

Primary school teachers' perceptions on primary school headteachers' communication styles in selected primary schools of Lukulu District, Zambia

Patience Mundia and Dr. Rosemary Muma Mulenga (PhD)

Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia

Abstract: This study established the effects of the head teachers' communication styles on the job performance of teachers in selected primary schools in Lukulu District of Western province in Zambia. The approach used in this research was mixed method. This was chosen because it increased the usefulness and credibility of the results found as data collection and data analysis was done using both quantitative and qualitative. A pragmatic world view was employed in this study because of its practicability and position thought to be well suited to mixed methods. The study used convergent parallel research design to which data is collected concurrently from questionnaires and interviews. The goal of this research was achieved by using an accessible sample consisting of 10 primary school head teachers and 100 primary school teachers. The study was done in 10 primary schools. In the quantitative part of the research, systematic random sampling strategy was used in the choice of the sample for the study. In the qualitative part of the study, non-probability sampling was used. Purposive sampling was used in the identification of respondents to be included in the sample. The research instruments used in this study were Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires were used for collection of data from the teachers whereas semi structured interviews were used to collect information from the head teachers. In this study quantitative data was analysed deductively using the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). On the other hand, qualitative data was analysed inductively by grouping it into categories according to emerging themes. The findings of the study reviewed that the communication styles that were used by head teachers to improve the job performance of primary school teachers included aggressive, assertive, manipulative, open and inclusive. According to the responses from the participants, it was revealed that head teachers' communication styles had both negative and positive effects on the job performance of teachers in Lukulu District of Western province in Zambia. The study recommended that there was need to encourage teamwork among teachers and head teachers, to be appreciating the teachers' efforts, allowing teachers to participate in decision making processes, promoting free communication among the teachers, and the head teachers' creation of safe and secure working environments.

Keywords: communication styles, perception, head teachers, primary school teachers,

I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The role that primary school teachers play in the educational system is significant in that they are the instructors of instructions and key personnel as they are final

in the implementation of policies and principles in education (Likando, 2013). For the teachers to fully implement policies and other educational programmes, they require regular updates from their head teachers. On the other hand for teachers to implement policies and other educational programmes to the expected standards they need motivation.

In a school, the head teacher is responsible of motivating teachers in order to improve their job performance. One way by which teachers can be motivated to perform their duties accordingly is through the head teachers' effectiveness in communication. According to Al Hajar (2016), the process of communication is all about sending, receiving, interpreting and responding through the use of different patterns and directions. Communication can therefore be viewed as a channel to flow information, resources, and even policies. This type of communication includes activities of sending and receiving messages through various layers of authority, using various message systems, and discussing various topics of interest to the group one belong to or the company one work for.

Researchers and educationalists, for example Odhiambo (2005), indicated that effective communication can enhance organisational outcomes such as flow of information, regulations, policies, and procedures. Therefore, communication is an important thing to do in our daily life because it strengthens relationships there by bringing about desirable results. It is also important to note that effective communication among the primary school head teachers is an important component of effective management. This is because effective communication leads to the success of programmes in a school and the head teacher will be seen to be an effective leader.

The head teachers can communicate effectively with their subordinates by using a communication style that suits the situation at a particular time. The communication styles used by the head teacher in a school are therefore of greater importance because they affect the interaction patterns within the school and would in turn have positive or negative effects on the job performance of teachers. Odhiambo (2005) further states that communication styles that head teachers use in schools in Kenya directly affect the behaviour of teachers in the school.

The categorisation of communication styles differ among different researchers, scholars and fields (Al Hajar, 2016). This is because people have different perspectives on the best ways communication can be done and the purposes it intends to serve. For example, Ezenwekwe (2013) and Sherman (2015) categorised communication into four styles namely: open communication style, inclusive communication style, aggressive communication style and assertive communication style.

In general, it can be concluded that the communication styles that are used by the head teachers in schools rests on two major principles namely: democratic and autocratic. For example the communication styles proposed by Ezenwekwe (2013), Sherman (2015) such as open, assertive and inclusiveness fall under democratic principle in which the school head teachers and the rest of the teachers are fully committed and involved in the decision making process in the school. On the other hand aggressive communication style falls under autocratic principle in which the teachers are not involved in decision making but only expected to follow orders from their head teachers.

Lussier (2010) adds that these communication styles are associated with the delegation of duty, political language, cooperation, authority and two-way communication. There is also the respect of other members' opinions, suggestions and ideas in the organisation. Al Hajar (2016) noted that each communication style is important and its value is seen according to the situation that has been encountered and the type of people involved in the communication system.

Despite the fact that communication styles have been viewed by many researchers, scholars and educationalists as being of great importance in the lives of people, its systemic study in Zambia is still scant due to the fact that there is no sufficient information pertaining to such studies. The scarcity of information on the effects of head teachers' communication styles on job performance of teachers in primary schools of Lukulu District in Western province, Zambia is unfortunate because this would have been the information that the curriculum developers, teacher trainers and head teachers required in order to improve the job performance of primary school teachers. This study established the Primary school teachers' perceptions on primary school headteachers' communication styles in selected primary schools of Lukulu District, Zambia.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish the Primary school teachers' perceptions on primary school headteachers' communication styles in selected primary schools of Lukulu District, Zambia.

Objectives

- (i) To identify the common communication styles used by primary school head teachers in Lukulu, District, in Zambia.

- (ii) To determine primary school teachers perception on primary school head teachers' communication styles.
- (iii) To establish the effects of primary school head teachers' communication styles on the job performance of primary school teachers.

Research Questions

- (i) What were the common communication styles used by primary school head teachers in Lukulu district in Zambia?
- (ii) What were the primary teachers' perceptions on primary school head teachers' communication styles?
- (iii) What were the effects of primary school head teachers' communication styles on the job performance of primary school teachers'?

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research approach

This study undertook a mixed method research approach. This study used parallel research design. The study covered Lukulu district in Western Province in Zambia. The study included primary school teachers and primary school headteachers in Lukulu district.

Sampling Techniques

In the quantitative part of the research systematic random sampling strategy was used in the choice of the sample for the study. In the qualitative part of the study, non-probability sampling was used. Purposive sampling was used in the identification of participants to be included in the sample. The research sample consisted of 10 primary school headteachers and 100 primary school teachers. The study used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to obtain information from the participants and respondents. In this study, quantitative data was analysed deductively using the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). On the other hand qualitative data was analysed inductively by grouping it into categories according to emerging themes.

III. RESULTS

Respondents had studied the concept of communication styles used by primary school head teachers

This section was a presentation of the research findings obtained on communication styles used by primary school head teachers in Lukulu District of Western province in Zambia. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had studied the concept of communication styles. Their responses were as shown by figure 1.1 below:

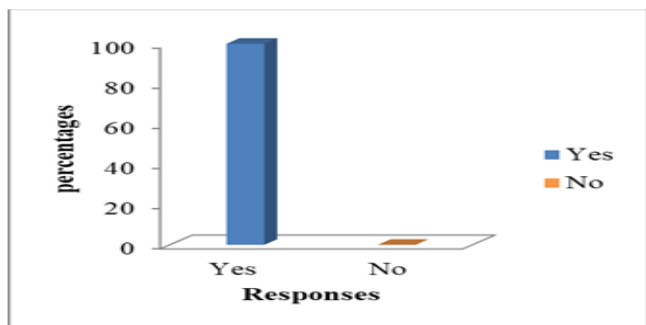


Figure 1.1: responses from teachers

Field work (2019)

Figure 1.1 above shows the responses of respondents on whether they had studied the concept of communication styles. All the respondents indicated they have heard of communication styles.

The majority of the head teachers were not effective communicators

The next question in the questionnaire was to find out whether head teachers were effective communicators. Their responses were as shown in the figure 1.2 below:

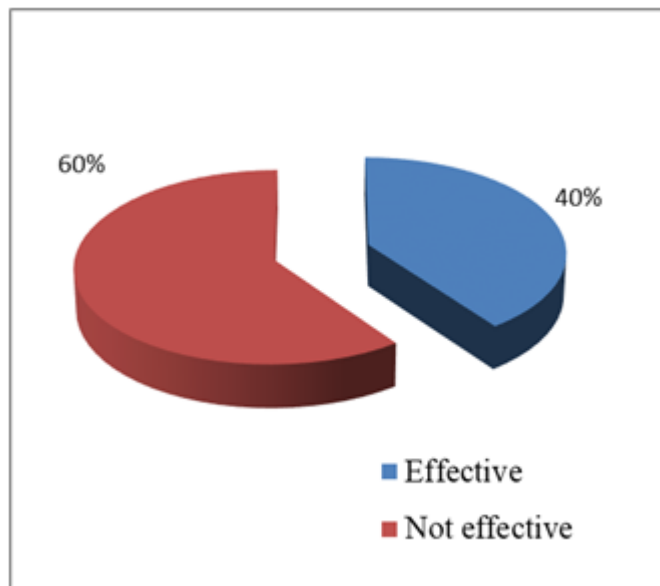


Figure 1.2: Effectiveness of head teachers in communication

Field work (2019)

In the figure 1.2 above it can be observed that the majority 60 (60 percent) of the responses from the primary school teachers indicated that the majority of the head teachers were not effective communicators whereas 40 (40 percent) indicated that the head teachers were effective communicators.

From the above responses, primary school teachers who indicated that head teachers were not effective communicators were further asked the reasons as to why they thought that

their head teachers were not effective communicators. Table 4.1 below shows their responses:

Table 1.1: Responses from the respondents

Responses	Frequency
They are too harsh	100
They do not take teachers' views	90
They think they are small gods	100
They hide information from teachers	80
They do not usually delegate duties to teachers	50
They usually disturb school' learning time	40

Field work (2019)

From table 1.1 above it was discovered that the majority of the responses (100) pointed that head teachers were not effective communicators because they were harsh and that they thought that they were small gods. These responses were followed by responses (90) which indicated that head teachers did not take teachers' views and this was followed by responses (80) which indicated that head teachers had a tendency of hiding information from the teachers. 50 responses indicated that head teachers were not effective communicators because they did not usually delegate duties to teachers and last 40 responses showed that head teachers disturbed lessons.

Respondents were asked to indicate what communication style was used by their head teachers. Figure 1.3 below shows their responses.

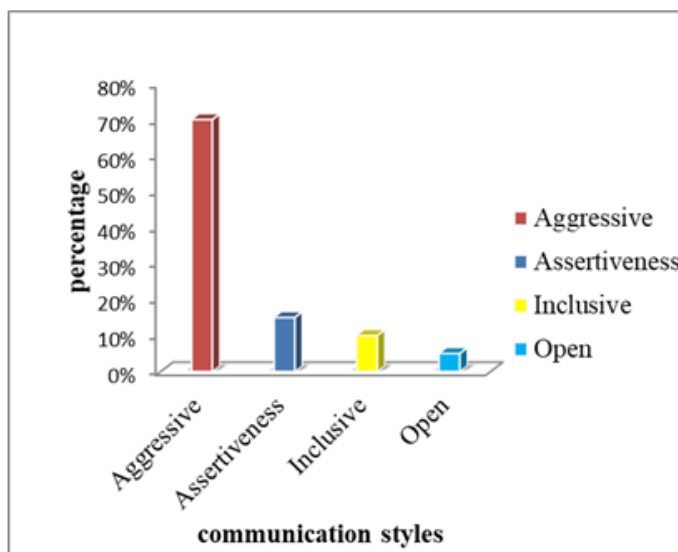


Figure: 1.3: Communication styles used by head teachers

Field work (2019)

From figure 1.3 above it can be observed that the majority of the respondents 70 (70 percent) indicated aggressive communication style, followed by 15(15 percent) for

assertiveness, 10 (10 percent) for inclusive and lastly 5 (5 percent) for open.

The next question in the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate whether the communication styles used by their head teacher affected them positively or negatively. Figure 1.4 below shows their responses.

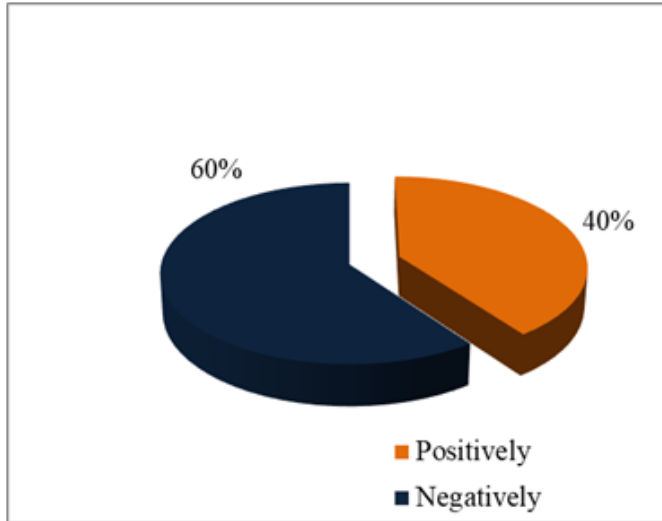


Figure 1.4: How teachers’ job performance was affected

Field work (2019)

Figure 1.4 above shows that the majority of the respondents 60 (60 percent) indicated that the communication styles used by their head teachers affected them negatively while 40 (40 percent) of the respondents indicated that the communication styles used by their head teachers affected them positively.

The respondents who indicated that the communication styles used by their head teachers affected their job performance negatively were further asked to give reasons as to why they indicated that the communication styles used by their head teacher affected their job performance negatively. Their responses are shown in table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Responses on effects of communication styles on job performance of teachers

S/N	Responses	Frequency
01	I feel demotivated to go for work	100
02	I become stressed up and cannot perform to my abilities	100
03	I become frustrated so I don’t perform to my abilities	100

Field work (2019)

From table 1.2 shows that the communication styles used by the head teacher affected the teachers negatively as shown by the responses above. 100 responses indicated that the communication styles used by head teachers not only demotivated the teachers but also made them feel stressed and frustrated in performing their job.

Discussion of the research findings Primary school teachers’ perceptions of primary school head teachers’ communication styles

The second objective of this study was to determine the primary school teachers’ perceptions of primary school head teachers’ communication styles in primary schools of Lukulu District of Western province in Zambia. The objective aimed at finding out as to whether the respondents had studied the concept of communication styles. All the respondents (100 percent) involved in this study indicated that they had studied the concept of communication styles. The perceptions held by individuals have about something may be caused by present and past experience, individual attitudes at a particular moment, the physical state of the sense organs, the interest of the person, level of attention and the interpretation gain to the perception, because of these experiences different people would react differently when they are from the same physical environment. They would not have the same experiences hence perception that respondents have on any concept in any given field or professions are of great importance as it directs an individual’s behaviour, feelings and interaction with others. De Vries *et.al* (2010) acknowledged that awareness of one’s own perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviour is important because it offers the opportunities on how the individual behaves, judges, wishes and is tolerant to different situations.

Due to the fact that the participants had studied the concept of communication styles, they were further asked to indicate whether primary school head teachers were effective communicators or not. The majority (60 percent) of the responses from the primary school teachers indicated that the most of the head teachers were not effective communicators whereas (40 percent) indicated that the head teachers were effective communicators. This is in line with the study conducted by Sezgin and Er (2016) focused on investigating teachers’ perception of school principal interpersonal communication styles in Turkish primary schools. This was a qualitative research that specifically focused on teachers’ views on the communication styles of the school principals. The study used semi-structured interviews prepared by the researchers and the sample size of 14 primary school teachers from schools in in Ankara province. Content analysis was employed in the analysis of data.

The results of the study indicated that communication within the school was inefficient as perceived by the teachers. The study further revealed that school principals did not effectively use communication for the development of collaboration between teachers for the improvement of the school. The finding of the study strongly point out to the need for the development of interaction between the principal and teachers that can allow open two-way communication style. Kambeya, (2008) conducted a study whose purpose was to examine teachers’ perception of their principals’ interpersonal communication skills in relation to teacher performance in Greenville, south California. This was a qualitative study,

where an auto ethnographic mode of inquiry was employed. Auto ethnographic describes research studies of a personal nature. Using an interactive interview technique, five teacher participants were asked questions in an effort to elicit teachers' perception of principal's interpersonal communication skills as they relate to teachers' performance. This study is significant in determining which interpersonal communication skills as perceived by teachers were most effective and essential in increasing teaching performance. Teachers' perceptions of their principal were manifested in their efforts to do their jobs. First, those principals who have excelled in demonstrating interpersonal communication skills have experienced a school where teachers were functioning in a climate conducive to teaching and learning. Secondly, those principals who have not demonstrated good interpersonal communication skills have experienced teachers who have chosen not to extend themselves beyond expectation. Finally, principals affected teacher performance in one way or another regardless of their ability to demonstrate interpersonal communication skills effectively.

However the study conducted by Saglam and Aydogmus (2017) that focused on determining the communication competence of school directors working in various secondary schools in the city of Usak, Turkey revealed that in general teachers thought that the school directors' communication competence was high. The school directors' communication competence for the dimensions of understanding, empathy, social comfort and social support was found to be mostly positive. This study is contrary to the findings of the present study and the study conducted by Sezgin and Er (2016). In the present study primary school teachers perceived their head teachers to be ineffective communicators.

In summary the study conducted by Ezenwekwe (2015) that focused on teacher-principal as correlates of effective school administration in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anmbra state in Nigeria indicated that school managers who used open, inclusive, two- way, result-driven and multi-channelled effectively managed and contributed to the increase in job satisfaction of the teachers. Therefore it can be said that the type of communication style the school manager uses has great effects on the teachers' job performance.

The primary participants who indicated that head teachers were not effective communicators were further asked the reasons as to why they thought that their head teachers were not effective communicators. The majority of the responses (100) pointed

that head teachers were not effective communicators because they were harsh on their teachers and that they thought they were small gods. This was contrary to the study conducted by Akinwale and Okotoni (2018) that aimed at assessing principals' communication styles and administrative impact on secondary schools in Osun state in Nigeria. The results of

the study indicated that principals in this study adopted inclusive, open and assertive communication styles. This therefore meant that the principal did not act harshly towards their teachers and did not consider themselves as small gods as their communication styles were open, adoptive, assertive and inclusive. When head teachers use communication styles that are not open, adoptive, assertive and inclusive the job performance of the teachers becomes affected negatively as teachers would feel oppressed by their head teachers.

The other respondents, (90 percent) indicated that head teachers did not take teachers' views. This research finding is contrary to the study conducted by Sanduleac and Capafind (2016) that aimed at investigating the influence of leadership communication on school teachers' job satisfaction. The study revealed that better performance of school teachers depended on the school head teachers' considerations of teachers' ideas and suggestions in the decision making process for the smooth running of the school. It is therefore important to take note that effective head teachers usually take into considerations the views of their subordinates in decision making process. Primary school teachers usually feel encouraged when their views and suggestions are taken into consideration by their head teachers and would help in motivating these teachers to work hard because they feel they are part of the system (Khan et al, 2015). This in the long run improves the job performance of the teachers. In addition to the above it is important to note that the communication style that the head teacher would use would have effects on the attitudes, happiness and job satisfaction of the teachers.

This was confirmed in a study conducted by Proctor (2014) which aimed at finding out how effective organisational communication affects employee attitudes, happiness and job satisfaction in the Enrollment division of the Southern Utah University. The results showed that effective bi-directional communication between employees, supervisors and management improved attitudes, happiness and this led to improvement in job performance of the workers.

In response to the question why teachers thought their headteachers were not effective communicators, (80 percent) indicated that head teachers had a tendency of hiding information from the teachers. This tendency leads to poor performance in schools as it lowers the morale of teachers because the head teacher might be hiding information that is suitable to the teachers' contribution towards the smooth running of the school. It is therefore important for head teachers to strengthen their relationship with teachers through communication. Bokeno (2007) conducted a study which aimed at investigating workplace communication and Job Performance in Private Commercial Bank in Kathmandu Valley, in Nepal. The study was performed in order to study workplace communication and to know the link between job satisfaction and job performance. The result of this study reveals that a relationship exists between effective communication and workers' performance, productivity and

commitment. The study recommended that managers will need to communicate with employees regularly to improve workers commitment and performance.

The question in table 1.1 asked why headteachers did not usually delegate duties to teachers. The 50 responses indicated that head teachers were not effective communicators because they did not usually delegate duties to teachers. For a school to operate accordingly, coordinated efforts from both the head teacher and teachers is required. The coordinated efforts can only be strengthened if the head teacher exercises his/her role of delegating duties to teachers as a way to allow for commitment, productivity and accountability. The study of Solaja, Faremi and Adesina (2015) conducted with an aim of exploring the relationship between leadership communication styles, personality trait and organisational productivity in Nepal, revealed that the communication styles that leaders use in Organisations had great effects on productivity in that organisation. It is therefore, important that leaders in any given organisation adopt communication styles that would involve subordinates in the process of making decisions. This would boost their morale and in return increase job performance and organisation productivity.

The last question in Table 1.1 asked why Head Masters usually disturb school' learning time. From the responses, 40 showed that head teachers liked disturbing lessons, a conduct that may lead to teachers less coverage of their work and learner' poor performance. Head teachers should timely know when to appropriately communicate to teachers so as to avoid unnecessary disturbances.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Establishing the effects of the head teachers' communication styles on the job performance of teachers is very important because teachers are accountable for the implementation of policies and other educational programmes and reviewing these effects serves as one way of strengthening the relationship between head teachers and teachers. From the findings of the present research, it can be concluded that the job performance of teachers highly depend on the factors like the head teachers effectiveness in communication. Head teachers should at all times acknowledge the presence of teachers and their contribution towards the smooth running of the school, thus have to share appropriate information with teachers at the right time using a suitable communication style. The study has also established the relationship between the head teachers' communication styles and the job performance of teachers in primary schools in Lukulu District of Western province in Zambia. The communication styles used by head teachers had both negative and positive effects on the job performance of teachers. It is however important to note that the teachers' perceptions on primary school head teachers communication styles may have been influenced by the relationship that existed between them. It is possible that the teachers who were in good terms with their head teachers

indicated that they were effective communicators whereas those not in good terms indicated their head teachers as being ineffective communicators.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations emerged.

- i. Encouraging teamwork among teachers and head teachers
- ii. Encouraging head teachers to appreciate their teachers' efforts
- iii. Encouraging participatory decision making processes
- iv. Encouraging free communication among the teachers and with the head teachers.
- v. Creation of safe and secure working environments
- vi. The Ministry of General Education (MOGE) through the Provincial Education Office (PEO) and District Education Board (DEB) office should initiate some workshops to capacity build head teachers on effective communication.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Patience Mundia was a Masters Student and a scholar. She is currently heading a school in Lukulu, Western Province.

Dr. Rosemary Muma Mulenga (PhD) is a researcher and scholar at Kwame Nkrumah University. She is currently a Dean for School of Education.