

---

**INFLUENCE OF ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILL USAGE AND EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA**

EKWE, GABRIEL MICHAEL; ANI, APPOLONIA NGOZI ( Ph.D);  
PRECIOUS- CHINATU, OGECHI NANCY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, ENUGU STATE  
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ENUGU, NIGERIA.

**ABSTRACT**

This study was carried out to examine the influence of assertive communication skills usage and effective principalship in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The research design employed for the study was descriptive survey design and the area of the study was in Enugu state, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 3125 male and 5665 female teachers of secondary schools, giving a total of 8790, while the sample for the study included a total of 879 respondents. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, and t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that principal utilize active listening communication skills to a great extent in secondary schools in Enugu state, Nigeria. The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals utilize assertive communication skill in secondary schools in Enugu state. Based on this, it was recommended that Post Primary School Management Board should organize seminars and workshops from time to time for principals in secondary schools on the importance of effective communication in schools.

**Keywords:** Communication skills usage, Assertive communication skill, Enugu State, Nigeria

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background of the Study**

In any organization, formal or informal, effective communication leads to effective management which aids achievement of organizational goals. Effective personnel management is a function of effective communication as management involves working with and through others to achieve

corporate goals. The realization of the goals of a secondary school as an educational organization hinges on effective communication among the various operating personnel. The basic function of education itself relies almost entirely on communication. A school manager cannot organize his staff, coordinate and control their activities as well as delegate responsibilities without effective communication (Ijaiya, 2000). Communication helps to build relationships and facilitates achievement of goals. Thus, the need for effective communication strategies for the improvement of a secondary school cannot be overemphasized.

Communication is derived from the Latin word “communicare” which means “to put in common” and “to share”. It then means the sharing of ideas, facts, thought and feelings for easy coexistence. It is a two way process which involves the sender and the receiver (Ukairo, 2000). Communication is, therefore, concerned with transmitting and receiving information which is the key to all aspects of organizational life, whether by planning, controlling, problem-solving, decision-making, motivating, interviewing and other management activities (Weldy,2009).

Ocho (2008) refers to communication as the transferring of a thought, message, idea, feeling or knowledge to another person in such a way that is understood. Communication is regarded as the life-wire of any human organization. The primary function of communication from organizational point of view is to influence behavior in ways that is conducive to the attainment of objectives. The individual’s understanding of what the organization wants to accomplish, how it plans to achieve its aims, what and how it expects him to do it and whether it considers his work satisfactory depends on the efficiency of the communication system. School needs effective communication by principals to enhance teaching and learning. The principal has a lot of roles to play in the school such as: - supervision of instruction, general administration of school, maintaining school/community relations. Other roles include maintaining a balance in the student personnel services and staff personnel services all which are aimed at improving the teaching and learning process in the school.

The above cardinal roles can only be attained with an effective communication system in the school which may be verbal or non-verbal. It is therefore imperative to examine the influence of assertive communication skills usage and effective principalship in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. This study is relevant so as to bridge the gap between principals’ roles as school head and teachers to ensure effective communication system to promote teaching and learning in schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent time, students’ academic achievement in Enugu State secondary schools has been a major concern to the parents, teachers and even the education board officers. Research has also

shown that some secondary school principals are lacking communication competency resulting in mistrust in the administration, low morale, lack of commitment by the teachers, indiscipline among staff and students (Desumu, 2005). Lack of effective communication between the school leader and the other participants including the teachers, students and parents, impedes the school performance. It is in this regard that this study examines the influence of assertive communication skill usage and effective principalship in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of assertive communication skill usage and effective principalship in secondary schools in Enugu state. Specifically, the study sought to:-

1. ascertain the extent to which active listening communication skill is utilized by principal's in secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. ascertain the extent to which assertive communication skill is utilized by principal's in secondary schools in Enugu State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. to what extent do principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize active listening communication skill?
2. to what extent do principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize assertive communication skill ?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers regarding the extent to which active listening communication skill is utilized by principals in secondary schools in Enugu state.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers regarding the extent to which assertive communication skill is utilized by principals in secondary school in Enugu state.

## **Research Method**

The design of this study was descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design, according to Ali (2006), is a study in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. Hence, the researcher deems it necessary to use this design because a representative sample of the entire population was used for the study. The study was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria. It covers all the 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state. The population for this study comprised all the teachers in the 314 public secondary schools in Enugu State, Negeria. Available data show that there are 3125 male and 5665 female secondary school teachers in Enugu state. The sample used for this study consisted of 312 male teachers and 567 female teachers. The researcher used proportionate sampling technique in the selection of the respondents. While the instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Principals Communication Skills Questionnaire (PCSQ). This questionnaire contained two parts; part A and B. part A contained about the bio-data of the respondents while part B contained information on Principals Communication Skills. The instrument was validated using content validity while the reliability co-efficient of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha method. Alpha value was found to be 0.85, indicating high reliability of the entire instrument. Mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, and t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## **Results**

The results are presented in tables according to research questions.

### **Research Question one**

To What extent do principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize active listening communication skill?

**Table 1: Mean rating scores of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize active listening communication skill.**

S/N	Items	Male Teachers			Female Teachers		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1.	principal listen to teachers explanations of events before making decisions	3.01	0.70	GE	3.22	0.69	GE
2.	principal make conscious efforts to interpret verbal messages before reacting	3.67	0.65	GE	3.18	0.70	GE
3.	principal listen with attention to reports given by teachers	3.56	0.68	GE	3.05	0.69	GE
4.	principal show interest when teachers make suggestion about school issues	3.06	0.70	GE	2.99	0.79	GE
5.	Opinion about your principal reflect that he/she is a good listener	2.28	1.02	GE	2.48	0.99	GE
6.	Principal final decisions show evidence of he/her having listened attentively to various views from teachers	3.11	0.69	GE	3.21	0.69	GE
7.	principal attentively get to the root of problems, before proffering solutions	3.09	0.70	GE	2.87	0.71	GE
8.	Principal insist on knowing the rationale behind what is being said before accepting the fact/issue	2.76	0.96	GE	3.03	0.69	GE
9.	Principal allow oral information to flow from the teachers to him/her	2.49	0.99	LE	2.40	1.00	LE
10.	Principal demonstrate that he/she trust oral information emanating from the teachers	2.32	1.01	LE	2.46	0.99	LE
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>2.93</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>GE</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>GE</b>

Based on the data on Table 1, the two groups of respondents independently rated all the items great extent except item 9 and 10 which are rated low extent with. The ratings of the items of this cluster implies that the two groups of respondents share the view that principals utilized active listening communication skill in secondary school in Enugu state. The cluster means are 2.93 (for male teachers) and 2.89 (for female teachers) in a four point rating scales with corresponding standard deviation of 0.81 and 0.79 for male and female teachers respectively.

**Research Question two**

To what extent do principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize assertive communication skill?

**Table 2: Means rating scores of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize assertive communication skill.**

S/N	Items	Male Teachers			Female Teachers		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
11.	Principal push in instructions to teachers and not just Marshall out point	2.93	0.76	G.E	3.04	0.67	GE
12.	Principal make decision based on the opinion of teachers	3.01	0.69	GE	2.88	0.78	GE
13.	Principal democratically listen to the views of teachers	2.53	0.89	GE	2.70	0.84	GE
14.	Principal honour the persons of the teachers	2.68	0.74	GE	2.53	0.89	GE
15.	Principal accept teachers decisions because they are convinced they are doing the right thing	2.77	0.78	GE	3.00	0.67	GE
16.	Principal allow teachers to express themselves confidently	3.11	0.66	GE	2.94	0.92	GE
17.	Principal avoid speaking in ways suggestive of intimidating the teachers	3.09	0.68	GE	3.14	0.67	GE
18.	Principal perceive teachers	3.22	0.65	GE	3.10	0.67	GE

	as colleagues who can independently initiate actions						
19.	Principal perceive teachers s specialists	3.40	0.64	GE	3.06	0.67	GE
20	Principal exhibit respect for contrary views of teachers	2.15	1.02	LE	2.38	0.95	LE
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>GE</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>GE</b>

The data on Table 2 shows that the respondents independently rated all the items great extent except item 20 which is rated low extent with. The ratings of the items of this cluster implies that the two groups of the respondents share the view that principals utilize assertive communication skill in secondary schools in Enugu state. The cluster means are 2.89 (for male teachers) and 2.87 (for female teachers) in a four point rating scales with corresponding standard deviation of 0.75 and 0.77 for male and female teachers respectively.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers regarding the extent to which principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilized active listening communication skill.

**Table 3: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize active listening communication skill.**

Group	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	Decision
Male Teachers	310	2.93	0.81	873	0.38	1.96	Not significant
Female Teachers	565	2.89	0.79				

Table 3 above presents the independent t-test analysis of the mean difference in the response opinions of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals utilized active listening communication skill in secondary schools in Enugu state. The result in table 3 showed that the calculated t-value (0.38) was less than the critical value (1.96). The null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significance different in the mean ratings of male and female

teachers on the extent to which principals utilized active listening communication skill in secondary schools in Enugu state.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers regarding the extent to which principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize assertive communication skill.

**Table 4: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers regarding the extent to which principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize assertive communication skill.**

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-critical</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Male teachers	310	2.89	0.75	873	0.49	1.96	Not significant
Female Teachers	565	2.87	0.77				

Table 4 above presents the independent t-test analysis of the mean difference in the response opinions of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals of secondary schools in Enugu state utilize assertive communication skill. The result in table 4 showed that the calculated t-value (0.49) was less than the critical value (1.96). The null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals utilized assertive communication skill in secondary schools in Enugu state.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study show that principals utilized active listening communication skill to a great extent in secondary schools in Enugu state. In other words, respondents greatly shared the view that active listening communication skill is utilized by principals of secondary schools in Enugu state. The findings showed that principals listen to teachers’ explanations of events before making decisions. It was revealed that principals make conscious efforts to interpret verbal messages before reacting and listen with attention to reports given by teachers.

The findings agree with Chukwuma (2004) who maintain that communication is very influential in determining the over all impact of message. According to her, effective listening and feedback in communication helps in fostering school community relationship such as Parents-Teachers Association. The finding is also in consonance with the opinion of Ugwu (2006) who noted that effective communication can occurred only when the receiver is able to listen attentively to a message for proper decoding and give expected feedback to sender or senders. This finding is

also in tandem with Ibrahim (2006) who noted that active listen is needed for resolution of conflicts in the school system.

The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers regarding the extent to which principals utilize active listening communication skill in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Evidence from the study revealed that the respondents shared the view that principals utilized assertive communication skill to a great extent in secondary schools in Enugu state. The findings show that principals allow teachers to express themselves confidently and avoid speaking in ways suggestive of intimidating teachers. The findings agree with Ugwu (2006) who noted that to ensure effective communication in the school, the principal needs to plan well by communicating policies, information and decisions to staff and students. He further noted that of all the managerial functions of secondary school principals, none consumes as much time as that of communication. Therefore, if communication is hindered, the entire school system suffers. This finding also agree with Nwoye (2004) who noted that the principal needs to see teachers as colleagues who can independently initiate actions and passed crucial messages to the school management. The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which principals utilize assertive communication skill in secondary schools in Enugu state.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered.

1. Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) should organize seminars and conferences from time to time for principals of secondary schools on the importance of effective communication in schools. Such workshops should focus on techniques of communication in secondary schools
2. The Ministry of Education should organize workshops for all the principals on different strategies for improving communication behavior in secondary schools.
3. All secondary school principals in Enugu state should be encouraged to use a wide range of medial of communication in secondary schools.
4. The state government should provide the secondary school with communication gadgets like telephones, radios, telex, fax among others. This is important since it would enable the principals and teachers send and receive information in the schools.

**REFERENCES**

- Ali, A. (2006) *Conducting research in education and social science* Nsukka: Tashiwa Networks Ltd.
- Chukwuma, O.J. (2004), *The use of Modern Communication System in School*. A Quarterly journal of the Federal Ministry of Education Vol, 4 zones.
- Desumu, S. (2005), *Instructional communication in Nigeria*. Ile Ife. University of Ile-Ife Press.
- Ibrahim O. (2006), *School communication and staff compliance in schools management implications for an information age*. *Innovations in Technology* 2(2): 23-30.
- Ijaiya, N.Y.S. (2000). Communication in school management. In D.O. Durosaro and S. Ogunsaju (Eds). *The craft of educational management*. Ilorin: Haytee Press.
- Nwoye, U.S. (2004), *School Communication System*: NERA Publications. University of Benin. Benin City.
- Ocho L.O. (2008), *Communication skills in Educational Administration*. Enugu: new Generation Ventures L.t.d.
- Ugwu A.H, (2006), *Communication Skills for Effective Organizational Climate*. Ifeb Publishers, Onitsha.
- Ukairo, N.O. (2000), *Issues in Classroom Communicating System in School*. Africana Publisher Onitsha, Anambra state.
- Weldy, G.R. (2009), *Principals: What they do and who they are*. Reston, VA: National Association of secondary school principals.