

## The vital role of oral communication: School Administrators' views

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### Abstract

The leadership duties in school such as mentoring, motivating, coaching, inspiring and teaching can highly be expressed through oral communication with the school members. A communicative competent school administrator inspires teamwork and collaboration which promote growth and success in school. School Heads' mastery in speaking is crucial to actualizing the expected responsibilities. However, a number of Principals, Deans, Supervisors and other school administrators are observed with flaws in speaking. Hence, an investigation has been conducted to see the viewpoints of the school administrators. The main purpose of this study is to validate the Oral Proficiency in Educational Leadership Theory, particularly the assumption that school administrators' oral proficiency and sociability foster school productivity. Qualitative-descriptive research method and a thematic analysis of the current perceptions were utilized with the aid of semi-structured interviews. The results showed how changes in the relations and productivity in school been produced through the aid of the administrators' perceptions and actual abilities in speaking skills. It is concluded that oral communication fosters school heads' authority figure, relationship building, production efficiency, and managerial communications.

**Keywords:** oral proficiency, authority figure, relationship building, production efficiency, and managerial communication

### 1. Introduction

Communication between leaders and team members in a certain organization is essential, in order to effectively deliver the basic functions of leadership and management. With this, it aids the institutional heads to accomplish their responsibilities, and jobs accordingly. Further, leaders as managers must build a strong connection within their members so as to achieve the desired organizational goals. In similar with the school administrators, in which they must communicate with the other superiors, teachers, parents, student, and other stakeholders to keep every aspect at a place. Since this is a requisite for group energy and teamwork as this also promotes ethical principles that will encourage the members (Juneja, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Those teams who achieved there expected success has a kind of leader who can channelize the group towards the organizational objective and goal. His primary responsibility is to become a leading resource to his subordinates, offers knowledge, drive their motivation and gain experience and is willing to share advice. Furthermore, he is also responsible for the procedures to be followed, by giving his best to every single requirement to be compiled. His professional skills in a specific field are important to share various techniques that may aid the improvement of quality and speed of the production.

Another aspect of a leader's tasks involves administrative performance, in which he is expected to be proficient in finance, equipment, and reports. Moreover, his scope of responsibilities includes maintaining regular and healthy communication within the interrelated departments for production execution and planning (Windermere, 2019).

Production efficiency has been emphasized through various responses about the impact of oral communication to work-related matters, particularly in the sense of production manner. Respectively, the school administrators elaborated that the requirement if the country's education system as

well as the school's mission, vision and objectives can be obtained through an effective speaking with the members.

**Hypothesis:** School administrators' oral proficiency and sociability foster school productivity.

### 2. Theoretical background of the study

The Theory on Oral Communication Proficiency in Educational Leadership establishes that oral proficiency makes one a figure of authority and fosters sociability that leads to quality leadership. Through Oral Communication Proficiency, a leader is counted as figure of authority. Thus, he is respected, trusted and there is confidence, cooperation and loyalty of members. It is through oral communication proficiency as well that a school head can earn effective sociability; the skill towards his people. By these, managerial communications are easily applied and so, production efficiency is attained. If these are actualized accordingly, a school can have a reputable climate; a kind of institution wherein every stakeholder is safe, healthy and satisfied; the very essence of quality leadership.

This elaborated the foundation in conducting this study that focuses on elaborating the vital role of oral proficiency based on the perceptions of the school administrators.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to validate the Theory on Oral Communication Proficiency in Educational Leadership, particularly the hypothesis that school administrators' oral proficiency and sociability foster school productivity. Specifically it aims to: (1) look into the views of the school administrators about the vital role of oral proficiency in school leadership and management and (2) determine the emerging themes that can elaborate the significance of oral communication in school administration.

### 3. Literature review

Communication is the greatest key to utmost leadership (Towler 2003) <sup>[10]</sup>. Among all the employees, it is expected that a leader possesses set of extraordinary skills; which enables him or her to take charge and mentor other members who are inexperienced. A leader is expected to motivate and help them to attain the individual, team and organizational sets of goals and objectives. Moreover, they possess a clear set of values and they primarily promote the welfare of others. This is in the result of the appreciation he receives from his team and their sincere will to follow his lead.

Since it is a requirement, great leaders are required to be a great communicator, thus they are considered as first-class communicators. However, it is not necessary that a great communicator should be a proficient talker because these two are contrasting from each other. The drive of gaining more knowledge separates excellent communicator from a good talker who has insufficient knowledge and even gets confused while they interact with others. In addition, a proficient communicator speaks with conviction to his words and there is no room for confusion because the knowledge they possess is just enough which allows him/her to interlinked their passion and ambition while conveying their ideas with others. Likewise, they are conscious if there is a failure of communicating their ideas, these may create unclear comprehension, thus defeating the purpose of communication.

A skilful communicator always has a distinct quality of intently listening to what others are trying to convey which makes them a keen observer. This characteristic enables this kind of leader to read an individual or group's mind by analyzing their attitude, behaviour, ideas and actions. This, in return, enables them to modify their feedback in accordance with the situation. In reality, the best managers or leaders are those who utilize effective communication for the purpose of invigorating their team to assure efficient work, discipline and responsibility between the members. They take a stand by having an accurate set of working ideologies and establish to embed the same in their teams, which often results to appreciation and obedience of his team members (Lee Froschheiser).

The concept of Leadership communication is when a leader was the ability to inspire his team or other people, through his ideologies and principles; it becomes easier for them to execute the tasks with less effort. It has been noticed that there is a significant number of managers and leaders who are continuously engaging in communication with one or another while working. Moreover, about 70 to 90% of their time is mostly consumed for the interaction within the group each day (Mintzberg, 1973; Eccles & Nohria, 1991) and this has continuously rocketed in percentage with the introduction of new communication technologies like mobile phones, e-mail, social media and etc. This immense percentage of time expended by managers in communication emphasizes the essentiality of high and strong communication proficiency for leaders who want to promote their leadership quality. There are various researches that establish that the concept of effective communication brings a person from a lower level to the spot of leadership. In fact, it has been proven that when a person is exceptional in communication, he or she is also capable of taking a significant decision.

Additionally, high level of communication skills has been found to immediately finish the work, which is frequently

more recommended for a leadership position in an organization (Bowman, Jones, Peterson, Gronouski & Mahoney, 1964). The creation for excellent comprehensions of what is being expressed is justifiable by good communication skills, which in result encourages the members to blindly follow their leader. In a nutshell, for one to achieve excellence and outstanding leap in his or her professional career, it is then a priority to become proficient in leadership communication

A leader should ensure certainty for a continuous communication and appropriate utilization of both informal and formal approaches (Bill Back). The combination of both approaches while communicating is an advantage. Informal denotes the communication to ensure an accurate and regular evaluation to report concerns immediately like interaction during breakfast meetings, roundtable meetings which are continually proven effective and helpful for discoursing and finding solutions of various issues such as trust and credibility. Formal approaches on the other hand require an extensive and adequate implementation of an organizational plan (Luthra, 2015) <sup>[11]</sup>.

### 4. Research methodology

The study used a qualitative research method to give a narrative description of the significance of Oral Communication for School Administrators. These narratives are supported by the participants' responses from an in-depth interview. Extracted from the text of data collected, a series of codes marked were then grouped into similar concepts to create themes. The participants were taken through purposive sampling. They are current school administrators in Cebu from multi-grade public and private schools. They are School Directors, Principals and Deans with at least five-year experience. All of them have backgrounds in Graduate School; either or both Masteral and Doctoral studies.

### 5. Discussion of results

The participants shared their feelings and views about the role of Oral Communication in Educational Leadership and Management after a one-on-one interview. School administrators believe that oral communication in school is crucial and needs to be effective for it allows them to deliver their administrative and managerial functions accordingly. The codes and themes of the study were mainly taken from the responses were considered vital by the researcher. The results encapsulated the most important functions of Oral Proficiency in leadership communication:

#### Theme 1. Strengthen Professional and Personal Relationship

Oral Communication is one useful tool to bridge the school heads to his members. From building rapport to constructing a deep professional and personal connection to the school constituents, a school administrator is careful as to the way he portrays his verbal and non-verbal communication to maintain the harmony within the organization. The main objective is to keep a good relation to the people to attain a well-structured and stronger support system. Moreover, according to them ordered organizations means convenience, comfort, and production success. It is essential that the head and his team must master just right communication as this will enable the teams not only to complete the projects successfully but as well as facilitate

the institution to achieve success and growth (Froschheiser, nd).

Aside from the major functions of leadership and management, it is the effective communication that is vital for leaders in the organization. This helps the institution heads to perform their jobs and responsibilities. Leaders as managers or vice versa must connect successfully with their members to achieve the organization goals. Similarly, school administrators must communicate with other superiors, teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders to keep every aspect at a place. This is vital for teamwork and group energy as this promotes a kind of morale that is encouraging among the members (Juneja, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Results show that personal connection is exhibited only if there is a face-to-face interaction between the school administrator and the members. The sincerity of each party is felt if there is the presence of non-verbal gestures in communication. A school head's genuineness is a powerful thing and takes place from knowing him and what he desires to portray. It is a thing that his constituents witness through his passionate attitudes and apprehension for others (Llopis, 2012) <sup>[7]</sup>. School administrators use their speaking ability for formulating emotional sense within the members. Interventions for intricate matters like family problems, company issues, and even personal concerns can only be properly addressed if there is a one-on-one talk. Members can freely express their emotions and perceptions if there is genuine openness which can only be unlocked through oral communication.

Relationship building in the school is elaborated by the sub-categories: concern for people, audience sensitivity with language flexibility and effective listening as its constituent elements.

**Sub-theme 1. Concern for people:** Great leaders concentrate on serving others to become well. They are advocates for the advancement of his people. They intend that the impact of their legacy to be directly associated to the achievement of his members and the institution they serve (Llopis, 2012) <sup>[7]</sup>. The speaking ability of a school leader can also be a powerful tool to convey his concern for people. Participants shared that through their ability in speaking, they can strengthen people skills through constructive feedback, spontaneous coaching, and professional development training and even giving inspirational or motivating messages during meetings, conferences, and school programs.

The participants believe that to become successful school leaders, he or she must be sociable, collaborative, team player, compassionate, understanding, inspiring, motivating and helpful. These characteristics can best be demonstrated through interpersonal communication. His way of touching the professional and personal life of his members through words and actions will move them to work and cooperate with them.

**Sub-theme 2. Audience Sensitivity:** Being mindful to the diversities of groups and members is the main concept of audience sensitivity. School Administrators deal with different stakeholders such as students, other school administrators, school staff, teachers, parents, learners, community members, business leaders, and elected officials who have different backgrounds. These people have different characteristics and needs which are always taken a

look at in every action the school head makes. The following are the specific factors in speaking that are considered by the school administrators in dealing with interactive communication with the stakeholders:

**Sub-theme 3. Language Flexibility:** In contrary to the common notion in the country about associating competence and excellence in speaking fluent English, the majority of the school administrators expressed that it requires them to become language flexible in communicating with the stakeholders.

Generally speaking, public schools and private schools in the Philippines have different cultures when it comes to communication. Some children in private schools have English as their first language. This requires the school to employ teachers then who can be English competent to handle the needs of the students.

Many parents in private schools are professionals and well-off; English communication then is never an issue. This is different in the public schools. Parents and students are used to communicating in the vernacular. They even find communicating in English awkward if outside the classroom. Most administrators admitted that they communicate with the students and parents in the language that everyone can understand. It is for the common understanding that school administrators bend their communication skills. Teachers and staff even find their heads intimidating and unwelcoming if they do not use the language that makes them feel at home.

School administrators are flexible to the extent that they can even be inflicted with adjustments only for the school needs. Due to the desire to serve their constituents, participants from public schools honestly expressed the downsides of it. The mastery of speaking, for instance, falters over time if not consistently utilized. As much as they would like to maintain the English language as a medium for communication in school, they tend not to just to make the members feel comfortable.

If one skill is mastered but not practiced over time, the proficiency suffers (e.g., Kroll, Bobb, & Wodniecka, 2006). The inconsistency of speaking fluently opens room for code-switching, mispronunciation, grammatical errors, numerous pauses, incorrect intonations and other suprasegmental elements of speech.

**Sub-theme 4. Effective listening:** Listening is one secret weapon of good leaders (Sax, 2018) <sup>[9]</sup>. A powerful method that school administrators take to enhance their influence is to establish a critical understanding of the members' experiences. They should proactively seek to comprehend all sides including the single detail coming from his constituents' perception. Through effective listening, proper intervention to school issues can properly be implemented. Effective communication requires both careful speakings and listening to transmit and receive messages correctly. The outcome must be parallel to the intention; the same as true in leadership principle. Listening allows the school leader to have access to different ideas and possible solutions coming from the team. This skill expands perspectives and allows an institution to address concerns proactively rather than displaying impulsive reactions. On an interpersonal level, listening fosters teamwork, enhances credibility, increases loyalty, builds trust and strengthens school relations.

### **Theme 2. Increase Productivity**

Successful teams have a kind of leader who can direct the group toward the organization goal or objective. His main responsibility is to become a leading resource to his subordinates, offering knowledge, motivation, experience and even advice. He is responsible for the procedures to follow giving his best that every single requirement is compiled. His professional skills in a certain field are essential to share techniques that may help on how to improve quality or speed of production.

Another aspect of a leader's tasks involves administrative performance. He is expected to have the ability in finance, equipment, and reports. Moreover, it is also his duty to maintain regular and healthy communication with interrelated departments for planning and production execution. (Windermere, 2019) Production efficiency has been elaborated through various responses about the influence of oral communication to work-related matters particularly in the sense of production. The school administrators emphasized that it is through effective speaking with the members that the requirement of the country's education system as well as the school's mission, vision and objectives can be attained

### **Theme 3. Establish the Figure of Authority**

Authority Figure is a person whose real or apparent authority over others inspires or demands obedience and emulation. (Dictionary.com, 2016). School administrators are then traditional authority figures for the school stakeholders.

As a leader, it is just a must that instructions are given and orders to the members are obeyed properly. (Karve, 2013) <sup>[6]</sup> This is one way to ensure quality production. In School, administrators disseminate tasks to corresponding departments and people in-charged from planning to operation proper. Instructions must be clearly specified and elaborated so that the expected outcomes are achieved. This is where effective communication skill in administration becomes vital. It is through the communication process, the purpose and the outcome meeting. A leader who has the ability to delegate tasks effectively with co-workers, clients, and others can get more people to work with him. This working force is able and willing to yield quality outcome only when the person heading the team is respected and trusted.

Hence, trust is a crucial factor that is difficult to fake. It is widespread to every individual, group and relationship, and if not evident, can possibly devastate even the strongest and most influential organization. Communication failures erode and destroy trust (Tuck, 2014) <sup>[11]</sup>. Nevertheless, this can be avoided if a school administrator meets deadlines, follows through with premises and communicates effectively (Alexander, nd).

### **Theme 4. Systematic Delivery of Managerial Communication**

Managerial communication may be defined as a task which allows managers to communicate with each and with employees within the organization. (Juneja, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup> Communication amongst themselves and with the team members is important for the administrators. Effective managerial communication is a requirement for the following purposes; first is for discussions of ideas among members for quicker and better results. Second is for

achieving targets within the desired time frame. The third is for the manager to address the grievances and problems of the members. Fourth is for them to set goals and targets for the institution and for themselves as well. Lastly, in time of organizational crisis, managerial communication plays a crucial role as well. (Juneja, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup>

There are several tips for effective Managerial Communication. One among them is making the message understood clearly by the recipients. (Juneja, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup> This explains as to why School Administrators in the Philippines do not solely rely on the use of the English language for communication. Stakeholders in the school are of different kinds who also have various backgrounds. In private schools where tuition fee is high, it is already given that most parents are either professionals or average earners at least who can afford to pay. Most stakeholders are able to express and comprehend in English. Thus, there is a need for the school administrators to communicate with them in the language they are able to reciprocate. Meanwhile, in public schools, where children, parents, staff and even teachers are not fluent in speaking the Universal language, flexibility of the school administrator must be evident. They speak with them for the purpose of understanding and effects. Clarity of the message is their main objective for the respondents to interact accordingly. It is then that the members achieve the goals and objectives in the school.

English, despite being considered as the medium for businesses and professionals, is still considered as the second language in the Philippines. Since this is usually not utilized at home, Filipinos tend to commit errors in its linguistic structure once in a while. Moreover, even expert bilinguals appear that they can interact with others in whichever language is necessary, the evidence shows that both languages are dynamic when bilinguals read (e.g., Dijkstra, 2005), hear (e.g., Marian & Spivey, 2003), and speak (e.g., Kroll, Bobb, & Wodniecka, 2006) one language alone. Thus, school administrators in the public school, whose people he meets every day are not native English speakers or more than average at least, have the tendency to deviate from his mastery as he may also be influenced by his environment. He may have earned knowledge and skills from his education or professional experiences but the frequency of encounter with the aforementioned stakeholders could highly affect his communication performance.

### **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The assumption that school administrators' oral proficiency and sociability foster school productivity was validated. School administrators view oral proficiency as vital in the growth and success of the school. If properly practiced, oral proficiency is a powerful tool to establish their authority figure, to strengthen school relations, to increase production and to cultivate managerial communications. These four elements bind the administrative and managerial functions of the school administrators; essential in attaining leadership success. For further enrichment of this research, it is recommended to conduct an investigation and analysis regarding the views of the stakeholders about the school administrators' speaking abilities and its connection to their leadership quality.

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