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COMMUNICATION GAPS AS PREDICTOR OF TEACHING PARTNERSHIP IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

Teaching partnership is considered a breakthrough in teachers' professionalization because it favours the articulation of the knowledge but the existence of communication gaps have made it difficult for effective teaching partnership to triumph in school towards achieving the school goals. The study examined communication gaps as predictor of teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level significance. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 5133 teachers in 263 public secondary schools in six Education Zones in Anambra State. The sample of 513 teachers was used for the study. Proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. The instruments for data collection were Communication Gaps Questionnaire (CGQ) and Teaching Partnership Questionnaire (TPQ). The instruments were content validated while the construct validation was ascertained using Principle Component Analysis Approach. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient method and the average coefficient for CGQ and 0.80 for TPQ was obtained and was considered reliable and suitable for the study. Simple regression analysis was used for data analysis. The study revealed that language barriers ($r = -0.532$; $P < 0.000$), and cultural barriers ($r = -0.494$; $P < 0.000$) negatively and significantly predicted teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State to a moderate extent. The study concluded that communication gaps predicted teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that school administrators must tackle the issues of communication gaps adopted in the school system in order to prompt good teaching partnership.

Keywords: *Communication Barriers, Teaching Partnership, Cultural Barriers, Language Barriers*

Introduction

Partnership is a form of unification, support and assistance in formal education to ensure quality educational output. It specializes in helping both the teachers, parents and other stakeholders in collaborative teaching and learning process. The partnerships involve a highly collaborative relationship, with the curriculum being jointly developed, delivered and owned (Adonu, 2019). Partnership among teachers in secondary schools can form a fruitful context for teachers' professional learning. Shah (2018) stated that educational partnership requires an action which means that students' education becomes everyone's problem and requires the mobilization of all energies around the schools. Continuing, Shah noted that teachers can, for example, share knowledge, critically reflect on teaching practices, provide collegial support or peer feedback and collectively design teaching methods. Adonu (2019) noted that teaching partnership is a key aspect of teachers' professional development and a vehicle to increase teachers' knowledge.

Teaching partnership produces a cooperative environment that enhances the level of novelty and passion among teachers and provides a continuous backing for teachers' professional enhancement.

Agogbua (2024) defined teaching partnership as the formal and collaborative relationship between teachers, often from different backgrounds or institutions, working together to enhance teaching and learning experiences. This partnership involves sharing resources, expertise, and strategies to improve educational outcomes for students. Teaching partnership could modify instruction; hence teachers need to recognize the value of working together and to focus on what they have in common. Naicker (2019) itemized eleven benefits of teaching partnership among school teachers to include; moral support, improved efficiency, enhanced effectiveness, reduced burden, harmonized time perceptions between teachers and administrators, positioned certainty of collective professional wisdom, political confidence, improved capacity for reflection, organizational responsiveness, chances to learn, and constant learning.

Teaching being an intellectual activity requires that school administrators should encourage teachers to experiment on new ideas, methods and techniques as they relate to their work. Amuse and Okafor (2019) agreed that organizational culture where teachers share ideas in order to improve in their teaching is possible through observing the spirit of teamwork as new ideas and innovative methods of teaching

emerge. Teaching partnership create such a cooperative climate that heightens the level of innovation and enthusiasm among teachers and provides a continuous support for staff professional enhancement (Shah, 2018). As teachers experiment and discards the ideas that do not work; they should be rewarded instead of seeing their effort as waste of time and resources. Teachers should be encouraged to always look for new and innovative ways of teaching, because that is the way teachers and schools improve. Cano et al. (2016) posited that the success of education is built on partnership among the teachers and other stakeholders in education, therefore, every form of communication gaps should be eliminated.

Communication gaps are the misinterpretation of information or the complete lack of communication. Suleyiman and Zewdu (2018) defined communication gaps as the misinterpretation of information or the complete lack of communication within the relationship or union. Gaps in communication usually occur when the meaning intended by the speaker is not what is understood by the recipient. In today's educational system where we work across geographies, time zones and cultures, maintaining a space for effective communication is always a challenge due to communication gaps. Rani (2016) noted that people holding different attitudes, values and discrimination are common causes of communication breakdown in the workplace.

Communication gaps in this study is defined as the misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or lack of proper information flow that hinder effective interaction and exchange of ideas between individuals or groups. Communication breakdown usually occur when the gaps between the lips and ears are more than required. Thus, communication is not only about talking but also about understanding, connecting feelings and emotions. Rani (2016) pointed out that communication gaps are mostly caused by language barriers, cultural barriers, physical barriers, behavioural barriers, attitudinal barriers and environmental barriers. Therefore, within the context of this study, communication gaps focused on language barriers, and cultural barriers.

Language barriers are those features of language use that result in miscomprehension or complete loss in communication. Tenzer et al. (2021) pointed out that language barriers occur when people do not speak the same language, or do not have the same level of ability in a language. This could be as a result of factors such as differences in educational background, level of literacy, country and area of the language user. Language barriers can be challenging to overcome in the workplace, especially when one is working in an environment where the primary language spoken is not their first language. Brett (2019) noted that language barriers typically occur when two people who speak different languages are unable to understand each other, leading to a

breakdown in communication. Language barriers in the workplace can also arise due to cultural differences, making cultural barriers a significant factor affecting effective communication.

Cultural barriers to communication occur when differences in cultural norms, values, beliefs, or practices hinder mutual understanding between individuals or groups. These barriers can lead to misinterpretations, stereotypes, or conflicts, affecting effective communication and collaboration. Bernard (2018) noted that cultural diversity can make communication difficult, especially in the workplace, where a misunderstanding can cause costly problems. The prime dynamics of culture are the mutual social perceptual set with coordinated, meaning and action, and cultural variance. The differences in communication styles and the diverse forms of communication can create diversity among various cultures. Barbara (2017) believed that when people from different cultures work together, several factors such as cultural backgrounds, norms, values, beliefs, and physical distance could affect their productivity, highlighting the need for teaching partnership to thrive in schools.

For partnerships to thrive, teachers must create engaging mechanisms, including adopting an attitude of involvement with students and regularly evaluating pedagogical practices. Amuse and Okafor (2019) emphasized the importance of sustaining a culture that facilitates the transmission of information from teachers to

students, enabling them to develop critical thinking skills for problem-solving. Partnerships in which teachers collaborate and foster attitudes of mutual reliability do not undermine classroom management but instead recognize that knowledge is a shared resource. When teaching efforts, which demand more than mere lesson planning, are developed collaboratively, they result in harmonious and impactful outcomes. However, it seems that some teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State find it difficult to collaborate with colleagues. Could it be that they lack the necessary training on the effectiveness of partnerships, or is there a deeper issue of mistrust and resistance to change within the school culture? Could it also be that the school leadership does not provide sufficient support or create an environment conducive to collaboration? It is against this background that the study sought to examine communication gaps as predictor of teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of language barriers on teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

2. What is the predictive value of cultural barriers on teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Language barriers do not significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Cultural barriers do not significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Methods

The study was a correlational research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 5133 teachers in 263 public secondary schools in six Education Zones in Anambra State (Planning, Research and Statistics Department, Anambra State Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC), Awka, 2023). A sample of 513 teachers (that is, 10% of the population) was used for the study. Multi-stage sampling technique involving; proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques

were used for the study. The instruments for data collection were a researcher-structured questionnaire titled: Communication Gaps Questionnaire (CGQ) and Teaching Partnership Questionnaire (TPQ). The instruments were divided into section A and B. Section 'A' which has two clusters sought information on language barriers and cultural barriers; while section 'B' sought information on teaching partnership. The instruments were on four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) (4 points), Agree (A) (3 points), Disagree (D) (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1 point). The face and construct validity of the instrument was established by three experts; one from Measurement and Evaluation and two in Education Management. All the experts are all from the Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. The questionnaire reliability was ascertained through a pilot test. The data collected were analyzed with Cronbach Alpha method and coefficient values of 0.82 for language barriers, 0.78 for cultural barriers and 0.81 for teaching partnership. Out of 513 copies of the instrument administered, 483 (94%) of the instrument were correctly completed and returned. Simple regression analysis was used to answer the research questions and hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the predictive value of language barriers on teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Summary of Simple Regression Analysis with Language Barriers as Predictor of Teaching Partnership in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β
Constant	18.614	4.529	
Language Barriers	-.587	.341	-.532
R	-.532		
R ²	.475		
Adj. R ²	.411		

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown on table 1 indicated that language barriers is a moderate negative predictor of teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = -.532$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) of .475 showed that the explanatory power of the variable is moderately strong. This implies that 48% of the variations in teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State are being accounted for or explained by the variations in language barriers. The adjusted R^2 supports the claim of the R^2 with a value of .411 indicating that 41% of the total variation in the dependent variable (teaching partnership) is explained by the independent variable (language barriers). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of the language barriers is moderately strong in determining teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Nevertheless, the standardized beta weight ($\beta = -.532$) showed that language barriers is a negative predictor of teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is an indication that increase in language barriers leads to .532 (53%) decrease in teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: To what extent do cultural barriers predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Summary of Simple Regression Analysis with Cultural Barriers as Predictor of Teaching partnership In Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β
Constant	18.614	4.529	
Language Barriers	-.587	.341	-.532
R	-.532		
R ²	.475		
Adj. R ²	.411		

The summary of the simple regression cultural barriers is a moderate negative predictor of teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = -.494$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) of .416 showed that the explanatory power of the variable is moderately strong. This implies that 42% of the variations in teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State are being accounted for or explained by the variations in cultural barriers. The adjusted R^2 supports the claim of the R^2 with a value of .372 indicating that 37% of the total variation in the dependent variable (teaching partnership) is explained by the independent variable (cultural barriers). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of the cultural barriers is moderately strong in determining teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. However, the standardized beta weight ($\beta = -.494$) showed that cultural barriers is a negative predictor of teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is an indication that increase in cultural barriers leads to .494 (49%) decrease in teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 1: Language barriers do not significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: Test of Significance of Simple Regression Analysis with Language Barriers as Predictor of Teaching Partnership in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β	t value	p- value
Constant	18.614	4.529		7.149	.004
Language Barriers	-.587	.341	-.532	11.376	.000
R	-.532				
R ²	.475				
Adj. R ²	.411				
F	15.564				.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown on table 3 revealed that the simple regression coefficient (R) is -.532 while the R² is .475 and Adjust R² is .411. The F-ratio associated with regression is 15.564, the t-test is 11.376 and the P-value = .000. Since p-value (.000) is less than .05 level of significance which resulted in the decision to reject the null hypothesis at $p(.000) < .05$. The result is further strengthened by the t-value where the result showed that t-calculated value of 11.376 is greater than the critical value of ± 1.96 at .05 level of significance. The study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that language barriers do not significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that language barriers significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural barriers do not significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: Test of Significance of Simple Regression Analysis with Cultural Barriers as Predictor of Teaching Partnership in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β	t value	p- value
Constant	17.122	4.635		7.093	.004
Language Barriers	-.507	.368	-.494	10.116	.000
R	-.494				
R ²	.416				
Adj. R ²	.372				
F	12.796				.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown on table 4 revealed that the simple regression coefficient (R) is -.494 while the R² is .416 and Adjust R² is .372. The F-ratio associated with regression is 12.796, the t-test is 10.116 and the P-value = .000. Since p-value (.000) is less than .05 level of significance which resulted in the decision to reject the null hypothesis at $p(.000) < .05$. The result is further strengthened by the t-value where the result showed that t-calculated value of 10.116 is greater than the critical value of ± 1.96 at .05 level of significance. The study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that cultural barriers do not significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that cultural barriers significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on the predictive value of language barriers on teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that language barriers negatively predict teaching partnership in public

secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also indicated that language barriers significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is as a result of the respondents accepting the fact that sender do not speak the same language with the receiver;

communication becomes difficult in situations where people do not understand each other's language; lack of common language create obstacles in communication; when the sender make errors in grammar and spelling; improper result in unclear messages can create bad impression; improper choice of words can result to distorted messages thereby creating wrong impression; dialectical and accents differences affect communication; misinterpretation of words can impede efforts of communicating verbally; usage of rude language can impede all the efforts of communicating; and informal words used in communication that often exclude specific groups. The finding of the study agreed with Jay (2014), Wilson (2017) and Brett (2019). They revealed that language barriers negatively predict teaching partnership in schools. In the words of Odoh (2017), a barrier to communication between people who are unable to speak a common language, thus, language barriers negatively predict teaching partnership in schools. In disagreement to the study, Bakwo (2014) and Nasuri and Hammawa (2019) studies disclosed a positive relationship between language barriers to people work life. The similarities and difference in the findings of the studies could be attributed to the advantages and disadvantages in communication gap. These linguistic limitations that occur create confusion or prevent comprehension. They can cause misunderstandings that lead to conflict, frustration, offense, violence, hurt feelings, and wasting time, effort, money, and lives of the people. Summary, language barriers are

semantic problems that arise during the process of encoding and/order-coding the message into words and ideas, respectively.

Findings on the predictive value of cultural barriers on teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that cultural barriers negatively predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also indicated that cultural barriers significantly predict teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is as a result of the respondents accepting the fact that language reveals the values and beliefs of cultures; cultural values favored by members of individualistic cultures; cultural values favored collectivistic cultures; differences in beliefs in culture create a barrier in communication; cultural differences cause misunderstandings; cultural differences cause conflicts; culture also gives rise to prejudices; intercultural communication prevent such misunderstandings; cultural diversity makes communication difficult; and different cultures have different meaning of words. Agreeing with the findings, Giami and Obiechina (2019) that indicated that cultural values favoured by members of individualistic cultures, thus, negatively relating to the partnership schools enjoy. Nwosu (2017) disclosed that cultural values favoured collectivistic cultures thereby causing a barrier to effective communication in the organization. The findings of the study contradict with the findings of Abwalla (2014) and Okorie (2019) who opined that

cultural barriers positively predict teaching partnership in schools. They argued that cultural barriers have its own positive side effect that help organizations to grow. The similarities and differences could be as a result of the peoples' inability to speak in the native language which prevents individuals from being able to fully express their personality and form bonds with others. The individual may feel isolated from the rest of the population. Language barriers can foment discrimination and separation of groups.

Conclusion

The communication gap at the workplace is an issue and one that can have a negative impact on all areas of organization, from productivity and efficiency to staff morale and retention. Based on the findings, the study concluded that communication gaps predicted teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School management should establish clear communication policies that encourage the use of simple, standardized language for both verbal and written communication.
2. Ministry of Education should implement regular cultural sensitivity training programs for teachers and administrators. These programs should focus on fostering an understanding of diverse cultural values, beliefs, and communication styles to minimize misunderstandings, conflicts, and prejudices.

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