers and heads should critically observe the communication flows which are, downward, upward, and horizontally flow of communication for effective communication. It is evident that communication gaps still thrive in most of these schools. Hence, the need for this study.

1.1 Research Questions

- 1) What are the communication instructional skills needed by primary school teachers for improving teaching?
- 2) What are the mean responses of male and female teachers on the communication instructional skills needed for improving teaching?

2. Methods

The sample of the study was 1196 primary school teachers from Enugu State Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the perceived instructional skill needs of primary school teachers for improved teaching in Enugu State. According to Ali (2006) descriptive survey design is concerned with describing events as they are, without any manipulation of what caused the event or what is being observed. In descriptive surveys, views, facts, among others are collected, analysed and used for answering research questions. The descriptive survey design was considered most suitable for the study because it permits the collection of original data from the respondents themselves, describes the present conditions as they exist in their natural school settings, and allows only a representative of the population to be sampled.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Teachers' Perceived Communication Instructional Skills Questionnaire (TPCISQ). The questionnaire comprised information regarding the personal data of primary school teachers such as gender, location and education zone in section A while section B contained items that addressed communication instructional skills, needs for improved teaching. Section B was arranged on a four-point rating scale was provided for the respondents to indicate the strength of their opinion as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. Two experts validated the instrument. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, trial testing of the instrument was carried out in Awka Education Authority of Anambra State using 30 respondents (teachers). This trial testing was conducted to determine the internal consistency reliability estimate of the instrument using the Cronbach Alpha Statistic. The analysis of data yielded Alpha co-efficient estimate values of 0.80.

Six research assistants, one from each education zone were used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. The research assistants were provided guidance in line with the objectives of the study and the method would adopt to reach the respondents. To ensure maximum return however, the research assistants used on the spot delivery approach to minimize instrument mortality

Two data analyst analyzed the data using mean and standard deviation in order to determine the degree to which each questionnaire items was agreed to. In taking a decision in each of the research questions, mean scores of 2.50 and above on the four-point rating scale was considered acceptable, while those below 2.50 was regarded as rejection.

3. Results

Table 1. Mean responses of teachers on the communication instructional skill needs of primary school teachers for improved teaching (N = 1196)

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
Teachers need to:				
1.	Listen to the pupils attentively when they ask questions.	3.39	0.79	Agree
2.	Demonstrate communication that is harmonious with pupils' feelings.	3.35	0.78	Agree
3.	Reprimand the pupils if they ask wrong questions.	1.51	0.52	Disagree
4.	Give proper feedback to the questions raised by the pupils	3.33	0.88	Agree
5.	Repeat instructions orally or in writing to ensure that the pupils understand it.	3.35	0.78	Agree
6.	Always provide evaluative praise rather than appreciative praise.	1.53	0.55	Disagree
7.	Communicate to all pupils in a polite manner	3.32	0.50	Agree
8.	Ignore offensive language from the pupils rather than making a big deal out of it	3.31	0.55	Agree
9.	Usually make use of verbal communication when teaching the pupils.	3.30	0.52	Agree
10.	Make use of sign (non-verbal communication) when teaching the pupils.	3.37	0.79	Agree
11.	Make use of gesture during class with the pupils	3.33	0.78	Agree
12.	React to incorrect questions in a soft manner.	3.33	0.88	Agree
Grand mean		3.03	0.69	Agree

The table above presents the mean responses of teachers on communication instructional skill needs of teachers for improved teaching. From the analysis on the table, the respondents agreed on ten out of the twelve items on the list. The respondents however disagreed that reprimanding the pupils if they ask wrong questions, and always providing evaluative praise rather than appreciative praise for the pupils is not communication instructional skill needs of primary school teachers for improved teaching. This disagreement is explicable, because, rather than reprimand the pupils if they ask wrong questions, a teacher with good communicative skill should encourage the pupil to ask questions, but explain to the pupil why such question is wrong. Similarly, rather than providing evaluative praise for the pupils, appreciative praise should be extended to them to improve teaching process.

Moreso, the cluster mean for the items is 3.03, indicating agreed. Therefore, the respondents agreed on the communicative instructional skill needs of teachers for improved teaching in Enugu State.

Table 2. Mean responses of urban and rural teachers on the communication instructional skills needed for improved teaching (N-1196)

S/N	ITEMS	URBAN			RURAL		
		\bar{X}	SD	RMK	\bar{X}	SD	RMK
1.	Listen to the pupils attentively when they ask questions.	3.69	.69	Agree	3.81	.55	Agree
2.	Demonstrate communication that is harmonious with pupils' feelings.	3.53	.75	Agree	3.56	.71	Agree
3.	Reprimand the pupils if they ask wrong questions.	1.19	.82	Disagree	1.50	.77	Disagree
4.	Give proper feedback to the questions raised by the pupils	3.28	.83	Agree	3.38	.80	Agree
5.	Repeat instructions orally or in writing to ensure that the pupils understand it.	3.37	.84	Agree	3.33	0.84	Agree
6.	Always provide evaluative praise rather than appreciative praise.	1.28	.86	Disagree	1.35	.83	Disagree
7.	Communicate to all pupils in a polite manner	3.32	.93	Agree	3.39	.83	Agree
8.	Ignore offensive language from the pupils rather than making a big deal out of it	3.26	1.00	Agree	3.36	.87	Agree
9.	Usually make use of verbal communication when teaching the pupils.	3.39	.53	Agree	3.35	0.70	Agree
10.	Make use of sign (non-verbal communication) when teaching the pupils.	3.48	0.88	Agree	3.39	0.90	Agree
11.	Make use of gesture when teaching the pupils	3.45	0.86	Agree	3.36	0.88	Agree
12.	React to incorrect questions in a soft manner.	3.25	0.94	Agree	3.28	0.87	Agree

From Table 2, both teachers in urban and rural schools both agreed on the same items on communication instructional skills for improved teaching. These teachers equally disagreed on the same items on communication instructional skills for improved teaching.

4. Discussion

The result revealed that primary school teachers need to listen to pupils attentively when they ask questions; give proper feedback to the questions raised by the pupils; repeat instructions orally or in writing to ensure that the pupils understand it; politely communicate to all pupils usually make use of verbal communication when teaching the pupils; react to incorrect questions softly, and so on. It is believed that teachers possessing the above communication skills will improve teaching in primary schools.

This finding is in line with the assertion of Ibelegbu (2013) that teachers need certain skills for improving the teaching and learning process in schools. It is also in agreement with El-Yakub (2013) who found that teachers require communicating skills for enhancing teaching effectiveness. Adebayo and Sagaya (2016) revealed that there is a significant relationship between teacher capacity building and students' academic performance. The finding also conformed with the opinion of Chukwu (2009) that teacher professional development and capacity building in communication are very important to the development of the educational sector.

One can see from the findings and earlier studies that correspond with the findings that communication skill is needful for teachers' effectiveness in teaching. It means that teachers should constantly ask questions to their pupils to know whether they understood what has been taught or not. Teachers need to utilize other communication skills identified in order to improve pupils' learning process in school.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that teachers need the following communication skills: listening to the pupils attentively when they ask questions; giving proper feedback to the questions raised by the pupils; repeating instructions orally or in writing among others. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to organize workshops, conferences and seminars for change and innovation in education practice, communication gaps being noticed in the management of public primary schools will be averted. Also, newly employed teachers should be provided with a handbook of information to remind them of what is expected of them.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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