

ADMINISTRATORS' COMMUNICATION STYLES AND ACADEMIC STAFF EFFECTIVENESS IN UNIVERSITIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between administrators' communication styles and academic staff effectiveness in Kwara State, Nigeria. The survey research design was found suitable for the study. The population of academic staff in universities in Kwara State comprised of 5,456. The academic staff was divided into strata i.e male and female. A stratified random technique was used to select 400 academic staff from the population. Two sets of questionnaires tagged Administrators' Communication Styles Questionnaire (ACSQ) and Academic Staff Effectiveness Questionnaire (ASEQ) were used for data collection. The validity of the instruments were done and pilot tested on 20 academic staff in a university that was not actually used for the study. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the reliability co-efficient of the instruments and this yielded .65 and .62 respectively. Analyses of data collected were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings of this study revealed that the promoter communication style was the most commonly used by administrators of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. It was further revealed in the study that the measures of academic staff effectiveness i.e. teaching and research were on the average except community service which was low. The study showed that there was a significant relationship between the measures of administrators' communication styles and academic staff effectiveness. The study recommended the following among others that administrators of universities should adopt the best communication style that is in agreement with the effectiveness of their staff since there is no best communication style for all occasions. Administrators should employ the communication styles that will foster effectiveness in terms of goal.

Keywords: Administrator, Communication Styles, Academic Staff Effectiveness

Introduction

Every organization is established to pursue certain ends and for the effective realization of such ends it is necessary for them to create a favorable environment by putting in place an effective communication styles. In essence, a good communication styles if used can facilitate the overall effectiveness of administration of universities in Nigeria. Organization consists of individuals from superior to subordinates who possess different styles of communication. Communication is central to the creation of the universe because it is essential in all life endeavours. The beginning of human existence on earth started with communication which suggests that its absence may bring about ineffective relationships among the various elements within the university because relationships are formed on the basis of communication. This therefore connotes that communication is unavoidable or an inevitable aspect of the internal and external functioning of an organization, no wonder it is

considered as a major tool of the management functions. Planning, organizing, directing, controlling and co-ordinating are all managerial functions that needs to be properly communicated for the efficient functioning of university.

Communication is the process through which messages are passed from one person to the other. Communication takes place when the parties involved i.e the source encodes the message in a clear manner and the receiver i.e the decoder understand clearly in a way and manner that facilitates understanding. In the words of Omotoye (2007), success of an organization depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of the communication because relationships are formed on its basis. The communication styles adopted by an institution may foster staff efficiency or inefficiency, effectiveness or ineffectiveness. It is the style communication arising out of institutional direction that fosters staff efficiency or inefficiency, effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

One of the major purposes of communication in any social settings including the universities is to bring about action among the administrators, academic staff, non-academic staff and the learners at large. The education system is so complex and the complexity has given rise to increasing enrolments of students, so educational institutions need effective leaders who can communicate effectively using different communication styles. It is in line with the assertion that Lunenburg and Irby (2006) asserted that effective educational institutions leaders spend most of their time on issues around communication with various stakeholders. In educational institutions' including universities, communication happens at all times and in different flows; downward, upward, horizontally and vertically in an organization. This made administrators to develop different styles when they communicate. Communication style involves the negotiation among people in any social institutions with respect to how organizational growth can be fostered. It is the mode of behavior exhibited by an individual whenever information, ideas and emotions are exchanged with other people in any social settings (Reece, Brandt & Howie, 2010). The leadership styles used by a leader have influence on the way he/she communicates and this can either make or mar the organization.

Over the years, universities have been seen as a training ground for the high-level manpower needed for the development of all the sectors of a nation. Ogbodo and Nwaoku (2007) in support of the assertion posited that the strategic position occupied by universities all over the world in national development is beyond doubt. Universities are therefore expected to be agency saddled with the task of extending the frontier knowledge for the overall benefit of the society. It is in line with these that university is recognized as an ivory tower of education by many scholars and researchers. A typical university is comprised by three major actors, the administrators, the academic staff and non-academic staff and the students. All the human factor and elements in the university are saddled with different roles. In the University, the roles of lecturers as stated in the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) are Teaching, Research, and Community services. To accomplish these responsibilities efficiently, it requires that the styles of communication adopted by the universities administrators with their academic staff must be such that could help in the realization of the mandates of the university. Consequently, effective communication style is a sine qua non to foster workplace relationships among members in an organization. Based on the background information, this study examined administrators' leadership styles and academic staff effectiveness of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

One of the essential life skills for harmonious relationship in the workplace is communication. De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, Alting Siberg, Van Gameren and Vlug (2009) in their article on the content and dimensionality of communication style as the process by which individuals express themselves in a verbal and nonverbal way and ensuring that the messages expressed are clearly understood. In management, many theorists have developed several communication styles as parameters for facilitating effective relationships and the realization of organizational goals.

There are lots of leadership styles which can be associated with different communication styles. For example, democratic leadership style focused on respect of people and their opinions with respect to getting tasks done in the workplace. This style can be related to promoter communication style. A charismatic leadership style is connected to a communication style that inspires followers and encourages them. Furthermore, a task-oriented leadership style depends less on open and receptive communication styles and is directive and controlling (de Vries, Bakker-Pieper & Oostenveld, 2009).

A study to investigate principals' communication styles and school performance in Al Ain government schools in the United Arab Emirate was carried out by Ibrahim and Mahmoud (2017). Findings of their study revealed that expressiveness, supportiveness, preciseness communication styles of principals is significant with school performance while the moodiness style does not have significant relationship with school performance.

A study which investigated communication climate and staff efficiency in south-western Nigeria tertiary institutions was conducted by Ijaduola (2008). The study found that there exist significant relationships between communication climate and staff efficiency in south-western Nigeria tertiary institutions. Nwadukwe and Timinepere (2012) conducted a research which focused on the relationship between management styles and organizational effectiveness in Anambra State with special reference on private enterprises. The result of their study indicated positive correlation between the duo of participative and paternalistic management styles and organizational effectiveness. Fashiku (2016) did a correlational study on leaders' communication pattern and lecturers' job performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that a significant relationship existed between leaders' democratic communication pattern and lecturers' performance but that leaders' autocratic and laissez faire pattern is not significant with lecturers' performance. Effective school leaders must learn how to match appropriate communication styles to the school policies, programmes and plans.

Academic staff ineffectiveness is one of the major problems which administrators of universities are contending with. In dealing with this ineffectiveness, administrators often make use of different styles ranging from leadership, management and communication. There is a controversy among researchers about whether administrators' communication styles have any significant influence on academic staff effectiveness. Common observations in the university system shows that the style of communication adopted by an administrator could have impact on the effectiveness of the universities. Despite recent ground breaking advances in communication by theorists and researchers, absence of effective communication styles continue to take place in universities. Ineffective communication style of administrators is detrimental for academic staff effectiveness in universities. Of course, this may bring about ineffectiveness, poor relationships and conflict situations. All the problems experienced in a university system are occasioned by improper communication style. This study therefore investigated the relationship that exists between administrators' communication styles and academic staff effectiveness of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

In line with these problems, the following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What is the most commonly used communication styles by administrators of universities in Kwara State?
2. What is the level of academic staff effectiveness in universities in Kwara State?

Research Hypothesis

Administrators' communication styles are not significantly related with academic staff effectiveness of universities in Kwara State.

Methodology

The survey research design was found suitable for the study. The total number of academic staff in all the universities in Kwara State was 5,456 and they constitute the population of the study (Administration Office of the Universities, 2018). The academic staff were divided into strata i.e male and female. The universities in Kwara State were stratified into 3 categories based on proprietorship i.e Federal, State and Private. Thereafter, the universities were purposively selected to capture the three groups. A stratified random technique was used to select 400 academic staff from the entire 5,456 population.

Two sets of questionnaires tagged Administrators' Communication Styles Questionnaire (ACSQ) and Academic Staff Effectiveness Questionnaire (ASEQ) were used for data collection. The two sets of questionnaires were constructed by the researchers and vetted by experts in the field of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation experts in the University of Ilorin, Faculty of Education for both face and content validities. The questionnaires were structured along the 4-point likert scale. The instruments were pilot tested on 20 academic staff in a university that was not actually used for the study. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the reliability co-efficient of the instruments and this yielded .65 and .62 respectively. The administration of the instruments was personally carried out by the researchers with the assistance of colleagues in other universities. A total of 320 copies representing 80% were duly completed and returned. Analyses of data collected were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

Research Question One: *What is the most commonly used communication styles by administrators of universities in Kwara State?*

Table 1: Mean, standard deviations and rank of the most commonly used communication styles by administrators of universities in Kwara State

Communication Styles	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
Controller	320	3.13	1.47	2 nd
Supporter	320	2.38	1.10	4 th
Promoter	320	3.27	1.68	1 st
Analyzer	320	3.02	1.28	3 rd
Valid N (list wise)	320			

Table 1 revealed in synopsis the mean, standard deviation and rank of the different communication styles adopted by administrators of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The promoter style had the highest mean value of 3.27 while supporter style had the lowest mean value of 2.38. From the statistical values, the greatest or commonly used communication styles by administrators of universities in Kwara State is the promoter style (m=3.27) followed by controller style (m=3.13), analyzer style (3.02) and supporter style (m=2.38). The result revealed that administrators who use the promoter style usually establish relationships with the people whenever they are communicating.

Research Question Two: *What is the level of academic staff effectiveness in universities in Kwara State?*

Table 2: Level of Academic Staff Effectiveness in Teaching, Research and Community service

S/N	Variables	X	SD	Decision
1.	Teaching	1.89	.75	Average
2.	Research	1.85	.44	Average
3.	Community service	1.56	.53	Low

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Key: X 1.00-1.59 Low; 1.60-2.59 Average and 2.60-3.59 High

Table 2 revealed the mean standard deviation and the levels of the academic staff effectiveness in universities in Kwara State. Academic staff effectiveness in the areas of teaching, research and community services were considered and it shows that the effectiveness of the academic staff in the areas of teaching (m=1.89), research (m=1.85) and community service (m=1.56). It can be inferred from the table that the academic staff effectiveness in the areas of teaching and research was average, while that of the community service was low.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Administrators' Communication Styles and Academic Staff Effectiveness

		Academic Staff Effectiveness	Controller style	Promoter style	Analyzer Style	Supporter style
Academic Staff Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.139	.145	.154	.178*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Controller style	Pearson Correlation	.139	1	.354	.486	.508
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Promoter style	Pearson Correlation	.145	.354	1	.371	.392
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Analyzer style	Pearson Correlation	.154	.371	.386	1	.402
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Supporter style	Pearson Correlation	.178*	.392	.375	.714**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	320	320	320	320	320

Source: Fieldwork

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix between administrators' communication styles and academic staff effectiveness in universities in Kwara State. From the table it was revealed that all the hypotheses were rejected. This was because the p-value of .000 was less than the significance value of .005 for all the formulated hypotheses.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of this study as revealed on Table 1, the promoter communication style was the most commonly used by administrators of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The reason for the findings on table 1 was that administrators most of the times focus and direct their conversations on the interest of the academic staff in the university thereby focusing on their feelings with respect to their job. It can also be inferred from the findings as revealed on Table 1, that all the other communication styles have implications on the academic staff effectiveness when used by the administrator. For instance, administrators of universities that make use of controller communication style react quickly and spontaneously to issues, usually assertive and impatient and this in turn makes academic staff of the universities to be effective while carrying out their tripartite mandate of teaching, research and community service. Also, administrators that make use of controller style makes emphatic statements on issues.

The administrators of universities that make use of analyzer communication styles are not usually open to establishing relationships with people, always focus conversations on the tasks, issues and business at hand, usually make decisions based on facts or evidence, reject other people's point of view, feelings and concerns and always work independently all of which have implications on the academic staff effectiveness. It was also revealed that administrators that makes use of the analyzer communication style react slowly and spontaneously to issues, contribute infrequently to group conversation, establish relationships with the way the speak and are usually predictable. This finding was in agreement with earlier studies by Ibrahim & Mahmoud (2017) who found that preciseness, expressiveness and supportiveness communication styles are significant with school performance.

It was found out that administrators of universities in Kwara State make use of diverse communication styles as a way of bringing out the best in the effectiveness of their academic staff. The promoter communication style was the commonly used styles by the administrators and this can be attributed to the fact that human beings by nature sometimes need some level of encouragement before tasks are executed. Furthermore, administrators' of universities adopt the controller communication style based on the fact that academic staff by nature needs some level of aggressiveness before they execute their tasks.

Findings from Table 2 revealed that the measures of academic staff effectiveness i.e. teaching and research were on the average except community service which was low. This shows that the style of communication adopted by administrators of universities in Kwara State was a strong indicator of the academic staff effectiveness. The study showed that there was a significant relationship between the measures of administrators' communication styles and academic staff effectiveness. The findings of the study was consonance with earlier findings by Ijaduola (2000), Nwadukwe and Timinepere (2012), Fashiku (2016) that communication styles influence school performance, organizational effectiveness and staff efficiency.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is imperative to conclude that administrators' communication styles to a very large extent determine the effectiveness of academic staff in universities in Kwara State. It is also worthy to say that for effectiveness of academic staff on their areas of primary assignments of teaching, research and community service, proper communication styles adopted by administrators at the different levels will go a long way in making them more effective.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations were put forth:

- I. Administrators' of universities in Kwara State should adopt the best communication style that is in agreement with the effectiveness of their staff since there is no best communication style for all occasions;
- ii. Administrators' of universities in Kwara State should employ the communication styles that will foster effectiveness of their academic staff in the areas of teaching, research and community service;

- iii. Administrators' of universities in Kwara State should develop and establish communication styles that will foster relationships with their academic staff because it will also bring about their effectiveness;
- iv. Administrators' of universities in Kwara State should develop and establish communication styles that will respect academic staff point of view, feelings and concerns and
- v. Administrators' of universities in Kwara State should lay emphasis on the communication styles that will make them react quickly and spontaneously to issues that concerns their academic staff.

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