

COMMUNICATION METHODS OF SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY FROM A SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

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Abstract

Although it is generally accepted that communication plays a critical role in how school administrators impact the performance of their faculty, the precise pathways via which this effect spreads are rarely thoroughly investigated at the school level. In order to explain how school administrators interact with instructors and how those interactions relate to a more comprehensive profile of teaching performance, this article uses a qualitative case study that was carried out at the Senior High School Department of a Don Bosco Technical Institute. Ten teachers and ten school administrators participated in semi-structured interviews to collect data, which were then thematically evaluated. There were two related findings. First, nonverbal, written, and visual communication all consistently play supportive roles in fostering clarity, trust, and engagement, but instructors and leaders agree that verbal communication is the most direct and successful route. Second, a common dedication to the institution's Salesian educational ideals, two areas of professional responsibility, and five pillars of teaching competence form the basis of the teaching performance profile that leaders and teachers mutually describe. All of these results point to a useful tool for school administrators looking to boost teacher effectiveness: enhancing regular verbal communication while purposefully reinforcing it with written, visual, and nonverbal follow-through.

Keywords: school leadership, communication methods, teacher performance, case study, Salesian education

INTRODUCTION

Although effective communication is frequently mentioned as one of the characteristics of successful school leadership, it is more difficult to prove the connection between leaders' communication style and teachers' performance. Unresolved conflict and quiet opposition to leadership initiatives have been linked to communication breakdowns between administrators and teaching staff in many secondary schools, whereas organizations with clear and consistent communication typically report higher staff morale and engagement. Previous research indicates that teachers' motivation and sense of support in following instructions are influenced by the way school administrators interact with them.

Despite this corpus of literature, comparatively little study has looked at teacher performance and communication in a single school community, where the specific institutional culture, values, and daily routines can be taken into consideration. This disparity is particularly noticeable in faith-based technical-vocational schools, where communication is influenced by both a unique educational philosophy and administrative necessity. Through a case study of the Senior High School Department of a Don Bosco Technical Institute an organization steeped in the Salesian educational tradition the current study fills this gap.

Four goals were pursued by the larger study that this article is based on. The first three are covered in this article: (1) describing the communication methods profile of school leaders as perceived by teachers, including written, visual, nonverbal, and verbal communication; (2) describing the same profile as perceived by the school leaders themselves; and (3) describing the respondents' teaching performance profile, which includes professional responsibilities, teaching competence, and alignment with the school's Salesian educator identity. Examining which particular communication techniques have the greatest direct impact on teaching performance is a fourth goal that is outside the purview of this article.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many people believe that communication strategies used in educational institutions have a significant impact on teacher effectiveness and, consequently, the general caliber of instruction that a school provides. In this connection, the school leader plays a crucial role as the main communicator who sets the tone for the school community while also serving as an administrator. The literature on school leaders as communicators, the concept and dimensions of teacher performance, the factors that influence and evaluate that performance, the nature of the relationship between school leaders and teachers, the four communication modes this study examines, the difficulties leaders encounter in effectively communicating, and the gap in the literature that this study fills are all covered in this review.

The School Leader as a Communicator

It has long been recognized that leadership is essentially an act of communication. Communication is sometimes referred to as the lifeblood that enables leaders to motivate and direct followers toward a common objective. Leaders must be able to articulate expectations succinctly and clearly in order to effectively influence others. Higher-level leaders in particular are expected to demonstrate advanced communication skills in order to establish trust, articulate an organization's mission, and motivate their subordinates to perform better. Researchers can assess school leaders based on their interactions with employees rather than just their formal authority by using a communication lens to view leadership (Johnson & Hackman, 2018). As leadership responsibilities increase, so does the need for effective, consistent communication.

The communication of a school's values, culture, and objectives to teaching staff is facilitated by school leaders (Birch, 2018), and the manner in which they do so establishes the tone for the entire school community. While communication based on openness and consistency helps school leaders develop the kind of trust that is linked to higher teacher performance, transparent, motivating, and inclusive communication is linked to a more positive school climate and stronger teacher commitment (Hallinger & Heck, 2019). Improved teacher performance at the school level has also been connected to trust that is fostered via candid communication, helpful criticism, and collaborative decision-making (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Communication is not only a supporting skill for leaders but also a field that can provide new theoretical understanding of leadership itself, as leadership study has increasingly acknowledged (Bergman, 2020).

Teacher Performance: Concept and Dimensions

The effective and efficient execution of meaningful work that meets the needs of a school's numerous stakeholders and is subject to their review is the wide definition of teacher performance (Hatch, 2007). It is helpful to distinguish between managing performance, which refers to a teacher's proficiency in organizing, carrying out, overseeing, and modifying classroom practice and assessment, and teaching performance, which is the efficacy and attributes teachers bring to ensuring student learning in the classroom, including their capacity to engage students and deliver lessons clearly. By communicating expectations, establishing performance standards, and carrying out performance reviews, school administrators are known to influence both dimensions.

The study has focused on the particular qualities that make up excellent teaching performance because successful teaching is directly linked to student academic success and, more generally, to the trajectories of persons and communities (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Teaching Competence

The knowledge, skills, and abilities a teacher uses to impact students' learning are referred to as teaching competency. These abilities usually include pedagogy and content knowledge, the learning environment, learner diversity, curriculum and planning, assessment, and reporting. Proactive, interactive, and post-active planning abilities are necessary for effective teaching, incorporating new teaching techniques and strategies to enhance learning outcomes (Fauth et al., 2019), and—most importantly for this study—developing effective verbal and nonverbal classroom communication practices that promote student engagement and comprehension (Kunter et al., 2013).

Students' affective, interactive, and cognitive engagement is greatly influenced by the physical, social, and psychological aspects of the learning environment (Lederman et al., 2023). A change from authoritative to more supportive classroom settings has been associated with better learning outcomes (Cayubit, 2021). In order to meet the diverse needs of their students, educators must develop strong interpersonal skills, subject-matter expertise, and communicative competence, as well as an awareness of students' interests, learning styles, and cognitive and non-cognitive readiness. While assessment and reporting call for continuous testing, portfolio development, and self-assessment practices that raise standards of accomplishment, curriculum and planning require teachers to translate larger educational programs into meaningful classroom activities (Amanah et al., 2022; Grundén, 2022). When combined, these aspects of teaching competency are regularly found to be important levers that teachers use to impart high-quality knowledge to students (Adnan, 2015).

Professional Responsibilities

Teachers have professional obligations outside of the classroom, such as supporting innovative and differentiated curricula, developing their own teaching skills, and pursuing continuing professional development (Ambler et al., 2019). Professional engagement and community connections have been demonstrated to significantly improve the educational experience for both teachers and students while also benefiting the larger community (France-Harris et al., 2019; Cai et al., 2022). They also increase teachers' sense of self-efficacy and professional satisfaction. According to Madina et al. teachers must actively engage in self-examination and lifelong learning as part of their professional development and personal growth. The literature highlights that teachers must continue to pay attention to these professional obligations despite their severe workloads in order to maintain both their own professional development and the caliber of instruction they deliver.

The Salesian Educator

The literature analysis also takes into account the Salesian educational tradition that shapes teacher

identity at Don Bosco institutions, as this study is situated within one. The Salesian community's dynamic presence and, more specifically, the Salesian Educative Pastoral Plan, which molds the evangelizing and educational environment in which students develop, are two ways that the Salesian charism is spread (Gallego, 1987). In order to foster joyful learning and a strong sense of community among both students and teachers, Don Bosco's educational approach incorporates recreation, play, music, theater, and outings into formation. It is based on the concepts of reason, faith, and loving-kindness (Chrobak, 2015).

Factors Influencing and Assessing Teacher Performance

The literature has connected teacher performance to a variety of issues. The classroom environment, pedagogical approach, and teacher motivation all independently influence performance outcomes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Webster et al., 2015; Hattie, 2009); teachers with stronger credentials and training typically perform better in the classroom; and effective communication from school leaders promotes teacher growth and contributes to a healthier institutional environment.

Formal evaluation systems that integrate classroom observation, student feedback, and outcome data are frequently used in attempts to evaluate and enhance teacher performance (Harris et al., 2014). These systems are complemented by professional development opportunities that expose teachers to the most recent pedagogical research and by mentoring and coaching programs that offer tailored guidance (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These mechanisms are important because teacher performance extends far beyond administrative compliance into classroom practice and, eventually, student outcomes: communication in general has been linked to better instructional strategy, student engagement, and learning outcomes, and school leaders who communicate in ways that emphasize professional growth tend to inspire more innovative teaching practices (Leithwood et al., 2006).

The School Leader-Teacher Relationship

Communication itself shapes the quality of the connection between teachers and school administrators. In contrast to the lack of such communication, which has been connected to teacher disengagement and lower performance (Marks & Printy, 2003), two-way communication, regular feedback, and recognition from school administrators are linked to a more supportive environment and stronger teacher performance (Hoy & Tarter, 2011). Communication is generally regarded as a crucial basis for establishing and maintaining fruitful relationships between leaders and teachers, and school leaders' communication strategies are a major factor in determining teacher performance in the end.

A recurring theme in this relationship is trust: building trust between teachers and school leaders is essential to effective teaching leadership (Dawn & Tyler, 2022), and numerous studies have shown a strong, reciprocal relationship between school leader communication and teacher performance (Cansoy et al., 2019). Teachers are more likely to perform effectively and stay dedicated to their work when they feel empowered, valued, and appreciated through communication (Adipa et al., 2021). Strong communication skills among school leaders have been linked to improvements in teachers' task performance, including quality of teaching, class attendance, and record-keeping. Communication also plays a functional role in duty assignment, enabling school leaders to assign responsibilities in a manner aligned with institutional objectives.

Modes of Communication

The literature often categorizes school leaders' communication into four modalities: verbal, nonverbal, written, and visual. Each mode's efficacy is dependent on the particular circumstances of both the communicator and the recipient. Teacher performance typically improves when school administrators use these approaches to provide clear expectations, direction, feedback, and acknowledgment (Wakini & Jamilus, 2021).

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

For school administrators looking to improve teacher performance, verbal communication—which includes discussion, debate, and idea sharing is said to be essential (Doyle, 2020; Mudjito et al., 2019). While open verbal communication allows for feedback and guidance that supports better teaching practice, leaders who communicate clearly verbally ensure that teachers understand institutional expectations, which in turn allows teachers to align their instructional strategies accordingly (Adipa et al., 2021).

Relationships and daily routines between leaders and teachers are similarly shaped by nonverbal communication, which is expressed through eye contact, facial expression, gesture, and posture rather than spoken or written words (Keiling, 2021). School leaders are urged to cultivate nonverbal habits that are supportive, empathetic, and attaching. It is well known that nonverbal cues have a significant impact on learning outcomes in teacher-student interactions (Jones et al., 2022). Mehrabian's seminal work from 1981 discovered that body language and tone convey the majority of communicative meaning rather than words themselves, and subsequent studies have connected nonverbal immediacy the psychological intimacy that nonverbal cues foster to higher levels of student motivation. In order to engage students, solve issues, and maintain motivation, educators must develop both verbal and nonverbal fluency.

Written and Visual Communication

According to Chandran et al. (2019), written and visual communication are also regarded as crucial leadership competencies. Clear and succinct written and visual communications fosters collaboration and mutual

introspection between leaders and employees. According to Francisco (2020) and Ingay (2019), both routes have the potential to have a substantial impact on teachers' performance as well as how fast and consistently they apply leadership suggestions.

Letters, memos, circulars, and bulletins are examples of written communication that is appreciated for its formality and permanence. Written communication is also seen to support memory and give a lasting record that can be accessed as needed (Avneet, Pal Singh & Siddhraj, 2018). Because visual content is frequently simpler to process, retain, and recall than text alone, visual communication including diagrams, videos, and images is credited with enhancing comprehension, simplifying information retrieval, and boosting engagement (Dewan, 2015; Gutierrez, 2014; Khadimaly, 2016). Several studies have linked the use of graphics, video, and animation to enhanced attention, comprehension, retention, and overall learning performance (Avneet, Pal Singh & Siddhraj, 2018). Visual communication is also known for overcoming language barriers and simplifying complex information (Freeman, 2019; Choudhary, 2019). The literature on both channels agrees that textual and visual communication help teachers reach performance requirements by providing guidance and clarifying expectations.

CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION

Despite the established advantages of effective communication, school administrators continue to encounter challenges in real-world situations. Recurring obstacles include conceptual knowledge gaps and a lack of technical expertise (Katz, 1995). Research on technology leadership has revealed that inadequate training, budgetary pressure, administrative limitations, and a lack of resources all impede effective communication. Similar challenges, such as poor proficiency with electronic tools and restricted access to resources, have been identified in related research on the integration of information and communication technology in schools (Alkahtani, 2017), despite the fact that successful adoption of updated technology has been associated with improved teacher performance.

In secondary schools, communication failures have also been found to be a major cause of tension between administrators and teachers. As a result, leaders are advised to use a variety of communication channels instead of depending solely on formal meetings (Kamande, 2016). According to complementary research on forum-style workshops, when leaders take care to organize information flow and explicitly define discussion, these formats can significantly improve communication and institutional management. In general, time restrictions and workload are acknowledged as persistent obstacles to consistent, high-quality communication between school administrators and teaching staff (Cummings & Worley, 2009), highlighting the necessity of ongoing study into communication routes that help reduce these demands.

RESEARCH GAP

When considered collectively, the literature provides compelling evidence for the idea that teacher performance, trust, motivation, and engagement are influenced by school leaders' verbal, nonverbal, written, and visual communication. However, rather than close, context-specific accounts of a single school community, the majority of this evidence comes from large-scale or cross-institutional studies, and comparatively little research has looked at how these communication dynamics manifest within faith-based technical-vocational institutions that follow a particular educational philosophy, like the Salesian tradition. This creates an empirical gap about how school administrators in these kinds of environments actually communicate on a daily basis, how leaders and teachers describe that communication, and how it relates to a locally grounded profile of teaching performance. Through a thorough case study of the Senior High School Department of a Don Bosco Technical Institute, the current study fills this gap.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative case study design used in this work is ideal for examining intricate, context-bound phenomena like regular leadership communication. The communication interaction between instructors and school administrators in the Senior High School Department of a Don Bosco Technical Institute served as the unit of analysis in this case study.

Purposive sampling was used to select ten teachers and 10 school administrators to participate in the study. Respondents were able to speak from a considerable basis of first-hand experience because eligible teachers had at least three years of teaching experience and eligible school leaders had at least two years of leadership experience. Participants who were school leaders had two to thirteen years of leadership experience, while those who were teachers had three to nine years. While there was a balanced representation of both genders among the instructor participants, the leadership group was predominately male.

A sixteen-item procedure spanning verbal, nonverbal, written, and visual communication as well as teaching performance was used to lead one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. In order to promote frank responses, interviews were performed face-to-face in a quiet, comfortable setting. Standard ethical protections, such as

informed permission, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty, were also followed.

Thematic coding was used to evaluate interview transcripts in accordance with accepted methods for qualitative analysis. To make sure the analysis was rooted in the participants' personal perspectives, codes were categorized into themes for each communication method and performance domain and then compared to the study's guiding research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are arranged according to the first three goals of the study: the teaching performance profile that both groups share, the communication methods profile of school leaders as perceived by teachers, and the same profile as perceived by the leaders themselves.

Objective 1: The Communication Methods Profile of School Leaders as Perceived by Teachers

Teachers reported that their supervisors used a direct, verbal communication approach that was reinforced by written, visual, and nonverbal cues.

Verbal Communication

Teachers described their leaders' verbal communication as thorough and focused on clarification, with leaders actively seeking feedback to ensure that messages were understood. Teachers have a regular opportunity to debate pedagogy, share news, and voice concerns with leadership at weekly cluster and faculty meetings. Bigger events, like assemblies, had an agenda-driven, more regimented framework that allowed for questioning. Teachers saw verbal communication as essential to institutional alignment and effectiveness overall, but they also pointed out sporadic gaps in responsiveness or completeness that should be improved.

Nonverbal Communication

Teachers identified important indicators of a leader's preparedness, sincerity, and credibility, including posture, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and even clothing. Little actions like smiling, nodding, and deliberate pauses were thought to strengthen spoken words and foster trust. Teachers collectively reported that nonverbal communication, rather than taking the place of verbal exchange, is a subtle but steady addition to a pleasant school climate.

Written Communication

Teachers liked brief, precise, and timely written communication, which was primarily provided through emails and memos, especially when it came to issues like policy changes or cancelations of classes. Instructors also observed that written expressions of gratitude and support kept students' spirits high, particularly in uncertain times. Simultaneously, several educators noticed variations in the tone and formality of various leaders, indicating a need for more uniform written communication procedures.

Visual Communication

Teachers perceived visual aids, such as branded slides, charts, and well-structured presentations, as instruments that improved focus during meetings and enhanced recall of important information, especially for staff members who are visually oriented. Leaders' general professionalism was linked to their familiarity with technologies like Canva and PowerPoint. Instructors did call out significant discrepancies in the level of preparation of visual materials between leaders and events, indicating a need for more consistent and comprehensive visual assistance.

Objective 2: The Communication Methods Profile of School Leaders as Perceived by School Leaders

School leaders highlighted intentionality, audience awareness, and preparation in all four communication modalities while discussing their own communication strategies.

Verbal Communication

Depending on whether they were speaking to parents, teachers, or students, leaders said they preferred to be succinct, straightforward, and use language appropriate for their audience. When in-person meetings were not possible, digital platforms were employed as a workable substitute for face-to-face communication, which was the preferred method. In order to foster relationships with stakeholders and facilitate school-wide collaboration, leaders believed that verbal communication was essential.

Nonverbal Communication

Leaders stated that they intentionally use body language, eye contact, and facial expressions to convey sincerity and foster trust. A number of them also mentioned that they depend more on nonverbal clues than on harsh language when dealing with discipline. In order to improve their nonverbal communication over time and strike a balance between approachability and authority, leaders also talked about actively observing comments and responses from instructors and peers.

Written Communication

Leaders outlined a methodical approach to textual communication, including determining the message's goal, carefully composing, utilizing templates for uniformity, and foreseeing any questions. In order to reduce misunderstandings and strengthen professionalism, feedback from peers, superiors, and even students was identified as a component of improving written communication over time.

Visual Communication

In order to simplify information for various audiences and maintain focus throughout extended presentations, leaders reported used charts, diagrams, and customized visual materials including slides, models, and floor plans. Based on teacher input, leaders reported a continuous effort to enhance their use of visual communication, viewing it as a talent to be honed rather than a set competency.

When combined, the two viewpoints on communication are more similar than different. Nonverbal, written, and visual communication serve as additional reinforcement rather than replacements for verbal communication, which is the main means of communicating alignment, trust, and performance-related objectives, according to both educators and leaders.

Objective 3: The Teaching Performance Profile

The third goal, which was structured around teaching competency, professional obligations, and the institution's Salesian educator identity, looked at how leaders and teachers collectively define successful teaching performance.

Teaching Competence

According to both groupings, teaching competence is based on five interrelated areas. Teachers were required to continue their own professional development while combining learner-centered approaches, such as constructivist principles and frameworks like the 5E/7E instructional models, with solid subject expertise in content knowledge and pedagogy. Safety, respect, and a "family-like" classroom atmosphere where kids feel appreciated and safe from psychological harm were prioritized in the educational setting. Differentiated instruction and cultural responsiveness were mentioned by both groups as strategies for meeting the needs and backgrounds of diverse students. Teachers were encouraged to use scaffolding and collaborative planning in curriculum and planning to match lesson plans with the institution's values and national benchmarks. Lastly, in order to capture both content mastery and higher-order thinking skills like creativity and critical thinking, teachers were expected to blend traditional and performance-based evaluation in assessment and reporting, utilizing the results to guide future instruction.

Professional Responsibilities

Although their priorities were somewhat different, leaders and teachers both placed a strong emphasis on classroom management, continuous professional development, and effective teaching practices. Teachers prioritized creating a student-centered environment and tailoring instruction to individual needs, while leaders placed more emphasis on maintaining personal integrity and building trust. Both groups recognized actual limitations, such as excessive workloads, time limits, and a lack of resources for ongoing professional development, and suggested methods to alleviate these burdens through better time management, finance, and professional development support.

The Salesian Educator

The Preventive System's tenets of reason, faith, and loving-kindness served as the foundation for the school's Salesian identity, which both administrators and educators cited as being essential to their understanding of effective instruction. While instructors talked of directly implementing Salesian ideals via their everyday contacts with children, leaders tended to express this identity at the institutional level, influencing school culture and climate. Both groups identified this complimentary relationship—teachers' lived practice and leaders' institutional framing—as crucial to maintaining the school's instructional goal.

Overall, the teaching performance profile that results from both groups is comprehensive: fidelity to the institution's values, sound classroom and professional practice, and subject matter and pedagogy competence are viewed as mutually reinforcing aspects of effective teaching rather than as distinct checklist items.

CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions, which are based on the opinions of ten teachers and ten school administrators at the Senior High School Department of Don Bosco Technical Institute, depict a school community where verbal communication is the main means of alignment, feedback, and trust between leaders and teaching staff, while nonverbal, written, and visual communication provide steady, supplementary support. Although they highlight somewhat different goals based on their distinct positions, leaders and educators generally agree on what constitutes good communication.

In addition to this communication profile, the study outlines a common understanding of teaching performance that is based on content and pedagogy competency, a welcoming and inclusive learning environment, responsiveness to learner diversity, careful curriculum planning, and balanced assessment procedures—all of which are situated within the institution's Salesian educational identity. Strengthening structured, face-to-face communication routines while supporting them with clear written follow-through and well-prepared visual materials appears to be a practical, low-cost lever for supporting teacher performance in similar school settings, as school leaders' verbal communication in particular was described as directly shaping the working and learning environment.

These results are best interpreted as an in-depth, context-rich description rather than a generalizable assertion regarding school communication in general because they are derived from a single department within a single institution and a sample of twenty respondents. To evaluate the extent of these trends, future research would

look at a fourth question: which particular communication strategies most directly influence teaching performance? Additionally, comparative studies across various Salesian or technical-vocational schools would be helpful.

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