DO THE COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AFFECT THE MOTIVATION OF TEACHERS?

Volkan Cicek & Fatih Toremen  
Faculty of Education  
Zirve University  
volkancicek@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Countries transfer an important portion of their wealth to the sector of education. Success of the sector however is directly proportional with the performance of teachers and that depends on successful human resources management. In this regard, school administrators that employ effective communicative skills would be likely to increase the motivation of the teachers resulting in more effective use of the human resources schools have. Thus, in this study, the effect of administrators’ communicative skills on the motivation of teachers is sought for. The research methodology used is a qualitative one based on face-to-face interviewing technique implemented on 13 volunteers selected via random sampling. Results had revealed that administrators’ communicative skills do in fact affect the motivation of the teachers; however there are differences in the perceptions of the administrators and the teachers about the level and degree of effect.

Field of Research:  School administrator, teacher, communicative skills, motivation.

1. Introduction

Organizational communication is a sort of language within an organization based on symbols developed by the members of the organization used for coordinating the manufacturing or the servicing process aiming to achieve the alignment of the acts of the members of the organization with the goals of the organization (Kaya, 2003:48-49). Organizations cannot perform without communicating. Effective communication increases the job satisfaction and efficiency (Genç, 2005:322). Based on Timm (1986), administrators assume certain roles in an organization. Administration is defined in general as reaching certain goals with other employees. This definition involves the functions of planning, organization, commanding, coordination and controlling described by Fayol (1949). An exact administration is only possible with the willingness of the employees to be administered. Therefore, administration is not just transferring the authority, which is why communication is crucial in achieving collaboration (Akt. Kaya, 2003:1). There is a big difference between abiding order willingly or forcefully (Hagemann, 1997:110-123). An administrator facing such problems continuously asks himself how to achieve obedience of employees (Hanks, 1999:5). In a study by Ceylan (2001:10-15), it is stated that structure of the administration and hierarchy affect the teachers' efficiency and satisfaction. In the same study is stated that administrators' approach to the employees, whether it is a democratic or an authoritarian one, being just and respectful towards them and guiding them are all factors that are perceived as either positive or negative depending on how they are employed. Employee satisfaction varies substantially based on these factors. In general job satisfaction is lower in jobs that are structured in a hierarchical order and profession of teaching is no different. Communication is usually one-way and top to down at schools, thus it is difficult to be aware of the teachers' requests and complaints. As a result, job satisfaction would be low and employees would not feel at peace. Ceylan's study also reveals that teachers would like their supervisors to be aware of their work and
appreciate them and if this is not accomplished then the already economically disadvantaged teachers also fail to get the psychological satisfaction they seek. All these data are in harmony with the argument that the nature of the communication with an organization affects the motivation of the teachers. In another study, Calık and Sehitoglu (2006:99) state that school administrators generally abide by the laws and regulations and thus consider the professional qualifications of teachers when they hire them, however they fail to involve teachers in the decision-making process and also fail to assess them rightfully so afterwards. Karakose and Kocabas (2006:12) also reveal similar results that are being appreciated by the administrators upon good work and being involved in the decision-making process positively affect the job satisfaction and motivation of teachers work at private schools. According to Basaran (2000:76), administrators’ efforts are meaningless if the employees do not have the intention to achieve the organizational goals. Therefore, school administrators must employ effective communication skills both verbally and nonverbally to motivate the employees at school, otherwise motivation problems arise.

Motivation management is essential due to the fact that systematic motivation of employees is required to achieve high efficiency levels. Benefits of systematic motivation are as follows (Altınsık ve Aras, 2005, s.143):

1. Employees become loyal to the organization and its culture.
2. Efficiency increases.
3. Employees that high motivation also tend to have good morals and in good mood.
4. Employees' job satisfaction gets higher.
5. Employees make better use of their working time.
6. Quality of the life within the organization gets better.
7. Quality of the final product or the service of the organization gets better.
8. It would be more likely for the organization to reach its goals.

As a consequence, school principals and administrators must be able to use the communication methods skillfully to be able to move the employees, to convince them when needed and in achieving the organizational goals (Kaya, 2003:48). It is also important to be punctual and specific during communication, i.e., when asked an employee of something, the magnitude of the task along with the timing expectations must be specified and the administrator must be sure whether the employee got the message (Hanks, 1999:13-22).

**Problem Statement**

What is the effect of school administrators’ communicative skills on the motivation of teachers?

**Objective**

This study at hand first will aim to establish grounds for the relation between motivation and that of social communication, then will investigate the effect of school administrators’ communication skills and methods on the motivation of teachers given the accumulated set of data. Based on the findings, recommendations to school administrators as to what type of communicative skills and methods should they employ will be proposed.
2. Method

Participants

Research methodology used is a case study involving interviewing with five school administrators and eight teachers working at a public school in Sahinbey, Gaziantep, Turkey, who were selected via convenience purposive sampling. School has 1400 students and 60 staff members. There are two shifts at the school, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Half of the eight teachers and four of the five administrators are male. Teachers are aged between 25 and 52 years old and each of them worked at least two years at the school prior to the conductance of the interviews. Administrators are aged between 35 and 56 years old and each of them worked at least two years up to eight years at the school prior to the conductance of the interviews.

Data Collection

Firstly, relevant literature has been reviewed and then interview questions had been prepared based on the literature review and field observations. Semi-structured interviewing has been used to collect data with regards to experiences, approaches, attitudes, intentions, comments, perceptions and reactions. Separate interviewing forms have been prepared both for teachers and administrators. Each form consists of three questions that are aligned so that results could be affirmed.

Questions for teachers are as follows;

1. How does your administrator convey you the orders involving tasks and duties to be performed? What types of communication methods, skills does he/she use?
2. Which communicative skills and methods that your administrator uses toward you improves your motivation?
3. Which communicative skills and methods that your administrator uses toward you reduces your motivation?

Questions for administrators are as follows;

1. How do you convey your orders and communications to teachers? What communicative methods and skills do you use?
2. Which communicative skills and methods you use are likely to positively affect your teachers' motivation?
3. Which communicative skills and methods you use are likely to negatively affect your teachers' motivation?

Analysis

Data gathered were noted and recorded during interviews and organized afterwards. Themes were created based on the general interview data and codes were created based on the data recorded by investigators individually, which were then compared and common ones are selected for analysis.

Each question comprises of one theme, thus three questions each on both forms for the teachers and the administrators add up to six themes. Data were organized and described based on the themes and the codes via direct quotations followed by content analysis to analyze these data.
Three themes for teachers are as follows;

1st theme: Administrator’s verbal communicative skills

2nd theme: The way and style the administrator speaks and addresses teachers that enhance motivation

3rd theme: The way and style the administrator speaks and addresses teachers that lessen motivation

Three themes for administrators are as follows;

1st theme: Verbal communicative skills used to assign tasks to employees

2nd theme: Social communicative skills those enhance motivation

3rd theme: Social communicative skills those lessen motivation

3. Findings

Data Collected From Teachers

Table 1 summarizes the verbal communicative skills of the administrator.

Table 1: Verbal Communicative Skills of the Administrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme : Verbal Communicative Skills= VCS</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VCS</td>
<td>• Lack of one on one communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rigid, rude, and commanding attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not involving others in the decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Addressing employees as if they are students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not explaining the reasons and the basis for the tasks assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not using the spoken language well and efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not using sentences of appreciation and thanking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Generalizing the faults of individual employees to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Style of speaking that is constantly criticizing and blaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of disturbing words and mimics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general teachers that were interviewed stated that the school administrators were commanding, rude and rigid in their attitudes. They were not establishing one to one communication and instead they were assigning tasks to the teachers either in writing or via meetings and even in cases when they do establish one to one communications they addressed the teachers as if they were students. Teachers stated that their motivation to do their jobs had lessened due to aforementioned reasons. They stated that they were continuing to do their jobs not because they were motivated but because it was their jobs. They had also stated that the tasks they were assigned outside of their primary certification area was another reason reducing their motivation. Teachers added that the attitude of the administrators were not consistent. They explained this situation by administrators wanting teachers to do a perfect job while not doing theirs. Teachers claimed to have assessed this inconsistency as a result of the varying communication techniques that the administrators employed depending on the employee who has been contacted and also depending on the situation. Teachers also claimed that administrators lack sufficient communicative skills since they were assuming that they own the school. Therefore, they claim, communication was always one-way and in a
commanding style giving orders involving rude and rigid phrases. Additionally, they claimed that they were: (1) not awarded, (2) not given incentives, (3) neither appreciated, (4) nor thanked. They claimed that the administrators' criticising and blaming way of addressing teachers results in levelling the teachers that work with the ones that do not leading to the teachers that are equalized with the teachers that do not work losing motivation. It was claimed that the administrators fail to establish sincere environments due to always assuming a formal administrator role thinking that being cordial with the teachers may lead to disciplinary problems. Another observation by the teachers about their administrators is about their use of the spoken language, in this case Turkish. They claimed that administrators lack sufficient skills to effectively use Turkish language not being able to use appropriate words even when addressing others. Finally, teachers also claimed that if administrators were to establish good communication not believing that it would lead to disciplinary issues, they would be more motivated and dedicated to their organization.

In specific only one of the participants claimed that the social communicative skills of administrators included kindness due to phrases used by the administrator such as "Let's do it together" involving a sense of togetherness. Other participants all focused on negative aspects.

Table 2 summarizes the way and style the administrator speaks and addresses teachers that enhance motivation.

Table 2: Ways and Styles Administrator Addresses Teachers Enhancing Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Style of Speaking Enhancing Motivation = SSEM</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **SSEM**                                            | • One on one communication style increases motivation.  
• Trying to explain the situation and convincing increases motivation.  
• Being appreciated increases motivation.  
• Being kind and requesting in an orderly nice manner increases motivation.  
• Talking about the importance of a task that is assigned increases motivation.  
• Remembering and celebrating the special days of employees increases motivation. |

According to the answers provided by the teachers about their administrators it may be concluded that administrators do not possess effective communication techniques enhancing motivation of their teachers. They are usually rude, rigid, ordering and commanding lessening the motivation of the teachers, while the opposite is rarely the case. This unfriendly way of conduct of the administrators with the teachers make them feel that it is obligatory for them to obey the orders and fulfill them. Thus, they just do the minimum just to get by instead of doing a good job. Sometimes, this unfriendly way of conduct even leads to stubbornness and thus the teachers delay fulfilling the tasks they are assigned to do. On the other hand, teachers feel that they would have more motivation if they were appreciated, awarded and thanked, while it is not the case. A teacher stated that it is impossible to have a communication leading to motivation when the school principal does not remember and celebrate the special days of a teacher. Table 3 summarizes the way and style the administrator speaks and addresses teachers that lessen motivation.

Table 3: Ways and Styles Administrator Addresses Teachers Reducing Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Style of Speaking Reducing Motivation = SSRM</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **SSRM**                                            | • Commanding, rude, and rigid attitudes degrade motivation and lead to stubbornness in teacher.  
• Addressing teachers like they are kids lessen their motivation.  
• Disregarding teachers' ideas in general lessen their motivation. |
Based on the data gathered from teacher interviews, it is concluded that administrators do not constitute role models for teachers that they display conflicting attitudes and expect teachers to do a perfect job while they don't; which all reduces teachers' motivation. Administrators disvaluing the tasks they assign to teachers cause teachers to feel the same about the tasks that they are assigned to. Additionally, teachers feel that they lose motivation when their administrators assign them the tasks, which are normally supposed to be fullfilled by the administrators themselves.

**Data Collected From Administrators**

Table 4 summarizes the communication styles used when assigning tasks to the employees.

**Table 4: Verbal Communicative Skills Used To Assign Tasks To Employees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Verbal Communicative Skills Used To Assign Tasks To Employees=VCSAT</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Talking about the importance of the assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Friendly conduct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assigning tasks to ones who are eager to do the job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Considering the skills ad professions when assigning tasks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasizing that the assignment must be completed and not delayed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informing about the consequences if the assignment is not completed by the deadlines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using I-messages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using messages involving a sense of togetherness and being in the same team.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using individual and collective communicative skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the data gathered from the interviews with the administrators, it is concluded that administrators follow the procedures when assigning tasks and administering the consequences when a certain job is not done, which may be translated as that the administrators use their status quo to empower their will. Like teachers, administrators also stated that commanding and ordering style of communication of administrators would reduce the motivation of the teachers; however unlike teachers administrators claimed that they never communicated in a commanding or ordering way. While teachers had stated that administrators establish one-way top to down communication not sharing responsibilities and even assigning their own job to the teachers; administrators claimed that they explain the tasks they assign to the teachers, establish constructive communication and
share the responsibilities. Table 5 summarizes the social communicative skills those enhance motivation.

Table 5: Social Communicative Skills Those Enhance Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Social Communicative Skills Those Enhance Motivation=SCSEM</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCSEM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing kind communication.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasizing the importance of the task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Valuing the employees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing a cordial, sincere environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Paying close attention to the events going on within the institution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preferring one on one communication with the employees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being flexible and of help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing communication with respect and caring.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being perceptive and understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, administrators stated that they use sentences with which they intend to show that they value the teachers and when they don’t that the teachers do not want to do the job. Based on the data gathered from the interviews with the administrators, it is concluded that the administrators are aware of the differences between the positive and negative ways and styles they use to communicate with the teachers. Table 6 summarizes the social communicative skills those lessen motivation.

Table 6: Social Communicative Skills Those Lessen Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Social Communicative Skills Those Lessen Motivation=SCSLM</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCSLM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• İletişim biçiminin doğru olduğunu düşünmek.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Öğretmenin yapılacak iş hakkında bilgi sahibi olmadığını düşünmek.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kişiyi art niyetli olarak algılamak.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrators do not feel that they are doing a bad job communicating with the teachers, especially not to the extent that the teachers might be losing their motivation because of that. They claim that the fact that the teachers fulfill the tasks they assign to them supports their claim. One administrator stated that the fact that the teachers do not fulfill the tasks they are assigned by the administrators is due to forgetfulness and not due to the way of communication. Another administrator claimed that teachers that do not fulfill the job don’t because they have impure intentions. As a result, according to the data gathered from the interviews with the administrators, it is concluded that administrators avoided answering the interview questions in full.

4. Results, Discussion and Recommendations

In general, it is concluded that administrators way of establishing communication with their teachers affected the teachers' motivation. However, comments and opinions of teachers and administrators varied substantially although some commonalities occurred not about what is really happening but about what should happen such as administrators acting kind and gentle would increase the motivation of the teachers. It was also revealed that elementary school teachers perceived their administrators slightly more positive than the secondary school teachers, although perceptions of both groups remained negative after all, which is in accordance with the results revealed by...
Gultekin’s (2007: 234) study. Another finding was that administrators do not treat teachers differently in their negative attitude based on their status quo or their rank, a result that elementary school teachers agreed entirely, while secondary school teachers agreed slightly, which is also in accordance with the results revealed by Gultekin’s (2007: 234) study.

In general however, teachers think that the administrators communicate in a commanding, ordering, rude and rigid way, which is in harmony with the findings of a similar study by Ozgan (2006:148), who found that conflicts that the elementary and middle school teachers have with their principals are mostly due to empowerment, supression and oppression. Teachers think that their administrators should be trained for communicative skills due to the problems they are having with regards to communication with teachers, while administrators do not feel that there are any problems. Unal’s (1997:6) study revealed findings along the same lines including results about involving teachers in the decision-making process, valuing their ideas, developing one on one communication with teachers, administrators failing to establish communication with teachers, and disvaluing and not appreciating the work teachers do. Also, in the study of Öztürk and Dündar (2003:65), appreciation of the employees, listening to their ideas, collaborative decision making are cited amongst the factors affecting employee motivation in agreement with the findings revealed in this study.

Following recommendations are deemed suitable for the communication problems that occur between the teachers and administrators at schools;

1. Both school administrators and teachers should be trained about communication and motivation through seminars and other programs.

2. Both school administrators and teachers should gain problem solving and conflict resolution skills.

Acknowledgement

Zirve University of Gaziantep is acknowledged for the support provided during the course of these studies.

References


Turkmen, H. Sosyal Bilimler İlköğretim Okul Müdürüların İnsan Kaynaklarını Yönetme Yeterlilikleri, İstanbul, pp. 14-28
