

# **COMMUNICATION SKILLS: A NECESSITY FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF NIGERIAN SCHOOLS**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examined communication skills as the needed skills for effective management of Nigerian schools. The issue of effective management is one of the problems facing Nigerian schools. In the past, Nigerian school managers were not faced with many problems of communicating many kinds of information. Our school system was not as complex as today. In recent years, there has been an increase in school enrolment, coupled with the complexity in the school management. Hence, school managers in Nigeria have many problems of communication to contend with. This makes communication skills imperative for effective management of Nigerian school. The paper discussed the meaning of communication skills, importance of communication skills for effective management of Nigerian schools. The paper recommended amongst others that managers of Nigerian schools should be encouraged to attend seminars and workshops on communication skills.*

**Keywords:** Communication, Communication skills, Management, Nigerian schools

## **Introduction**

Every organization including the school system has its own goals. Every organizational activity is geared towards these goals. Every organizational activity also depends on communication. The mode of communication may be verbal or non-verbal. Communication is the process of transmitting information from a sender to a receiver.

Proper communication implies communicating effectively. Effective communication cannot exist without communication skills. Communication skills entail the abilities to communicate effectively. Effective communication occurs when the receiver gets the information as the sender intended. Achievement of organizational goals is determined by effective communication.

Effective management of Nigerian schools is built on the ability to communicate effectively. Nigerian school managers ought to possess communication skills necessary for executing the work assigned to them. Ukeje (1998) testifies to the view when he said that schools managers must be able to communicate effectively. Their role as Nigerian school managers makes communication skills imperative. School management which involves staff control, effective execution of available human, material and financial resources to obtain optimum results, has grown into a complex, sensitive and scientific art. Communication skills are needed to enable Nigerian school managers cope with their complex nature of duties to ensure effective management.

### **Meaning of Communication skills**

Communication skills entail the abilities to communicate effectively. Information is given, received and exchanged by individuals. All this activity involves communication skills. The major skills in communication are speaking skills, listening skills, writing skills and reading skills.

Ashley, Ellison, Hind, Knott, Morton and Waites (1993) refer to speaking skills as the abilities to have a wide vocabulary and choose from it with care; use the correct pronunciation of words; deliver sentences at a reasonable speed, maintain some eye contact with the listener, allow the listener the opportunity to intervene whenever this is called for. The speaker is expected to use words understandable by others that do not alienate listeners and organize messages in the way people can understand. Peretomode (1991) asserts that ambiguity and unclear language do not depict good speaking skills. Ambiguity in speech can breed unnecessary problems. It implies that a good speaker uses appropriate voice volume, pronounces words properly, uses good choice of words and uses good grammar. Speaking skills involve mastery of the mechanics of speech, logical structuring of the message, choice of an appropriate style, effective delivery, awareness of the message's context and understanding of the recipients. This implies that the total personality of the speaker is involved.

Ashley, Ellison, Hind, Knott, Morton and Waites (1993) refer to listening skills as the abilities to concentrate on the words used by the speaker; interject to clarify points of difficulty or confusion but in a way which does not break the speaker's flow; maintain attention by looking at the speaker; respond non-verbally to what is being said, nodding to signify understanding or approval, or smiling to provide encouragement. Listening skills cover the abilities to give people audience, understanding questions and distinguishing facts from opinions.

Tubbs and Moss (1991) see listening skills as abilities to understand directions, obtain factual information and identify important points when given oral instructions. Listening means not only hearing but also interpreting and evaluating what is being said. They further hold that criteria for effective listening as giving a speaker your undivided attention, showing courtesy by not interrupting a speaker until he or she comes to a comfortable break in conversation, asking a speaker to repeat or clarify information that you did not hear clearly or did not understand, confirm important information such as a telephone number by repeating it to the speaker, repeat important points to yourself silently to reinforce them in your mind.

Ashley, Ellison, Hind, Knott, Morton and Waites (1993) refer to writing skills as the abilities to express ideas and information in a form which is grammatically correct; write legibly, edit and correct the written material before issuing it; ensure correct spelling. The most basic component of written language is the word. Words are used in a language as its vocabulary. Sentences are made by linking words together which express ideas and the relationship of things to each other. The aim of grammar is to ensure that the words of a sentence are arranged so that together they convey a single

meaning if they are capable of bearing more than one meaning, the sentence is ambiguous and accurate communication is lost. Letter formation is no doubt one of the first steps in the performance of actual writing tasks. It is, in fact, basic to the art of writing since words are made up of letters and written compositions are made up of written words. Good hand writing demands that individual letters should be well formed and legible. Writing is perhaps the skill most commonly associated in communication. The most common purpose of writing is to present or to seek information.

Letters are the essential materials of written communication. The letters have to be put together to form words in order to make meanings. Ejiogu (1990) contends that effective writing skills involve passing on information through the written medium, the writer must ensure accuracy, brevity and clarity of thought, language of style. According to him, this is to say that the writer must make sure that his facts are correct and the content reliable. He or she writes briefly and concisely enough to suit the subject matter, ensure that the target audience understands what has been written; define his purposes for writing before hand, have the flexibility to adopt the style that would suit each particular occasion; spell correctly; use appropriate punctuations with ease and effectiveness; use short sentences and paragraphs.

Ashley, Ellison, Hind, Knott, Morton and Waites (1993) refer to reading skills as the abilities to check words that the reader is not sure of by using a dictionary; read at a reasonable speed so as not to lose the sense of the message; try to summarize the main points mentally as they appear; where necessary 'skim' material. Ideally sounds of words ought to be observed in pronunciation. Language is used to understand messages. Langan (1992) identifies ten skills in reading skills. The first five skills which concern literal level of comprehension are using vocabulary in context, recognizing main ideas, identifying supporting details, understanding transitions, understanding patterns of organization, distinguishing facts from opinions. According to him, the remaining five skills which cover the more advanced critical level of comprehension are distinguishing facts from opinions, making inferences, understanding purpose and tone, detecting propaganda, evaluating arguments.

### **Importance of communication skills to effective management of Nigerian schools**

The success of an organization like school depends to a large extent on effective communication. In any organization (such as the school system) involving two or more persons, it is the life wire and the glue that holds an organization together (Obi, 2003). Some Nigerian school managers fail because of ineffective communication. Communicating effectively is important. The ability to communicate effectively in organization like school is an essential attribute required of a Nigerian school manager. These abilities are known as communication skills. The major skills in communication are speaking skill, listening skills, writing skills and reading skills.

Speaking skills are inevitable to effective management of Nigerian schools. Every Nigerian school manager is expected to use understandable language and terminology,

make speech with clear audible voice and apply moderation in volume of spoken words. Good speaking skills are necessary in all areas of professional and personal life. A Nigerian school manager frequently needs to give oral reports, ask or answer question and speak with teachers and counselors. Nigerian school manager's effectiveness as a speaker will help him or her succeed in all aspects of his or her professional life.

Listening skills are at the root of effective management in Nigerian schools. Every Nigerian school manager is expected to give audience to his or her teachers, students and other visitors. The person who listens is the audience, what is transmitted is the message, and the spoken voice aired is the channel. Listening skills are important to effective management of Nigerian schools. Communication skills particularly listening skills are highly important in a counseling situation which has high emotional content. Counseling is part of the management tasks in Nigerian schools.

Writing skills are indispensable in communicating effectively in Nigerian schools. Igboeli (1990) holds that written messages are used frequently for widespread dissemination of information that may concern many people. Written message is not as good as it could be, organization pay a price in wasted time, wasted effort and lost good will. The ability to write and speak well becomes increasingly important for effective management of Nigerian schools. Reading skills are also vital for effective management of Nigerian schools. Nigerian school managers are expected to pronounce the words correctly. A person with communication skills must be a good speaker, a good listener, a good writer and a good reader.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made: (i) Managers of Nigerian schools should be encouraged to attend seminars and workshops on communication skills. This will enable them perform better in school system. (ii) Managers of Nigerian schools should be encouraged to adopted communication skills in management of school. This will help them achieve the goals for which the schools are established.

### **Conclusion**

Communication skills entail the abilities to communicate effectively. The major skills in communication are speaking skills, listening skills, writing skills and reading skills. Effective management of Nigerian schools is built on the ability to communicate effectively.

It is the contention of this paper that communication skills are needed for effective management of Nigerian schools. Effective communication unifies organizational activities like school system. It also modifies behaviour, change is effected, information is made productive and organizational goals are achieved. Indeed effective management of Nigerian schools is only possible if organizational goals are achieved.

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