# SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR

# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

# IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by

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# Abstract

School leaders are facing increased challenges as they enter the 21$^{st}$ century. In seeking to share the vision of the school, and achieve the agreed upon goals and objectives, school leaders are constantly advocating, nurturing, delegating and developing the potential of followers. Leaders also seek the cooperation of teachers to sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning, and staff professional growth.

This case study was conducted primarily through document analysis and semi-structured interviews in one large school within one Board of Education in North-western Ontario. In the study, the researcher explored the process of communication for school operations, pursuing for communication strategies as a means to develop leadership strategies that will enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21$^{st}$ century. Seven respondents were interviewed, and official documents of the school were collected. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: vision, commitments, interpersonal relationships, and communication competence. Findings from the study included the observation that school leaders must hold a clear vision, and fulfill commitments to achieve the goals and vision of the school. In this process, school leaders must develop close interpersonal relationships to enhance communication, and overcome factors or barriers that interfere with communication by means of communication competence. Regardless of the leadership style being exercised, school leaders must try to achieve effective communication. In school settings, effective leadership demands effective communication.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# THE PROBLEM

## Introduction

School effectiveness is a major concern for educational administrators, teachers, students, parents and community members. One of the main descriptors of an effective school is positive and effective communication among all members of the school community. (Cuban, 1976). Essential and crucial aspects of educational administrators' work must be their abilities to communicate, effectively, with teachers, students, staff, parents and community members. (Cuban, 1989)

Knowledge of organizational structure and the ability to provide leadership are important components of leadership, but the ability to communicate may ultimately determine the degree of success school leaders have as they interact with others and seek to improve instruction. For Tracy and MacNaughton (1993), skill in communication is the most important of all the skills of supervision; Oliva and Pawlas(1997) say that the ability to communicate is the primary tool of the principal. Raiola (1995) elaborates by saying that the art of communication is a vital tool for the transformational leader. Lysaught (1984) has observed that the problems associated with transmitting ideas and meaning are persistent in organizations, and when there are failures in communication, problems will result in goal setting, as well as, productivity and assessment. Jewell (1998) puts this in a contemporary context by saying that "given the importance of influence, cooperation, imitation, and leadership, it is clear that communication is the means by which things get done in organizations"(p. 448).

Through effective communication, relationships are built, trust is established, and respect is gained. When the leader is an effective communicator, the vision and mission of the school can be effectively shared with staff, parents, students, and large community. "In the areas of leadership, there is no talent more essential than one's ability to communicate" (Guarino, 1974, p. 1). "Communication is the lifeblood of the school; it is a process that links the individual, the group, and the organization" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996, p. 176).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the communication strategies used by one school principal in the daily operation of the school he administered.

## Research Questions

1. What communication strategies did the school principal exercise in the daily administration of the school?

2. What were the factors that enhanced communication in the school?

3. What were the factors that interfered with communication in the school?

## Methodology

This study was designed as a case study (Bogdan & Biklen 2003). In this study, the researcher focused on one school in northern Ontario. The participants were the principal, the vice principal and another five teachers. The study was conducted primarily through the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews. In the analysis of data, the researcher tried to discover whether there are patterns in the responses of the interviewees, looking for common themes, similarities and differences, in the responses to the research questions.

# Significance of the Study

As reform has become the mainstream in today's schools, the importance of communication practices cannot be overemphasized.(Palestini,1999). In the daily operation of the school, leaders not only communicate messages, but they receive, monitor, and seek them. Studies indicate that school leaders spend up to 80 percent of their time involved in communication with other members of the organization, parents, and members of the community (Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Sobel & Ornstein, 1996). Therefore, tantamount to the school operating in an efficient and effective manner is the leader's ability to communicate with people. Murphy and Peck (1980) cited the ability to communicate as the critical factor in management. It would appear that competent communication is regarded more highly than such skills as motivating employees, decision making, delegating, flexibility, and educational background. (Murphy and Peck, 1980). In educational institutions, Striplin (1987) found that the ability of school principals to perform effectively as instructional leaders is contingent on their degree of competence in communication.

Communication occurs on a day-to-day level in schools. Effective communication practices are essential in working with others in school organizations. It helps to establish the tone, shape attitudes, and build commitment to a vision. School leaders must recognize that effective communication is more than nuts and bolts and that words alone are not enough.

With our great leap into the 21st century, school management is now facing an increased number of challenges, such as nurturing school culture, promoting faculty professional growth, developing school community relations, etc. As a leader seeks to share the vision of the school and achieve the agreed upon goals and objectives, he/she is constantly advocating, nurturing, delegating responsibility, and developing the potential of followers. He/she also seeks their

cooperation to sustain a school culture and instructional program conductive to student learning, and staff professional growth. In carrying out these activities, the leader is sure to use various forms of communication.

Therefore, it is important to re-study the process of communication. As ultimately, communication contributes to the principal's ability to articulate a vision that is clear and shared by both members of the organization and various constituencies; it is building a sense of community and ownership, which serves to guide all aspects of organizational behaviours, that leads to change.

## Definition of Terms

**Leadership:** For the purposes of this study, leadership is defined as the process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by his or her followers (Gardner, 2001).

**Communication:** For the purposes of this study, communication is defined as the process by which information is transmitted from a person (the sender) to another person or group (the receiver or receivers) and may occur verbally or non verbally (Green, 2001, p. 96).

**Verbal Communication:** For the purposes of this study, verbal communication is defined as a message that is transmitted using spoken language face-to-face, over a public address system, or in a telephone conversation.

**Written Communication:** For the purposes of this study, written communication is defined as a message that is transmitted in a memo, in a letter, electronically.

**Nonverbal Communication:** For the purposes of this study, nonverbal communication is defined as a message that is transmitted without the use of words. Nonverbal communications

are very important to the communication process as more than half of what is communicated is not conveyed by words but by body language (Sobel, 2001).

## Limitation

1. The findings of the study are not generalizable to other communities, institutions, cultures, or groups of people.

## Delimitations

1. The case study was focused on the work of the administrators and staff of one school in an urban centre of northwestern Ontario.

2. The candidates interviewed in this study were the principal, the vice principal and all the teachers currently employed by a school board in an urban centre of northwestern Ontario.

## Assumptions

1. The interview process is an effective method of gathering data. It will be both a revealing and a productive process.

2. When conducting the interviews for this study the researcher assumes that the candidates will give honest answers.

3. It is also assumed that the candidates' personal career recollections are clear and accurate. It may be difficult for individuals to be absolutely objective when describing their personal mode of operation.

## Overview of the Study

In Chapter One, the researcher introduced the purpose of this study, raised the research questions, clarified the methodology and highlighted the significance of the study. Definition of terms, limitations, delimitations and assumptions were discussed. Chapter Two presented the

literature review in relation to the study. In Chapter Three, the research methodology, case study design, data collection and data analysis are outlined. The findings of the research were presented in Chapter Four. The researcher made the interpretation of findings in Chapter Five. Chapter Six undertook the summary and conclusion of the study, and recommendations were made.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

The purpose of the review of literature presented was to provide a theoretical background for the purposes of the study and the interpretation of the findings. In the first section of the review, literature on characteristics and strategies of leadership was presented. Literature on strategies and processes of communication was presented in the second section.

## Characteristics and Strategies of Leadership

### Three Characteristics of Leaders

Harris & Sherblom (2002) articulated:

> "Regardless of the particulars of anyone theory of leadership, there are generally at least three characteristics we expect leaders to manifest. These are vision, credibility, communication competence. *Vision* provides the direction for the group process, *credibility,* the reason for the group to follow that direction, and *communication competence,* the means for communicating that direction to the group. Each of these contributes to the ability of a leader to influence the group process."(p. 259)

### *Vision*

True leaders are expected to do more than simply conduct meetings, control agendas, and keep track of events. A key piece of leadership is the ability to hold onto an overall vision while moving a group through the process necessary to achieve that vision. Leaders need to set long-

and short-term goals, focus attention on relevant activities, manage conflict, and empower other group members to contribute to the creative process (Cybert, 1990; Nanus, 1992).

The leader sets the goal of getting the group safely out of the wilderness. To achieve that goal, she or he must keep the group safe and healthy for as long as it takes to find their way out. This may mean he or she will need to find sources of potable water and ways of feeding and sheltering the group within the constraints of the natural environment, while maintaining the group's morale. Keeping the goal in sight, while keeping the group on track toward accomplishing it, is a complex task.

*Credibility*

Effective leadership depends on the group's willingness to follow. This willingness is generally based on the group's perception of the leader's abilities and credibility (Hollander & Offerman, 1990). Without the group's trust and confidence, the most visionary leader is paralyzed in her or his attempts to direct the group toward the stated goals and visions. The leader would be powerless to help the group if they didn't participate in the process. If the group doesn't believe in the leader's ability to help them find their way to safety, or if they don't trust him or her to keep the group's welfare as a priority, they are not likely to follow her or his advice and instructions. Thus, vision without credibility may prevent the most insightful and creative leader from being effective.

Credibility is a complex phenomenon, however, which derives from several sources: competence or knowledge and expertise in a topic, character as honesty and trustworthiness, composure or the ability to remain calm under stress, sociability or likableness, and extroversion or his/her degree of interest in others. (Barge, 1994). Each of these builds a base of power and is activated by the perceptions of the value of that power by the members of the group.

Those leaders who are perceived to have a relevant power base, as well as the best interests of their group at heart, will have influence in their groups. Leaders who are perceived to lack such a power base or who are perceived to be manipulative or dishonest will have a harder time gaining compliance from their group.

### Communication Competence

Another important aspect of group leadership is communication competence. For a leader to be effective, he or she must be able to translate his or her relevant knowledge, skills, and situationally appropriate behavior to group members in ways they can understand and trust. Communication competence includes the ability to decode and understand messages coming from the environment-both within the group and from outside of it and to encode and interpret that information for the group members or for those relevant others outside the group. A leader must be able to communicate in a way that "upholds and 'fits into' the existing cultural value system or transcends that system by articulating an alternative value system" (Barge, 1994, p. 238). As such, leaders must be able to understand their environment and interpret it in a way that makes sense to group members.

Before going on a white-water rafting trip, the river guide explains to the rafters what to expect and how to respond to a given set of commands that the guide will issue when they reach the white water. Before they get in the raft and follow the instructions, though, they need to believe that the guide knows the river and how to interpret the currents, eddies, and falls; that she or he is able to maneuver the raft safely through or around the rapids, cares about the rafters' well-being, and is able to tell them what, when, and how to do things in a way they can understand. In addition, regardless of how well the guide knows the river and techniques for paddling it, if they are out on a treacherous stretch of the river and the guide tells the rafters to do

something they have not been told to expect, the guide will need to be able to communicate the rationale for that different command, either verbally or nonverbally, in a way that makes sense to the rafters. Thus, leaders must be able to communicate their overall vision, the credibility of their power base, and their trustworthiness in the situation at hand.

Communication competence also frequently includes an ability to manage ambiguity and uncertainty. A leader must be able to "read" the group, as well as the environment in which it operates, and know when to reduce and when to heighten uncertainty. On the river, the raft guide needs to reduce uncertainty enough to allay the fears of the rafters and keep them calm, so that they are able to enjoy the trip and not panic or cause harm to themselves or fellow rafters. However, the rafters must also understand the dangers of the river, not become too relaxed and casual in the raft, and be prepared for the unexpected. A mix of certainty and uncertainty is required for a fun and safe trip.

The leader of a real estate development group preparing a bid on a prime piece of land balances certainty and uncertainty in the process of putting together a successful bid, as well. Although it is certain that the group needs to offer enough money to outbid the competitors, while keeping their bid low enough to assure that they can make a profit from their development, there is some uncertainty about the exact dollar amount that will accomplish both ends. The leader may want to reduce uncertainty and streamline group discussion by relying on parallels with prior development to the extent possible, but he or she may also want the group to struggle with the unknown aspects of this particular case, to make sure they are not overlooking something crucial and expensive. The leader thus needs to balance the efficiency and comfort associated with reducing uncertainty with the risks of conflict and time-consuming discussion associated with raising the levels of uncertainty. Managing the mix of certainty and uncertainty

appropriately in a group is the task of a good leader and a test of his or her communication competence.

Therefore, as a leader, one must possess communication competence, and try his or her utmost to achieve effective communication. Comprehension and application of various effective communications are crucial competencies needed by educators during this crucial period of educational change. The quality of a school's communication seriously affects its effectiveness.

# Two Leadership Styles

Historically, leadership is generally categorized as either transformational or transactional. (Bass, 1986; Hoover, 1991; Kuhnert, 1994; Leithwood, 1992; Silins 1993; Sagor, 1991). In order to achieve organizational goals, leaders do their utmost to leverage effective communication with followers. Effective communication plays a pivotal role in school management for both transactional and transformational leaders.

## *The Transactional Leader*

A transactional leader (Bass, 1986) is very much a manager, and may not be considered a true leader by some researchers and some educators (Bennis, 1984; Covey, 1989; Silins, 1993). Covey (1989, p. 101) and Silins (1993, p.4) both use the words of Warren Bennis and Peter Drucker to explain why that difference of opinion exists: "Management is doing things right. Leadership is doing the right thing".

The employer/employee relationship with a transactional leader is based a mutual system of reinforcement. The transactional leader gets something he wants, and the followers get something they want. The transactional leader recognizes the basic needs of the followers, those on the lower level of Maslow's hierarchy, for example, money for housing, food and clothing. He/She then arranges the relationship so that the satisfaction of these needs (i.e. a weekly

paycheck) is contingent on the fact that the employees must satisfactorily meet the transactional leader's expectations for work, etc. (Hoover, 1991; Leithwood, 1992). This is the time-honored "carrot and the stick" approach to employer/employee relationships. It is assumed by the transactional leader that individuals will naturally try to avoid work whenever and however they can; the leader must coerce, direct and threaten in order to force the individuals to be productive. Further, the transactional leader believes that people prefer to be directed, rather than take responsibility for their own actions and decisions (Hoover, 1991; Silins 1993; Sagor, 1991; Tichy & Devanna, 1986).

Another characteristic of the transactional leader is that he/she cannot sublimate his/her own needs to those of the organization (Kuhnert, 1994; Hoover, 1991). One example is a transactional school administrator. His/Her need is to direct and control the people working under him/her. As a result, he/she refuses to share knowledge, because knowledge in a school district is, indeed, power. People can be controlled by knowledge or the lack of it.

## *The Transformational Leader*

Although there are different variations in definition, one constant throughout all definitions is that the transformational leader is, above all, an agent of change (Bennis, 1984; Bosler & Bauman, 1992; Bradley, 1993; Fisher, 1994; Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992; Holland, 1989; Hoover, 1991; Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Kuhnert, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Leithwood, 1993; Leithwood, 1994 ; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1984; Staw, 1986; Tichy & Devanna, 1986; Wissler & Ortiz, 1988). His/Her main function is to serve as a catalyst of change, but never as a controller of change (Aviolo, 1994).

A transformational leader has a compelling vision, a holistic picture (Tichy & Devanna, 1986), of how the organization should look in the future, when it is meeting all of it's stated

goals (Bennis, 1984; Bosler & Bauman, 1992; Covey, 1989; Leithwood, 1993; Peters, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1984, 1989, 1990; Tichy & Devanna, 1986; Yammarino, 1994;). That vision guides the leader's behavior(s) and decisions, and serves as a reference point for all activities within the organization. All processes and actions are judged in the light of whether or not they aid the organization in achieving its vision; all efforts are viewed through the needs of the students (Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992). An educational organization based on transactional leadership will have the attainment of knowledge as its goal; the transformational organization will focus on students (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). That vision speaks to the highest purposes of the organization (Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992), and serves to give meaning to the job done by every member (Tichy & Devanna, 1986) of the organization by creating shared goals to work toward. It also engenders optimism for the future of the organization. By keeping that vision and those shared goals always at the forefront of the organization, the transformational leader can align the organization to it's future needs (Tichy & Devanna, 1986) rather than to the past or to the present. (Often in a transactional organization, the phrase "it's always been done that way" indicates orientation to the past.) A very important corollary characteristic is that the leader must be able to communicate that vision both to internal and external constituencies. No matter how worthy a vision is, if it does not get communicated to those who need to know, it is useless. "Without vision, there is no revitalization" (Tichy & Devanna, 1986, p. 146).

The transformational leader is able to inspire the members of the organization to aspire to, and to achieve, more that they thought was possible (Aviolo, 1994; Bennis, 1986; Bosler & Bauman, 1992; Hoover, 1991; Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Kuhnert, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1991; Sagor, 1991; Yammarino, 1994;). The strength and compelling nature of the vision empowers the organization's members to excel. The transformational leader raises the

organization's level of consciousness (Hoover, 1991) about the purpose of the organization, as leadership (Sergiovanni, 1989). Sergiovanni further contends that the symbolic meaning of the leader's actions are even more important than the actual actions themselves: "What a leader stands for is more important than what he/she does" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 106). The values held by the leader are of the utmost importance. He/She must serve as a model of those values, transforming the values of the organization, if necessary, in order to help bring about the realization of the vision (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). Modeling is but one example of symbolic action; he/she should use symbolic action extensively. The leader must be adept at using symbols (Aviolo, 1994; &Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990) to motivate, to inspire, to give value to intentions and actions (Bennis, 1984), to indicate priorities, and to show strong advocacy (Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992). A symbol by itself is meaningless. It is the background, the beliefs, the actions, and the understandings that surround the symbol that give it meaning. The transformational leader is present at important occasions (graduations, awards, etc.), and is seen often and informally in the workplace (Cuban, 1976; Dunnerstick, 1992 Fisher, 1994). The same action can mean two different things to two different people. It is the task of the transformational leader to imbue symbols with the meanings useful for facilitating organizational change. This type of symbolic action is characteristic of transformational power.

The transformational leader is a teacher of the entire school community (Cuban, 1989). He/She must model, for the community, the behaviors that will lead to change (Bosler & Bauman, 1992). He/She cannot expect that others in the organization will practice behaviors that the leader does not practice. The transformational leader must be able to persist through the long term. Change is a slow process, particularly in education.

The most surprising element in a listing of the characteristics of a transformational leader, is that he/she must have passion (Covey, 1989; Peters, 1992): a passion to achieve the goals and vision of the district, a passion for education and the students, a passion for improvement.

There are some interesting dichotomies in a listing of characteristics of transformational leaders. The transformational leader is a holistic leader, more concerned with people than with processes. He/She has a very basic commitment to the ethic of client service (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990) that focuses the organization on relationships. Yet, while he/she is a "people person", he/she maintains a social distance (Fisher, 1994) open, but still remote from the rest of the organization's membership. The transformational leader is a politician, but mustn't appear to be political (Merrow, Foster, & Estes, 1974), meaning that he/she can never evidence partisanship or partiality. Indeed, the 1895 remonstrance to superintendents still holds true today: that schools should be "free from those who would prostitute them [schools] to political or personal ends" (Cuban, 1976, p. 22). Instead, he/she must use the political system to exert influence on others to develop action on behalf of the school district's goals (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). He/She must be able to commit to a plan, but not to any preconceived solutions (Leithwood, 1992). The leader is expected to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement where everything is constantly being evaluated for its relevance to the vision (Bennis, 1984; & Yammarino, 1994). The leader's behavior must always be consistent in nature, but not so consistent as to preclude trying new ways or experimenting with processes (Staw, 1984).

The transformational leader is a diagnostician (Schon, 1986). He/She takes the time and the effort to diagnose a problem from all aspects before looking for solutions. He/She diagnoses the needs of the people who are served by the organization; in the case of education, the students,

the parents and the community members just all be considered. Any new plan, product, or process is based on the leader's knowledge of those needs, along with its relevance to the vision.

In short, a transformational leader carries a heavy responsibility to lead, and is totally focused on the mission of the school district and its attendant improvement of schooling and education, which can only be achieved by means of effective communication.

## Leadership Strategies in Transmitting Messages

In transmitting messages, Green (2001) suggested that "the leader must realize that meaning is not in the words of the sender, but rather in the mind of the receiver" (p. 97). Meaning is not transmitted; the receiver gives the message meaning. The receiver gives meaning to the message based on his/her background, knowledge, experience, values, and prior observations. In some instances, because of differences in these areas, the same words hold different meanings for different people, causing a problem in semantics. Considering this factor, the sender must strive to encode the message, using symbols that will be most familiar to the receiver. The greater the agreement regarding the meaning of the symbols, the greater the probability of understanding existing between the two parties when the receiver decodes the message (Gibson, Ivancevich, & Donnelly, 1976).

The agreement on the meaning of the message can be enhanced through two-way interactive forms of communication and repetitiveness. Such is the case with face-to-face meetings where both verbal and nonverbal clues are a part of the transmittal process. Television presentations, videotape presentations, and telephone conversations also allow the type of interaction that enhances the possibility that the receiver will give the message the meaning that is intended by the sender. Letters, memoranda, and other one-way forms of communication do not allow verbal and nonverbal clues to assist in the transmittal process, and therefore, the

message is subject to interpretation. It is advisable in most school situations to use multiple forms of communication, as repetitiveness improves effectiveness.

Rogers and Farson (1995) offer several other suggestions in this arena. They suggest that the leader must be available, approachable, and able to listen intelligently and carefully to others, conveying the feeling that he/she is as concerned about them as the situation that is being addressed. Further, they offer that the leader must be attentive to both the content of the message and the feelings of the sender. The feedback given the sender must make clear that the message was appreciated in terms of both its meaning and the feelings with which it was conveyed. More specifically, to be an effective communicator, the leader must be an active listener, acquiring the total meaning of the message and observing the underlying feelings of the message, while noting and being sensitive to all verbal and nonverbal clues displayed by the sender. One way for the leader to become an active listener is to view communication as a people process, rather than a language process (Gibbs, 1995), and develop a clear understanding of the networks used in a social system to transmit messages. To provide a deeper understanding of the need for the leader to be an active listener and to assist in that process, some active listening skills are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1   The active listener

| OBJECTIVE OF THE LISTENER | ACTIVITY PERFORMED | IMPLICATIONS OR END RESULT |
|---|---|---|
| Understand the message | Grasp the facts and feelings | The sender of the message is assisted in presenting the message. |
| Demonstrate respect for the potential worth of the speaker | Demonstrate a positive attitude toward the sender of the message and for its content | The sender is less defensive, more democratic, less authoritarian, and more open to experiences. |
| Listen with sensitivity | Demonstrate the willingness to change | Information is acquired about people; positive relations are built, and attitudes are constructively altered. |
| Reduce any threat that might exist | Create a climate that is not critical, evaluative, or demoralizing | Defensiveness is reduced, and the individual feels safe enough to address new values and experiences. |
| View the issue in an objective manner | Refrain from being directive and influencing a position | One can listen with understanding and be open to change. |
| Listen for total meaning and remain sensitive | Seek to understand the content of the message and the feeling underlying the message, noting the nonverbal actions or cues of the speaker | Positive relationships are enhanced and the climate is supportive. |
| Convey interest in the speaker, respect for his/her position, and the fact that it is valid from his/her perspective | Demonstrate respect for the speaker through behavior | A tone is set for positive interaction to occur. |
| See the world from the speaker's perspective | Reflect on what the speaker seems to mean by his/her words | The climate is less emotional. |

SOURCE: Constructed from the readings of Carl Rogers and Richard E. Farson's "Active Listening" in David A. Kolb, Joyce S. Osland, and Irwin M. Rubin, *The Organizational Behavior Reader*, pp. 203–214.

Meanwhile, school leaders must be aware that information in schools (open social systems) is transmitted through formal and informal networks. Formal networks are the means of transmitting messages sanctioned by the organization in accordance with its hierarchy. Informal networks emerge as individuals in the organization interact with each other in ways that do not reflect the organization's hierarchy. The leader must be knowledgeable of both networks and recognize that the network being used to transmit information is essential to goal attainment. The following are examples of how these networks function in school settings.

If the principal holds a faculty meeting and shares information regarding the new reading program, the formal communication network is being used. The formal network is also being used when the principal receives a message from the superintendent and passes the message to teachers who, in turn, pass it to students. However, members of the faculty interacting personally may use the informal network. For example, if Tom (a science teacher at a high school) advises his friend Betty (the school's reading coordinator) that a new reading program is going to be announced by the principal and Betty shares the information with James (who teaches reading), the informal network is in use.

Both networks have their place in the organization and, if effectively utilized, can enhance communication. However, the informal network, often referred to as the grapevine, does have some negative features, of which the most noted are distortion and rumors (unsubstantiated information). When the needs of faculty and staff are not met, rumors tend to spread and may signify that the leader is not meeting the informational needs of the faculty and staff. Although it is somewhat difficult and may be virtually impossible for a leader to eliminate all rumors, his/her knowledge of them can prove to be very beneficial.

The positive aspects of the grapevine are flexibility and speed in disseminating information. If used in a positive manner, the grapevine can help keep subordinates informed, give administrators insight into subordinates' attitudes, and provide a test arena for new ideas. However, in a school system, the objective of the communication process is to provide a means for the flow of information so that activities regarding goal attainment can be coordinated. Therefore, the formal network should be as effective as possible.

In this first section of the review, literature on characteristics and strategies of leadership was presented. Then what could a school leader do to achieve effective communication? Literature on strategies and processes of communication was presented in the second section.

## Processes and Strategies of Communication

### Definitions and Process of Communication

There are over 126 definitions of communication in the literature, but certain elements recur. These elements include the sender of the message, the message, the channel by which the message is sent, the receiver of the message, interference with accurate transmission of the message, and feedback from receiver to sender that allows judgment of the accuracy of the transmission (Allen, 1994). Conventional wisdom restricts the ways in which the terms communication and information are defined and used in organizations. Conventionally, communication is thought of as a process in which people are more or less skillfully engaged. Communication is interactive, interdependent, and integrating, not just a stepwise model or a process that seemly becomes lifelike as people communicate. Figure 1 graphically depicts the communication process.
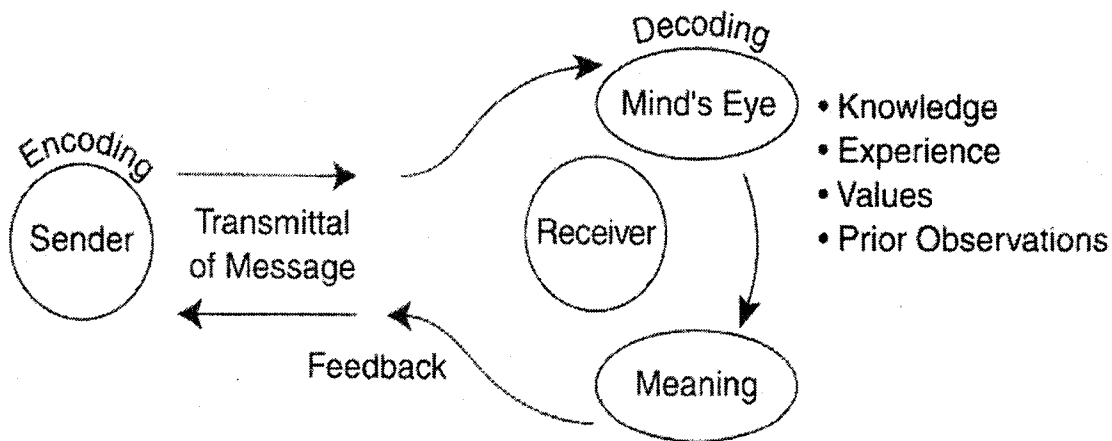
Figure 1    The communication process

Green (2001) put forward that "the communication process involves transmitting information from a person (the sender) to another person or group (the receivers) and may occur verbally or nonverbally" (p. 96). When a message is transmitted using spoken language face-to-face, over a public address system, in a telephone conversation, in a memo, in a letter, or electronically, verbal communication is occurring. Any form of communication involving the use of words, oral or written, is considered verbal.

When a message is transmitted without the use of words, the form of communication is considered nonverbal. Nonverbal behaviors are very important to the communication process, for more than half of what is communicated is not conveyed by words but by body language (Sobel & Ornstein, 1996). The manner in which the leader hesitates in his/her speech can reveal much about how he/she is feeling relative to a situation and so can the tone of voice. Certain ideas may be expressed in a loud tone, whereas others may be expressed in a mumbled tone. Hand

movements, eye movements, and facial expressions are all actions that help to convey a message. Any activity that conveys a message between individuals is considered communication (Myers & Myers, 1982).

## Communication in Organizations

Etzioni (1964) said, we spend a great deal of time in different kinds of organizations. A great portion of our communication takes place in organizations Monge and Eisenhart (1987) cited three frames of reference that enable us to view organizations and communication conveniently. In the bureaucratic era, the positional frame of reference viewed communication up, down, and laterally through set positions in the bureaucratic hierarchy. In a more recent era, the relational frame sees communication as occurring naturally among relationships between participants. The organization is shaped and given meaning through these interactions. (Monge and Eisenhart 1987) In another view, the cultural frame stresses the importance of stories, rituals, and work among its members and determines from these how the organization communicates. The real organization in this sense emerges from daily actions of members in their work.

Littlejohn (1989) used network as a metaphor to outline how three different frames of reference enable understanding about organizational communication. In combination with information theory, Littlejohn argues that theorists are able to understand how individual, dyadic, group, and organizational networks function. In the bureaucratic organization, management uses formal networks to achieve the purpose of the organization. Power, authority, and legitimacy govern communication in organizations. Informal communication networks also flourish in bureaucratic organizations as members lower in the hierarchy attempt to gain their own status and power.

Likert's (1987) four systems organizational concept transcends both the positional and relational frames. In the four systems approach, an organization functions along four continuums: (1) exploitative-authoritative, (2) benevolent-authoritative, (3) consultative, and (4) participative. Likert treats communication in organizations as one of many variables. In essence, the more authoritative an organization, the less individual and group loyalty there is to management and the less motivation toward organizational purpose is realized. Conversely, the more participative the organization, the more individuals and groups provide loyalty, performance, and mutual support to the organization. Overall, exploitative systems seem to produce more negative consequences than do participative systems. Tompkins and Cheney (1985) outlined a similar model in their theory of organizational identification. Organizations employ simple control, technological control, bureaucratic control, and concertive control to realize productivity and achieve organizational purpose.

Communication has been conceptualized through relational and cultural frames. The importance of lines of communication has been set aside as theorists study emergent patterns and interactions among organizational members and how persons really act in organizations. In the bureaucratic perspective on organizations, these frames of reference are an inappropriate parameter with which to study, as the dynamics of ongoing behavior depends on how they are organized. In the social realm, peoples' activities create organizations (Weick, 1969). Any act is communication. Interaction serves to develop common meaning among individuals and others in the organization. Uncertainty among members is thus reduced in both internal and external relations through enactment, selection, and retention. Continuous individual, group, or organizational behavior and choice cycles result (Weick, 1969). The theory of structuration (Poole & McPhee, 1983) is similar to Weick's theory of organizing. Organizational structure is

created at centers of structuration, implemented into formal codes, and enacted (termed *reception)* in organizational decisions. Organizational climate, an intersubjective phenomenon, arises from the structuration process through member interaction and results in organizational outcomes. In each theory discussed previously, communication develops into organizational networks. The social, structural, and functional channels are the essence of communication in organizations.

Communication occurs in differing contexts in organizations. Berelson and Steiner (1964) defined four properties of organizations that affect these contexts. First, a typical organization is characterized by formality. Specifically, it has goals, regulations, policies, and procedures that give rise to its form and determine how it will communicate officially. Second, organizations are structured in a hierarchical manner. This structure patterns multidirectional communications. Third, the size of the organizations ends to prohibit the development of close personal relationships with all other members and limits the scope of informal organizational communications. Last, organizations most often exist beyond the time frame of a given number's life. Those who work in school will surely recognize these features as pertaining to educational organizations. If the feature of organizational communication that separates it from other kinds of communication is its deliberate focus on the achievement of a common or collective goal, then the specific form of any organization can be expected to be mirrored in its forms of organizational communication. According to Berelson and Steiner's premise that form follows goals, communicating organizational goals becomes a "first cause" and shaper of all organizational communication. This is perhaps one impulse behind the first school assembly of each academic year and the traditional goal setting that some school leaders undertake in that forum. Goals are useless if they are not communicated in ways that enlist the cooperative efforts of members and organization. Without the intention to attain goals, organizations would also

appear to have no purpose. It is not surprising that those who write about organization see goal attainment and communication systematically intertwined. (Hoy & Miskel, 1987). Like Simon (1957), they believe that there can be no organization without communication. This places a clear responsibility on school leaders not only to establish and maintain communication, but also to be sure that it is both effective and efficient for goal attainment.

## Criteria of Effective Communication

Then, what is effective communication? The question obviously begs several others. A very clear message can be very dissatisfying, inappropriate and ineffective. A very ineffective message can be very appropriate. A very inefficient message can be very satisfying. And so it goes. Spitzberg (2000) argued that, because communication can be frustrating, many theorists conceptualize competent communication along multiple criteria in the hope that hybridizing criteria will permit the limitations of one criterion to be compensated for by the other criterion. The following criteria contribute to effective communication.

### *Appropriateness*

Appropriateness is one of the most conventional conceptions of communication competence (Larson, Backlund, Redmond, & Barbour, 1978). Appropriateness is generally defined as conformity to the rules of a situation. This definition is flawed. First, while research has shown that people often do have a sense of the rules of a situation, some situations are more rule-governed than others (Argyle, Furnham & Graham, 1981). Further, conformity is problematic in many senses. The hallmark of competence ultimately may not be adaptation per se, but creativity. For example, visionary leaders may conform at some point in the attainment of status, but at a later point deviate from the norm in achieving charismatic status. Thus, appropriateness is better conceived as the perceived fitness or legitimacy of a communicator's

behavior in a given context rather than conformity to the previous intact rule structure of the context.

Even this definition, however, raises significant issues. First, it is unclear whose perception is most relevant or important. Most often appropriateness is viewed as a perception best located in the views of others. Notions of politeness, etiquette, and rule following are generally conceptualized in terms of the sanctions imposed by those who feel affronted by a given person's behavior. The appropriateness of a given performance, in other words, is located in the subsequent evaluations and reactions of others. A person who belches, curses, or answers a cell phone call in a theatre may judge his or her own behavior as appropriate, but those around that person may be less prone to offer the same evaluation. If the *arbiter elegantiae* is located within the individual agent of action, then appropriateness becomes a solipsist criterion with no place for negotiated order.

Second, there may be no criterion that is more contextually, culturally, relationally, and situationally sensitive than appropriateness. If appropriateness is sensitive to all these features, then it follows that there can be no fixed level of appropriateness attributed to a performance or behavior. For example, a laugh is generally viewed as inappropriate at a funeral, and yet there are scenarios in which laughter would not only be appropriate, but inevitable in such a context. Third, even with the modification of legitimacy as opposed to conformity, appropriateness is ideologically spring-loaded toward maintenance of the status quo. The evaluative anchors of appropriateness are likely based in the existing matrix of rules and contextual definitions. Great art is often rejected in its own time because it is too deviant from the accepted definitions of art. Similarly, appropriateness as a standard of judging competence may be a fundamentally conservative criterion in its tendency to value what exists over what *can* exist.

*Satisfaction*

Satisfaction is viewed as the positively valenced affective response to the fulfillment of positive expectancies (Hecht, 1978). It has been posited as a reasonable criterion of competent communication (Spitzberg & Hecht, 1984) under the assumption that better communicators are more likely to achieve their preferred objectives than are worse communicators. However, satisfaction suffers many of the same complexities as effectiveness, given that effectiveness is one of the defining components of the construct of satisfaction. Further, as an intrinsically positively valenced phenomenon, satisfaction cannot cope with lose-lose situations in which there is no satisfying option. Finally, satisfaction is even more ideologically solipsist than effectiveness in that the individual is the sole arbiter elegantiae. If the individual is satisfied, if the communicator feels good, then the individual is competent ipso facto. This raises significant issues related to values for a civil and ordered society, and in ironic ways, presages several postmodern notions of rejecting grand narratives within which competence might be defined (Habermas, 1970).

*Efficiency*

Efficiency is defined in terms of the extent of valued outcomes achieved relative to the amount of investment (Kellerman & Berger, 1984; Kellerman & Shea, 1996). A person who can borrow a classmate's notes by simply saying "Can I borrow your notes over the weekend?" has been more efficient than one who engages in an extended apology for imposing, an account of why the notes are needed, and an offer of supplication if the notes are not returned in timely manner and in pristine condition. Again, this criterion is an elaboration of the effectiveness criterion, and therefore suffers most of the same problems. However, it suggests a few unique problems as well.

First, efficiency is little different in metaphorical extension than the Shannon and Weaver(1994)'s conduit notion of communication as circuit. The assumption is that out of several possible channels and messages, only those choices that minimize effort or time are preferable to those that may take more time or effort. It is difficult to fit much of everyday communication into such a mechanical metaphor. Computers, engines, and production lines seem well suited to efficiency. In contrast, small talk, social support, self-disclosure, conflict, and intimacy, to name a few modes of discourse, seem ill suited to the criterion of efficiency.

Second, similar to effectiveness, in real-time interaction, the effort required of foregone alternatives cannot be known because those alternatives were not operationalized. Consequently, communicators are not in a position to determine efficiency, and external observers can only make such assessments compared to some methodologically or culturally constrained set of prototypical alternatives. Thus, a lonely person may take a long time to formulate a relatively simple plan to court another person. But, if the courtship ultimately works, and the lonely person achieves intimacy, or even love, how would the lonely person or the researcher ascertain the efficiency of such courtship behavior? Is the efficiency of the courtship behavior even pragmatically relevant to such a situation? At most, efficiency seems a qualifier of the quality of effectiveness.

### *Task-Achievement*

Task achievement criteria of competence are relatively rare in the domain of communication. To return to the eye exam analogy, if certain icons or symbols are shown at certain sizes, then a task achievement criterion would designate a percentage "correct" that a person would be able to interpret. Identifying communicative tasks that can be scaled according to an analogous continuum of proficiency is itself a difficult task. For example, asking subjects

to "give directions" to a given location can permit a rough calculation of whether or not a person could get to the designation according to the directions or not. However, directions are themselves subject to considerable interpretation, including taken- for-granted assumptions, receiver adaptation, and shorthand phrasings that vary in their adequacy for any given receiver. Such interactions are likely to display these adaptations in ways that are not easily reproduced in a controlled setting. In addition, seldom is direction-giving strictly unidirectional those requesting directions often display quizzical looks or ask questions that evoke needed elaboration in directions. Further, closeness counts in giving directions. If the first three moves of a person's directions get the traveler closer to the ultimate destination, it may be much easier to get there than if the first step of the directions is incorrect. Finally, the questions remain "what competence skill is being evaluated, and why?" Giving directions may be a meaningful way of getting at other skills, but it is not clear what these other skills are. The skills that comprise competence are unlikely to be easily reduced to a set of identifiable task achievements that can be generically identified.

## Objectives of Communication

Khandwalla (1987) stated that the primary objectives of communication are to gain attention and to gain understanding and acceptance of a message. Sigband and Bell (1989) contended that the purposes of communication are to be understood exactly as intended, to secure the desired response, and to maintain favorable relations with those with whom one communicates. Obviously, human relationship is all about people, it is the base for educational leadership. (Razik & Swanson, 2001). Leaders communicate with followers for better relations. Reitz (1987) believed that the primary functions of communication are to provide information that makes an organization adaptable to change, to command and instruct employees, and to

influence and persuade the organization's members. The processes involved in accomplishing these purposes are recognized as contributing to the success or failure of a given end. A leader may subscribe to any of these communication objectives either as an expression of commitment to the organization and its goals or as an expression of a personal desire for power and self aggrandizement.

## The Flow of Communication in Schools

As organizations, schools are certain to have their communication flow. Green (2001) indicated that communication in schools or school districts flows in several directions: downward, upward, horizontally, and diagonally (p. 100). Downward communication often involves sending messages down the chain of command of the hierarchical structure. It is not atypical for school district personnel to use downward communication to keep employees informed, provide a sense of mission, impart information to subordinates regarding their performance, and orient new employees to the system. Upward communication occurs when individuals in subordinate roles send messages up the chain to their superordinates. Such communication is often in response to messages that have come down the chain of command. The receiver is providing feedback to individuals at a higher level. Upward communication is perhaps the form of communication that is most prone to filtering (sharing only select portions of a message). Sometimes subordinates resist providing leaders with unpopular or negative information. In such instances, there is a breakdown in communication as the message is modified, and the leader is only provided information that subordinates believe will be well received (Barge, 1994).

When individuals communicate with other individuals of the same status in the organization, horizontal communication is occurring. If individuals at one level in the

organization communicate with individuals at another level in a different division or department, then the communication flow is considered diagonal. Communication in an organization can also be described as vertical. The term *vertical* is not used here to refer to the direction of the communication, rather, it describes a pattern that focuses on combining upward and downward communication, making leaders more visible through face-to-face contact. It is the effective flow of communication in schools that provides task coordination and furnishes emotional and social support among peers. The direction of the communication flow in a school district appears in Figure 2. Each of these directions provides a means of effectively transmitting a message of a specific nature. Therefore, if breakdowns in communication are to be avoided, it is important for the leader to clearly understand which direction is most appropriate for use in any given situation.

Figure 2    The flow of communication in a typical school district
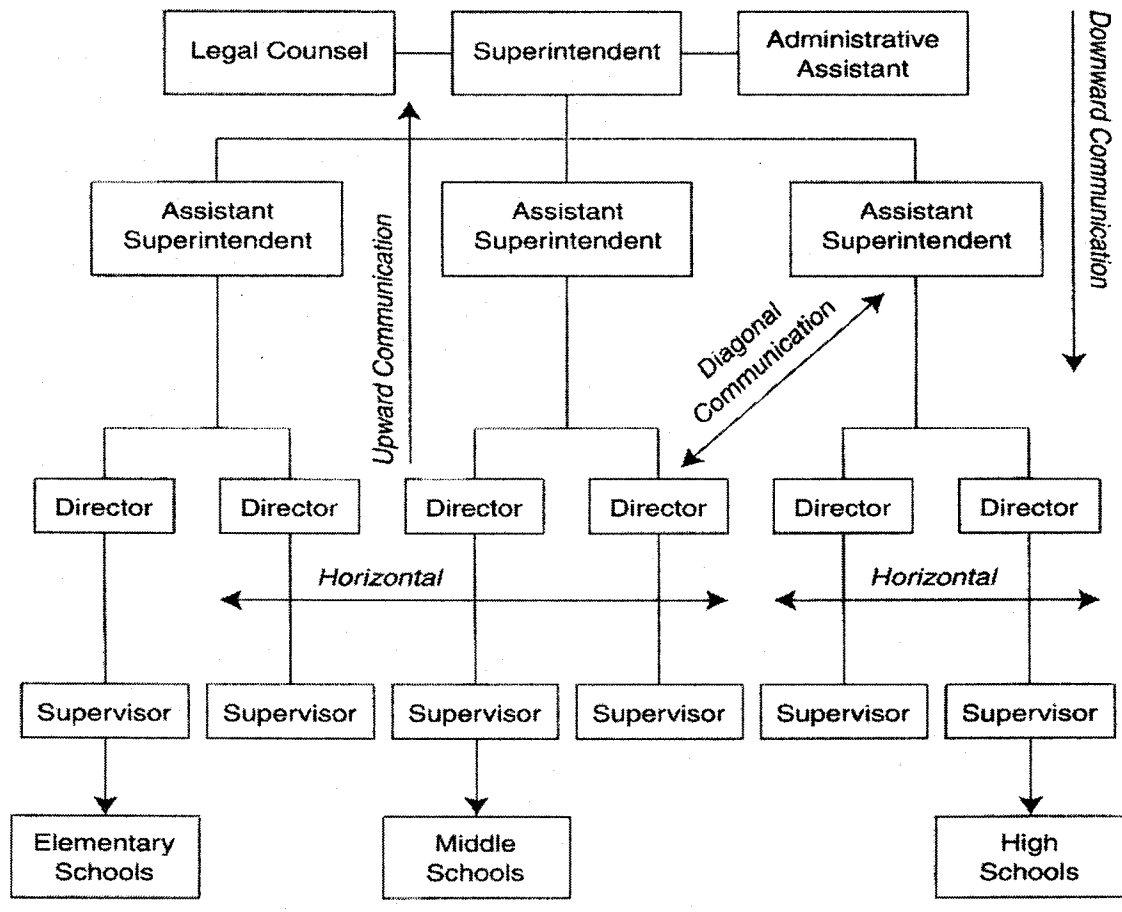


In Summary, the flow of communication in schools or school districts goes upwards,

downwards, horizontally and diagonally. This flow of communication gets the schools and

school districts connected and operated as a whole. School leaders are supposed to be aware of

this flow and be smart to use it properly. They should act as bridges in the communication.

## Strategies of Communication in School Settings

Through effective communication, relationships are built, trust is established, and respect

is gained. When the leader is an effective communicator, the vision and mission of the school

can be effectively shared with staff, parents, students, and large community. "In the areas of

leadership, there is no talent more essential than one's ability to communicate" (Guarino, 1974, p.

1). "Communication is the lifeblood of the school; it is a process that links the individual, the group, and the organization" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996, p. 176).

As a leader seeks to share the vision of the school and achieve the agreed upon goals and objectives, he/she is constantly advocating, nurturing, delegating responsibility, and developing the potential of followers. He/she also seeks their cooperation to sustain a school culture and instructional program conductive to student learning, and staff professional growth. In carrying out these activities, the leader uses various forms of communication.

In the daily operation of the school, leaders not only communicate messages, but they receive, monitor, and seek them. Studies indicate that school leaders spend up to 80 percent of their time involved in communication with other members of the organization, parents, and members of the community (Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Sobel & Ornstein, 1996). Therefore, tantamount to the school operating in an efficient and effective manner is the leader's ability to communicate with people. Murphy and Peck (1980) cited the ability to communicate as the critical factor in management. It would appear that competent communication is regarded more highly than such skills as motivating employees, decision making, delegating, flexibility, and educational background. In educational institutions, Striplin (1987) found that the ability of school principals to perform effectively as instructional leaders is contingent on their degree of competence in communication.

Communication's potential contribution to organizational success is present in virtually all organizational activities, from envisioning, to planning, to problem solving and decision making, to coordinating, controlling, accomplishing, evaluating, and reporting organizational results. It is tempting to conclude that effective organizational communication is therefore a panacea for all organizational stresses and difficulties. To the contrary, Hoy and Miskel (1987)

pointed out that the diffusion of communication processes throughout an organization makes organizational communication difficult to examine as a separate process. Difficulties in organizational communication that are often reflected in other problems in the school are another construct. Although communication can help resolve problems, it can also obscure other problems not directly under consideration. Finally, communication evokes action even though the quality of the action is questionable and there is no general commitment to the action. Poor leaders can unknowingly use communication to expedite inadequate or irrelevant plans.

In the 21st century, to assure effectiveness, the school leader must be fully aware of the intricacy of the school unit or district communication channels on both the formal and informal levels. How the leader facilitates the transmission of a given message can result in a deliberately orchestrated change in staff or student behavior. Given the reality of the constraints that Hoy and Miskel note, the school leader needs to be aware of the power of all communication as a potential force for maintaining or destroying some aspects of organizational life. Theoretically, this calls for the school administrator to borrow from Yukl's (1989) theory about the role of a "leader" versus that of a "manager" in a school. Yukl suggested that effective administrators know when to communicate as a manager and when to communicate as a leader. For example, a school administrator might give his staff a written questionnaire regarding supply requisitions. The staff writes a written response which the administrator subsequently responds to in the format of existing policy. On the other hand, as an administrator seeks staff support on an issue, he or she is best advised to use a variety of communication skills in an effort to gain commitment to an issue. This is a function of leadership and, according to Yukl (1989), requires administrative understanding of communication and a varied repertoire of communication skills.

In examining communication processes, the school administrator in a continuous process shifts from the role of manager to that of leader.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

The purpose of the research methodology presented was to provide a theoretical and methodological practice for the purposes of the study. This study was designed as a case study (Bogdan & Biklen 2003). The ethics was considered, and the methodology of data collection and data analysis were presented by the researcher.

## Case Study Design

In this particular study, the researcher focused on one school in northwestern Ontario. The participants were the principal, the vice principal and another five teachers. The principal, the vice principal were in the administrative position, they had their personal experiences and insights on school communication. The five in-service teachers were very active in their curriculum teaching and always willing to involve in school management. Thus they were selected as the samples of this research.

The study was conducted primarily through the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews (Bogdan & Biklen 2003). Schools produce documents for specific kinds of consumption. Many documents have been viewed by many researchers as extremely subjective, representing the biases of the promoters and, when written for external consumption, presenting an unrealistically glowing picture of how the organization functions. In these papers, however, researchers can get access to the "official perspective", as well as to the ways various school personnel communicate. (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003. p 128). By means of document analysis, the process of non-verbal/written communication could be easily perceived. The researcher could

study the official documents of the school, collected information/data relevant school leadership and communication for potential categories and themes of this research.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews as the way of data collection. In this case, the researcher encouraged the subject to talk in the area of interest and then probes more deeply, picking up on the topics and issues the respondent initiates. (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003. p 96). The semi-structured interviews have got two foci. One is the school leaders, including the principal and the vice principal, another one is the teachers. The questions are structured to allow for asking about similar ideas from different points of view.

The interviews with the school leaders were guided by the following questions:

1. From your perspective, what is effective communication?

2. There are various ways of communication, such as verbal and non-verbal, formal and informal, what do you usually do as your ways of communication?

3. Communication in schools or school districts flows in several directions: downward, upward, horizontally, and diagonally. Please give some examples of how your communication flows in each of the four directions.

4. What role do "listening and feedback" play in your process of communicating with other stakeholders?

5. Based on your experience, what are the key factors that make your communication effective?

6. What kind of school culture are you trying to foster, and what influence does it have on achieving good communication?

7. As you seek to share the vision of the school and achieve the agreed upon goals and objectives, what are your concerns, and how do you convey your ideas to other teachers and colleagues?

8. What are the factors that affect your communication with other teachers?

9. From your experience, is there any unsuccessful case of communication? What lessons can you learn from that?

The interviews with the in-service teachers were guided by the following questions:

1. From your perspective, what is effective communication?

2. There are various ways of communication, such as verbal and non-verbal, formal and informal, what do you think a principal should do to achieve effective communication?

3. Communication in schools or school districts flows in several directions: downward, upward, horizontally, and diagonally, what do you think is the principal's role in this process?

4. What role do "listening and feedback" play in the process of communication between the principal and other stakeholders?

5. Based on your experience, what are the factors that enhance communication?

6. What kind of school culture would you like the principal to try and foster? What influence does your school culture have on achieving effective communication?

7. As the principal seeks to share the vision of the school and achieve the agreed upon goals and objectives, what do you think should be his/her concerns when he/she conveys his/her ideas to other teachers and colleagues?

8. What are the factors that affect the principal's communication with other teachers?

9. From your experience, is there any unsuccessful case of poor communication? What lessons can the principal learn from that?

10. How can teachers help a principal become a better communicator?

## Ethical Consideration

Each potential participant was approached personally to discuss the study. In addition, letters of introduction and consent were provided for each participant. These outlined what was expected of the participant and that they could withdraw at any time. It was made clear that the participants in this research would remain fully anonymous, and that all documentation and information collected would be kept confidential in Lakehead University for seven years with only the researcher and the thesis supervisor having access. The research results would be made available to the participants upon request

## Data Collection

The researcher contacted one Board of Education in North-western Ontario through the cover letter (Appendix A), and make arrangements to have the research proposal reviewed by the Board's Ethics committee, and request permission to conduct the research in one school within the Board.

After permission was obtained, the researcher contacted the principal (Appendix B) and all of the teachers (Appendix C) in one school, by cover letter and in person to invite the principal and teachers in the school to take part in the study. Each letter explained

   a. The purpose of the research

   b. Anonymity/Confidentiality

   c. Can withdraw from the research at any time.

   d. The period of time that the researcher would like to work in the school.

The principal, vice-principal and teachers were asked to sign a consent form indicating that they agreed to participate in the research, and that they understood the conditions of participation.

The semi-structured interview was carried out by the researcher, using a notepad to take field notes. The session was audio-taped. The tape was transcribed. The respective interviews lasted for approximately 20-60 minutes. During the interview, the researcher noted any information or phrases which were especially important. The researcher asked the participants to elaborate on or to clarify these phrases. The researcher used a research journal to record the process. Meanwhile, the researcher collected official documents of the school.

## Data Analysis

In the analysis of data, the researcher tried to discover whether there are patterns in the responses of the interviewees, looking for common themes, similarities and differences, in the responses to the research questions.

The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed thematically. The tapes were transcribed by the researcher. The interpretation of the data followed Glaser and Strauss'(1967) "grounded theory". This theory is, "…a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between data analysis and data collection" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 273). Grounded theory is based on the idea that researchers are constructing a picture that takes form as data is collected and parts are examined. "The process is like a funnel: things are open at the beginning (or top) and more directed and specific at the bottom" (Bodgen & Biklen, 2003, p.32). The researcher does not assume that enough is known to identify important concerns before undertaking the research. Bodgen and Biklen (2003) stated: "The

qualitative research approach demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied." (p. 32). Merriam (1998) described data analysis:

> Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. (p. 178)

As transcriptions were reviewed, coding took place. "Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to 'chunks' of varying size-words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 54). Merriam (1998) defined coding as:

> ...nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand aspect to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data. The designation can be single words, letters, numbers, phrases, or combinations of these.

In the process of coding, the researcher identified different categories from the transcripts, and then main themes were derived from those categories. For example, in the transcripts, the respondents replied the questions "Based on your experience, what are the key factors that make your communication effective?" and "What are the factors that affect your communication with other teachers?". The transcription led the researcher to identify four categories: receptiveness, articulation, appropriateness, and task-achievement, from which one of the main theme: communication competence was inducted.

The researcher also studied the official documents of the school in order to find data fit into the categories and themes discovered. For example, in my study of the school's documents, the school's Eagle Planner impressed me so much. Eagle Planner was the plan printed out to distribute to every stakeholder of the school. On the first page of the planner, the vision of the school was clearly stated:

**My doors are open, come in, you are safe and welcome here**
**I stand here as a public witness that quality learning**
**In a Christian-centered environment, underpins the total**
**Education of the students.**
**I stand for distinctiveness in purpose and in outcomes**
**I stand for academic excellence, for self-worth, for respect.**
**I am a place where each student develops his/her potential as an individual, and**
**Contributing responsible member of society who will:**
**Think clearly, feel deeply, act wisely and justly, love tenderly, and will walk humbly with**
**his or her God.**

This document analysis contributed to one of the main themes: vision.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## Introduction

As reform has become the mainstream in today's schools, the importance of communication practices cannot be overemphasized. (Palestini,1999). The purpose of this case study was to explore the communication strategies used by one school principal in the daily operation of the school he administered. The study was conducted primarily through the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews in one school under one Board of Education in North-western Ontario.

In this chapter, the researcher presents findings of the study which investigated seven stakeholders' perception on school communication. Four themes emerge from the analysis of data: vision, commitment, interpersonal relationship and communication competence. This chapter presents profiles of the participants in the study, the data, and the four themes which developed from the analysis of the data.

## Participant Profiles

The researcher contacted all the potential participants working in one school under one Board of Education in North-western Ontario. Seven of them were willing to participate in the case study. Those seven included: the school principal, the vice principal, and another five teachers. They represented a purposive sample of stakeholders of the school setting. Below is a brief profile of each participant. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

**Paul**

Paul, who is in his fifties, is the principal of the school. He completed a Bachelor of Arts

Degree in 1972, followed by a Bachelor of Education Degree in 1973 ( Primary, Junior,

Intermediate Divisions ). In addition to a Master of Education in Education Administration, Paul

has received his Senior Basic Qualifications, has obtained Principalship Qualifications, and he

also holds specialist certification in Religious Education and Guidance. Paul has taught all grades

from grade three to grade nine. He has experienced various roles in education including

classroom teacher, guidance counselor, vice principal and various principalship responsibilities.

Recently, Paul has been actively involved provincially with many provincial councils and

programs. He feels privileged to be a part of the Catholic Principals Qualification Program and

looks forward to a challenging and rewarding session.

**Vivian**

Vivian has been employed with the Board for over 15 years. In 1995, she joined this

school as a grade 8 homeroom teacher. As a staff member for the last 9 years Vivian's

experiences have been many and varied. Some experiences were bestowed upon her and she

graciously accepted, and others she personally chose. Her teaching of curriculum at the Grade 8

level has included religious education, math, language arts, geography and history . At the Grade

7 level her experiences have included teaching computers, science, and physical education. In

addition to her teaching responsibilities at this school she has also assumed responsibility as the

acting administrator.

Up until Christmas 2003 she assumed this role on a part-time basis upon request of the

principal, however on January 5$^{th}$ 2004 she was fortunate enough to become a full-time

administrator (Vice Principal) at the school. The experiences this responsibility has afforded her

have been invaluable in terms of nurturing and supporting her leadership aspirations and journey. Despite the innate challenges, the acting role thus far has proven for her to be an enjoyable, insightful, and inspiring learning experience.

**Alan**

Alan has 27 years teaching experience. He has been married for 26 years and has two children both attending university now. He graduated with an Honors Bachelor of Science ( Biology ) degree in 1977 and a Bachelor of Education degree in 1978.

He has taught kindergarten through Grade 8 including music, art and physical education and has been involved in many, in the science, phys-ed/music, religious education, English and mathematics areas. Over the last 26 years, he has worked with 8 different principals. He is always active in classroom teaching as well as assisting the school operations. He feels he has a clear understanding of the administrators' leadership roles and the enormous responsibility they have in "steering the ship".

**Bob**

Bob is in his early thirties. He completed his kinesiology degree and then went on to complete his Bachelor of Education Degree at Lakehead University. He is in his 6$^{th}$ year of teaching and currently teaching Grade 8. He also coaches a number of sports at the school level and is an active player and coach competing at the city and provincial levels.

Meanwhile, Bob works as the Acting Administrator when the Principal or Vice Principal is out of the school. As a part-time administrator of the school, he is trying to fulfill his obligations and explore the better leadership strategies for school operation. He plans to take his Principal's Qualifications Course.

## Carl

Carl is in his first year of full time teaching in this school. He supply taught for three years and experienced many situations and grade levels. He loves children and tries to be their best friend. He was brought up along with the Catholic values. He believes the influence of the Catholic values will do good to the students, and his mission is to shape the students' images as Catholic citizens. He teaches wholeheartedly in the classroom, trying to be a good model of Catholic Citizen for all the students.

He respects administrators' leadership and is always willing to cooperate and involve in school management. He understands that school operation is a huge task. He feels he could not have progressed throughout his short teaching career without effective leadership from administration.

## Diana

Diana has been teaching for three years at grade 7/8 level. She is married and has an 11-month-old daughter. She teaches math and has her own way to inspire the students. She is polite, humble and willing to learn everything new. She likes to view things from different angles and is interested in educational administration.

She attends various math and language conferences and plans to take Special Education Courses. She has experienced four different principals in her teaching career, which makes her perceptions on leadership more comprehensive.

## Elisabeth

Elisabeth is 50 years old. She has married and has two children both in university now. She received her Honors Bachelor of Physical and Health Education in 1976 and the Bachelor of Education in 1977. Elisabeth has 27 years teaching experience. Her teaching career has involved

teaching all kinds of subjects at the 7 & 8 grade level. Now she is also the Guidance Counselor of the school.

With her Specialist Certificates in guidance and physical education, she has recently involved in teaching guidance and continued to teach physical education. This combination works very well as the students feel comfortable coming to her with their problems, big or small. She has always enjoyed teaching and coaching at this level.

## Themes

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: vision, commitment, interpersonal relationships and communication competence. School management is now facing an increased number of challenges, such as nurturing school culture, promoting faculty professional growth, developing school community relations, etc. To achieve effectiveness and efficiency of management, school leaders must conduct communication strategies. Based on the data, first of all, school leaders must hold onto an overall vision while moving a group through the process necessary to achieve that vision. The vision included building up school culture, facilitating growth, infusing Christian values, and bearing high expectations towards stakeholders. Besides, to achieve the goals and vision of the school, leaders must commit to accomplish the vision by means of motivation, influence, stimulation, consideration. It emerged from the data that close interpersonal relationships helped achieve effectiveness. School leaders were supposed to be open minds, respect and trust other colleagues, create rapport, and sometimes make compromises to satisfy other stakeholders. What's more, school leaders were in need of high communication competence, which required receptiveness, articulation, appropriateness, and task achievement.

Table 2 presents those four themes and respective categories that emerged from the analysis of data. Each is discussed below.

Table 2 Themes and Categories

| THEMES | |
|---|---|
| **Categories** | **Vision** |
| **School Culture** | "Because we're Catholic school. We're strong in moral and that kind of culture is what the principal tries to foster…"(D  p.2) |
| **Growth** | "My role is to try to facilitate growth."(P  p.2) |
| **Christian Values** | "We're certainly a Catholic school. So we have to reflect Catholic and Christian values." (C  p. 2)<br>"We're trying to have our community reflect Catholic citizenship being good model to each other…"(V  p.7). |
| **Expectations** | "I'm not going to be around everyday. I have to communicate to them that you have something to offer in leadership." (P  p.9) |
| **Categories** | **Commitments** |
| **Motivation** | "You're saying positive. Give them some positive stroke." (P  p.12)<br>"I don't motivate them, they have to motivate themselves…" (P  p.2) |
| **Influence** | "…making sure he is a good loyal model for, for the teachers and the students…" (D  p.2) |
| **Stimulation** | "Comfort the afflicted, but you have to afflict the comfortable. You've got to get people moving…" (P  p.9) |
| **Consideration** | "But you're leading, you are not autocratic in what you do."(V  p.1) |
| **Categories** | **Interpersonal Relationships** |
| **Open Minds** | "Not just one person at the expense of another, but being open minded enough to understand other people's situations." (V  p.1) |
| **Respect and Trust** | "I think no matter what, in all the different ways we communicate, everybody has to be treated with dignity and respect." (V  p.9) |
| **Rapport** | "Getting to know each other on a personal level or finding the common around when you both have a similar interest. Really improve the way." (B  p.3) |
| **Compromise** | "So the principal really has to be very open-minded and has to be willing to accept compromises and taking other people's ideas as well as convey his ideas." (B  p.3) |
| **Categories** | **Communication Competence** |
| **Receptiveness** | "So a principal, I think, who listens to his staff, listens to the board, listens to the society, who does not just make their own path. I think they welcome other reasonable perspective." (C  p. 1) |
| **Articulation** | "You've got to mean what you say, say what you mean, and live what you believe."(P p.5) |
| **Appropriateness** | "When you use humor, and how you use it. And so there's a final line, there's a final end of humor. I find, and you have to be very careful." (V  p.3) |
| **Task Achievement** | "(a leader should know how) to facilitate it all, to make sure that the communication is going in all directions…."(D  p.1) |

# Vision

True leaders are expected to do more than simply conduct meetings, control agendas, and keep track of events. A key piece of leadership is the ability to hold onto an overall vision while moving a group through the process necessary to achieve that vision. (Cybert, 1990; Nanus, 1992). The first theme that emerged from the data reflected the respondents' perceptions of the vision that was guiding school leadership. These perceptions focused on: school culture, growth, Christian values and expectations, all of which must be communicated to the followers by school leaders.

**School Culture**

Four out of the seven respondents' perceptions on school leadership were closely linked to school culture, which formed a significant part of school leadership.

Alan, a teacher of 27 years' experience, expressed his perception and preference of the school culture,

> I like the fact that in our school and in our system, it's Catholicity. It's the most important part of what we do here, that we use the term the Christian ethic is built into everything we do all day, every lesson you teach. There is a bias towards our faith. We try to bring it back to the Gospel message which makes it very easy to teach good things. (A p.3)

Diana was aware of the school culture,

> Because we're a Catholic school, we're strong in morality and that kind of culture is what the principal tries to foster, making sure he is a good loyal model for the teachers and the students, you know, that type of things he does in his life. (D p.2)

Paul, the Principal, was always trying to build up the school culture, which can be seen from his conduct to create a good environment.

> What I do is I create an environment, where they can do better, and they would want to do better. I create an atmosphere, they are going to be respected, trusted. (P p.2)

Vivian, the Vice Principal, articulated,

Well, the culture that we are trying to foster here is Christ centric. It's based on the values in teaching of the Catholic Church. We believe that we are our brother's keeper here, and that underlines, the influence that we try to have when we are communicating with the staff, the students, with parents, nobody's out, to get everybody here. (V p.7)

## Growth

The growth of a school formed another part of vision of all leaders, which was to be

steered by the principal. Paul, the principal, expressed his vision to try to facilitate growth.

Everybody here is a leader in their own way. I am no more important than the custodian, or the secretary. They just have different role to play. My role is to try to facilitate growth. (P p.2)

Meanwhile, in the school's document (Eagle Planner), I read:

**We will continue to ...**

**make the story of our Faith tradition available to the person in order to shape a new future.**

**create a learning environment where truth is pursued, lived and taught so students can become**

Discerning Believers

Effective Communicators
Reflective and Creative Thinkers

Self-directed, Responsible, Life Long Learners

Collaborative Contributors

Caring Family Members

Responsible Citizens

**work in communion with our partners to meet the many challenges ahead to ensure the best possible Catholic education for our students**

This written format also demonstrated the administrators' vision and ambition to facilitate growth.

**Christian Values**

From the data, I could perceive Christian values as the third category. Four respondents provided insights into their perception about Christian values. For example, Paul, the Principal articulated his Christian values,

> Well, we're in the catholic school. What we do is based on the Gospel, we don't do things because they are just nice things to do. We do it because Jesus challenged us to make a difference, to go forwards, and to please the Gospel. (P  p.7)

Alan thought the administrators should have the same vision "from a Christian standpoint",

> Well, I think we believe, I know I believe that what our administrators are doing and the way he is trying to work with me, and all the people in the building, the students and the other staff, they are doing from a Christian stand point and I feel that because there is no pressure, there is trust, because I know they are coming from a good starting point. (A  p.3)

Vivian believed that Christian values even helped to explain the position,

> I think for our system as a Catholic system, our communication is better because we can use our values to help explain our position. When we are dealing with people, be a student, be a staff, be a parent." (V  p.7).

She also noted that,

> when you look at the Catholic High School expectations, the bottom line is, we're trying, to have our community reflect Catholic citizenship being good models to each other, and, I'd like to think that all of the communication that we have in some way or another fosters, a Catholic value that we say we stand for. (V  p.7).

Carl assumed that everyone bears the Christian value in mind. "…we're certainly a Catholic school. So we have to reflect Catholic and Christian values." (C  p. 2)

## Expectations

Expectations were the fourth category that emerged from data related to vision. As a principal, Paul had his expectations on school teachers. He expected every stakeholder could be the leader.

> I'm not going to be around everyday. I have to communicate to them that you have something to offer in leadership. I tell them we needed you. Think about taking some courses, think about taking this course, thinking about going here. And maybe becoming a vice principal, principal, and maybe a leader in some other way. A lot of these people are needed in their community and their churches, their organizations, and that is important. (P p.9)

He expected every teacher to bring their potential into play, and always tried to promote the teachers' growth.

> "I think that's what I try to do, I try in the beginning of the year to meet the staff, to find out what they are really good at, and if I can, I'll try to help them to get into the teaching in that area. (P p.9)

Bob believed a principal should have "a wide range of goals".

> It's very important for the principal to make sure No.1 his ideas have a wide range of goals." (B p.4)

Elisabeth believed that the expectations had to be clear for the followers.

> People really should communicate better with the principal as to what his expectations are. On one occasion, the principal's expectations were confused by the students, "well, the person at the ski hill says I can do this and the principal says I can't". It has to be communicated that the principal is the leader here and they have to listen to the principal." (E p. 3)

## Document Analysis

In my study of the school's documents, the school's Eagle Planner impressed me so much. Eagle Planner was the plan printed out to distribute to every stakeholder of the school. On the first page of the planner, the vision of the school was clearly stated:

> **My doors are open, come in, you are safe and welcome here**
> **I stand here as a public witness that qualify learning**

**In a Christian-centered environment, underpins the total
Education of the students.
I stand for distinctiveness in purpose and in outcomes
I stand for academic excellence, for self-worth, for respect.
I am a place where each student develops his/her potential as an individual, and
Contributing responsible member of society who will:
Think clearly, feel deeply, act wisely and justly, love tenderly, and will walk humbly with
his or her God.**

School leaders built this vision by involving others and communicating it consistently through

words and deeds so that everyone knows what is required for organizational and individual

success. Meanwhile, the school had its clear Mission Statement (shown in Eagle Planner):

> **We, the staff of (name of the school), are committed to providing our early
> adolescent learners with a holistic education within a catholic Christian
> environment, so that we may instill in them the knowledge, skills, values and
> attributes necessary to become constructive and creative contributors to society.**

Also, the school motto was articulated in the written documents (Eagle Planner):

> **"We are our brother's keeper."**

**On-site Observation**

During my on-site observation in the school, I could see clearly the vision of the school

was conveyed to everyone by means of Morning Prayer. It was an activity hosted every morning

by the principal.

Mr. Principal hosts the morning prayer, announcing the date, Everybody was standing,
singing the national anthem( "Oh, Canada, we stand on guard for thee" also conveyed the vision),
then he announces the important issues. Then prayer starts. Two girl students lead the prayer:

> **God, in Your great love
> You bring us joy and peace
> You call us to be your children
> in a caring school community
> of teachers, parents and friends**
>
> **We thank You for (name of the school)
> his faithful life of love and concerns for children.
> Bless us as we now strive
> To live in mutual respect and trust**

**to be our brother's keeper**
**forgiving, as we are forgiven,**
**loving, as we are loved,**
**standing up for what is right,**
**seeing goodness in each other.**

**Guide us in our daily work**
**of building a Christian community of charity**
**always mindful of those in need.**

**We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen**

(from Observation Journal and Eagle Planner)

The results are evident. With this clear vision, stakeholders know where they are going, why it's important, and what they have to do to get there. There's a certainty of action. The commitment that was voiced by the respondents emerged as another theme.

## Commitments

To achieve the goals and vision of the school, any administrator is supposed to commit to lead to change, and bring those commitments into practice. (Aviolo, 1994; &Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Respondents in this case study described a number of commitments. They believed a school leader should convey those commitments to the followers and fulfill them. Paul clearly articulated a principal's role in school administration,

> You, who are principals and vice principals, have a unique opportunity to create the character of your school. Your reach extends both into the classroom, and into the community. The life, the values and the feelings of each school, derive in large part, from your commitment to your staff, your commitment to your students and your commitment to the gospel. (P p.5)

Those commitments include: 1) motivation, 2) influence, 3) stimulation, 4) consideration.

**Motivation**

It emerged from the data that motivation was the first important commitment. Paul had his own insight on motivation,

What I do is I create an environment, where they can do better, and they would want to do better. I don't motivate them, they have to motivate themselves..." (P p.2)

The school motto, "we are our brothers' keeper" motivated every stakeholder.

Our motto is we are our brothers' keeper, so we are very often try to communicate this, to students, How can we make a difference in someone else life in a good way. (P p.7)

Paul had even more insights for motivation: to heal those people.

Some parents are coming into a lot of struggles. Some families are separating, so you've got to find the ways to heal those people. (P p.9)

He knew clearly to persuade people was better than to direct people:

... you can't direct people anymore. It's gone. Those days are gone. You have to find the ways to persuade.(P p.9)

Paul suggested conceptualization and acceptance of difference as ways of motivation.

....You've got to know how to conceptualize. Well, then the other one is going to tell about is, is accepting differences. And I have to accept it. So I have kind of been a hypocrite. I'm just a dictator. (P p.10)

Some positive strokes can motivate stakeholders more.

You know, sort of people are doing good things. You're saying positive. Give them some positive strokes. And things like that. You know those are the key things here. And it's like the life is beautiful. You are serving but you are never a servant. Get to know your employees, volunteers, and students, what are their needs, how can you most effectively communicate with them. Know your school organization, community and resources, be knowledgeable. Know the people that you are interacting. You know that's the key in communication. If you don't know who you're communicating with, it's going to come back... And be willing to take a chance, to experiment. That's, that's the key. (P p.12)

Vivian was trying to motivate staff by means of "developing a collaborative type of

administrative style",

I am trying to develop and I say this because I am, I am very much so, trying to develop a collaborative type of administrative style which means that I like to work with other people and making decisions, so that I'm not making decisions unilaterally. (V p.1)

Alan believed that to motivate staff, the principal should be able to "seek out the talents and interests of different staff members"

> And the principal, I think, for the most part of previous judge for that. They know how to seek out their talents and interests of different staff members and they should be able to communicate that not only to the people that they're talking to, but to the community in the school as a whole, so that everybody knows whatever talents we have... to do certain jobs we can do at the best we can, and how can we help them...(A p.4)

## Influence

From the data, I could perceive that leaders were supposed to have influence on followers.

As the Principal, Paul was always trying to influence the colleagues by establishing a good example of himself/herself.

> You have to dream. You know, I believe this school is good, and I know it's good. And it was good when I came here, I feel good about it. I didn't do it myself. But I feel I have a part to make it so good, so I feel good about that. But you've got a dream. You can take advantage of opportunities. (P p.9)

Paul suggested sharing with staff to let them know they are welcome and paid attention to.

> When you get your master's degree, what will you do? Go into a room with that a little piece of paper by yourself. No way. I want to celebrate with my friends that's relationships. You have parties doing. And that's the best part. You share with people. (P p.10)

Paul pointed out a principal had to evolve with experience.

> You evolve and hopefully you learn and you become wise with experience, with knowledge. You become parts of wisdom and...with knowledge like that. (P p.10)

He articulated that a true leader meant a lot, and he should be an example to all.

> Becoming a leader into communicate does not mean power or authority. It means to give, or to facilitate, to guide and to mould, and to help, and to assist people. (P p.10)

Vivian also wanted to make herself an example "demonstrating a healthy citizenship."

> And because we want to produce Christ-like citizens when they leave our system. You know, citizenship is, for me, as a leader, is very important. Citizenship for staff, demonstrating a healthy citizenship and Christ-like environment for myself, for

students, for parents, when we were speaking with parents, we always want to foster the development of that. (V p.8)

Alan expected that administrators should have "experience" influence on the staff.

> And for the most part, our administrators do have more experience than most teachers and that's very important thing to understand that to column the wisdom of the elder resource. (A p.3)

Bob believed that a principal should influence the students to "be very positive and open-minded about all situations"

> I think it's very important too, it's very important for a principal to try to foster a school culture where students realize that it's very important to be very positive and open-minded about all situations, and even including the bad choice you may make sometimes. It's very, very important for students to realize that we all make mistakes, we all make bad choices at some point to another. And we are here to correct the behavior and not punish them personally. (B p.3)

Bob also thought that a principal should be a good example of honesty.

> I think it's very important that we try to make sure that everyone realizes I made the mistake, I'm trying to learn from it and try to be honest. (B p.3)

Diana suggested a leader

> ......make sure he is a good loyal model for the teachers and the students, you know, that type of things he does in his life. Not just coming here to work and say one thing but going home and doing another thing. (D p.2)

Elisabeth also mentioned that "He has to set a good example." (E p. 1)

**Stimulation**

It emerged from the data that school leaders should try to stimulate the potentials of followers. Paul had his own way to stimulate people. He tried to create opportunities for people.

> Creating opportunities: You've got to create opportunities for people. Because succeed relies on themselves, so they are ....remember what I said. Comfort the afflicted, those are comfort. Comfort the afflicted, but you have to afflict the comfortable. You've got to get people moving and I'm doing things like that. (P p.9)

He promoted what he was doing.

> And you've got to promote what you're doing. Promote it. You've got to be positive in saying this school is good. (P p.10)

He challenged the staff to make this school interesting, fun, and positive and to get the expertise going.

> Challenge the staff to make this school interesting, fun, and positive. "You are really good at art. You have seen the beautiful art here. Could you teach music?". We try to get people singing more, you know, to get the expertise going. (P p.12)

Vivian was trying to "make people happy".

> How are we going to make people happy. And to me, you like a happy community, because a happy community is much more productive entity to itself. When we are all happy, because negativity will grow and counters what we say and what we did. (V p.5)

Alan's statement showed the stimulation did exist.

> Our principal does foster that, and he does that through encouraging us, and leading us and our faith development having various religious ceremonies within the school. We have priest come in and so on, we have masses...services, even something that might be seen as unfaithful as the spirit assembly. In fact, we acknowledge a good thing will be happening and bring that back to our motto: we are our brother's keeper. (A p.3)

Bob expected a leader should offer "an open boundary" and "a range of thoughts".

> So as a principal when he is trying to achieve certain goals for the school he has to make sure that they're not too firm or too set, has a open boundary and say ok, well, if we can get to lift this point or maybe up here, give us a range of thoughts. (B p.3)

**Consideration**

As a school leader, one should always bear the followers in mind. It emerged from the data that there were many things to consider. Based on his experience, the Principal, Paul, articulated a series of considerations in administration. Paul stated,

> You have to dream. I believe this school is good, and I know it's good. And it was good when I came here, I feel good about it. I didn't do it myself. But I feel I have a part to make it so good, so I feel good about that. But you've got a dream. You can take advantage of opportunities." (P p.9)

Confidence was also important,

So, to communicate, you'll have to be confident yourself. You have to feel that you've got yourself work. You feel pretty good about yourself. Not conceal it. But you feel confident that, that there." (P p.10)

He indicated a principal should know human needs, "You learn more about the needs and desires that you can use to help them or someone else."(P p.9) , and should appreciate people, " ...you know that, and like I said, people do something I congratulate them." (P p.8)

Paul suggested considering more before making decisions.

The other end of respect is, you can't make everybody happy all the time. So you have to find out what time you have to make decisions. They are unhappy, but do things properly. Remember people have the dignity, and you take that into consideration. (P p.10)

He even considered more about "challenges" that the school was facing,

Having a vision to individual kids although we teach a whole group, everybody is an individual. And the difficult part is that these are the kids that don't have mom and dad, these are the kids, who have the bad days at home. These are the kids going to the street at night, these are kids here that are being abused, that we have to deal with. Those are the challenges, the real challenges. I tell my staff anybody can teach. They are self motivated. They do their own thing. Someone teaches the marginal, the outcast, the destitute, who wants to cry for help. Those are real challenges here and the Catholic school that will make a difference in our hope to address those needs. That's what I like to think. (P p.8)

He also considered about "risk taking" to make improvement of the school.

You've got to be able to be a risk taker sometimes. Remember coming to the first step. why we are doing things that way. Here we did it that way. And I said well, why don't we try it? see, if it makes things better. And that's the way that people saw. You can't do it because you never did it, you know. So that's it. (P p.13)

Vivian preferred "leading", "not autocratic"

So there are all kinds of management that falls within auspices of the term 'leader' that you have to deal with. But you're leading, you are not autocratic in what you do. I mean some leaders probably are, but that's not the style of myself, and the principal ever like to go to. (V p.1)

She also suggested an administrator "be sensitive."

> You really have to be sensitive to the stress that some staff members have, not only in their life but also in their classroom. Some teachers have more difficult classes than other teachers so the stress of that crippling them over the months can affect how teachers react. There're people too. I know I am communicating with parents. They have a hard time with that. A teacher can actually make a mistake in the classroom. We do make mistakes although we try not to. (V p.9)

Bob suggested a principal "accept compromise and taking other people's ideas".

> As a principal there are a lot of different ideas that come across within the school, and especially with the teachers and colleagues. We all have different ideas and views about what we want the school to do or what could we get for the school, and try to improve the school image and improve the school itself. So the principal really has to be very open-minded and has to be willing to accept compromise and taking other people's ideas as well as convey his ideas. . (B p.3)

Carl called for "...professionalism of his own personal conduct, place the best thing to do at that

time. (C p. 2), and "filter"

> They have to obviously, in this work, filter some feedback, they filter whatever they've taken, whatever they've listened to. They have to filter and say: ok, this is what I want to apply, this is what, maybe won't work in our school. At the same time, they get to choose from different perspectives. (C p. 2)

He pointed out that the key was to convey the best message.

> Everyone is like that, even you're best speakers. They don't sometimes convey the best message, so as long as you're listening and trying and considering different aspect with respect to whom you're going to offend if you say they're right at the wrong thing. As long as your ears and eye are open, I think communication could be successful. (C p. 3)

He also indicated "students are the biggest concern".

> I think clearly students are the biggest concern. That's why we're all here. Students need to be the concern, reflection of our Christian values, that's it, reflect properly our school motto, our board directive, our board models, also he has to consider his staff, you know. He has somehow, create an environment with the staff, you know, with respect, because he's doing things that against the staff regularly or generally if they feel they're not being respected, he's going to create some sort of close communication. So he has to concern staff, students, parents, society. There're a lot of things that has to be considered. (C p. 3)

Diana suggested a principal "need to be able to mediate".

...then a principal needs to be able to mediate between the two of us, and make sure, he can do that. So if he can listen and hear my side of story and their side of story, then he is going to be an effective administrator. (D p.2)

Elisabeth suggested the administrator should consider equal treatment and equal chance for students.

I think his concern should be that all students are treated equally, that all students are given the same chance. (E p. 2)

## Document Analysis

In the documents, I could read, clearly, the commitment of the school:

### Our Commitment

### We proclaim...

- A view of life that is God-centered
- A view of person that is Christ-centered
- A view of community that is Spirit-centered

### We provide...

- Academic excellence
- Christian values
- A safe, welcoming learning environment

### We promote...

- The transformation of the human person towards the fullness of life
- The transformation of the culture towards the reign of God
- A way of life rooted in the Christian call to discipleship and service

### We will continue to ...

make the story of our Faith tradition available to the person in order to shape a new future.

create a learning environment where truth is pursued, lived and taught so students can become

Discerning Believers

Effective Communicators
Reflective and Creative Thinkers

Self-directed, Responsible, Life Long Learners

Collaborative Contributors

Caring Family Members

Responsible Citizens

**work in communion with our partners to meet the many challenges ahead to ensure the best possible Catholic education for our students**

A good leader is supposed to possess clear vision and commitment, which could be conveyed by effective communication, and put into practice by specific conducts. However, effective communication has to be rooted on good interpersonal relationship. This third theme is discussed below.

## Interpersonal Relationships

When people have close interpersonal relationships, their communication tends to be more accurate and open. On the other hand, when they distrust each other, they are more likely to be secretive or hesitant to speak openly. This is why it is imperative for school administrators to establish close relationship with their colleagues if they expect to be effective. (Palestini, 1999).

Paul pointed out clearly that leadership is based on "good relationships", by saying, "If you have a good relationship, I think it's a lot of easier to do."(P p.1), which indicated the significant role of interpersonal relationships in achieving leadership. And the good relationships were accomplished by means of communication.

> You've got to have your people skills. They are always aware of the entire staff and sensitive to the strength and needs. Yeah, that's communication. I tell you this is a people game. If you don't communicate, you're going to die. You want to, and you have to. (P p.12)

At the same time, he realized that "communication in society is built on relationship".

> Our whole communication in society is built on relationship. And relationships are built on four things: You have to respect someone so we talk, we see double respect. We cooperate. The third one is your topic. To be able to communicate not me telling you, but both of us, ok. And the last one you have to be able to accept differences that make a sound relationships whether it's your spouse, whether with your special friends, whether with your classmates, whether it's the community. You have the relationship. You have to have their support. (P p.7)

When asked about what factors that enhanced communication, all the respondents emphasized or implied interpersonal relationships. The relationships included the following categories: open minds, respect and trust, rapport and compromise.

**Open Minds**

First of all, it emerged from the interview data that school leaders had to be open – minded to build up close interpersonal relationships. Vivian described her perception of being open-minded.

> I think one of the most important things with communicating in the school is, open minds of communication, so that, everybody feels informed and not violated.
> This is a position of authority that should be grounded in a value of meeting the needs of everybody. Not just one person at the expense of another, but, being open minded enough to understand other people's situations. (V p.1)

Alan suggested a leader be open.

> And the other factors, I suppose the fact that they're open and you know you can approach them, and they will give you their feedback from their experience. (A p.3)

Bob suggested a principal have "an open pathway"

> So if there's a lack of communication the teacher has to step up and say, I really think you have to make this very clear. I appreciate you coming and telling me this. It's really an open pathway here, open communication and not being afraid to approach the principal. (B p.5)

Carl used an example to show that a principal should be "open-minded".

> For example, the teachers are close-minded. There's going to be difficult communication, but again it's a lot to do with principals, maybe the demeanor, or attitude to behavior, coldness, in a way that they can communicate with the staff. If they are open-minded, approachable principal, things are just a lot easier. (C p. 3)

Diana made it clear ".... as long as our principal is open to, when not negative comments but one

I think that can be something could have been done better." (D p.2)

## Respect and Trust

I could perceive from the data that respect and trust are keys to building up interpersonal

relationship. Paul's perception came from his experience, "I think when I came to a position here,

I respected them, and I really feel that they respected me to a certain point."(P p.2). He was clear

that a leader should "trust in people and build". (P p.2)

> You've got to trust in people and build. And that's the key thing. You've got to trust others. So when I give people opportunity to do things, I'm not over the back. If you need some help, but report back, just show me how you are doing. And that's kind of thing. And they like to do that, because you give them trust. You are not kind of overseeing. But you build it. I tell you communication is all in building your relationships. Relationship is our life. (P p.9)

He also believed that "... they have a trust for me. They know that I don't ask them to do

anything that I wouldn't do myself." (P p.8)

Vivian's administrative style reflected her respect and trust with the stakeholders,

> I am trying to develop and I say this because I am trying to develop a collaborative type of administrative style which means that I like to work with other people and making decisions, so that I'm not making decisions unilaterally."(V p.1)

She believed, "I think no matter what, everybody in all the different ways we communicate,

everybody has to be treated with dignity and respect. (V p.9)

She also tried to show her respect to others in conversation as well as in written forms,

At the end of every letter, at the end of every conversation, I think it's important that, people are invited to contact the school, phone back if they are not happy. And then you let them know, your sense for their cooperation with the respect to the matter or thank you for calling. I think there has to be some sort of gracious type of communication at the end that makes that person believe that we are open, and they can call back and we do thank them. We are respectful of that. (V p.6)

Alan was aware of the importance of trust and respect,

Well, first of all, I suppose you have to get trusting relationship, trust absolutely. And with that trust, that comes from, I suppose for the most part, trust from the fact you have respect for that person's ability to do what they're doing. And their ability to understand what it is we are trying to do. (A p.3)

He expressed his trust and respect to the administrators,

I go back to trust and respect their knowledge, their wisdom. They've been there, they know what's going on. They're familiar with the materials coming down from the ministry which we're trying to follow.(A p.4)

Carl articulated his perception on respect,

I think, you respect people, respect others, respect their opinion, it certainly opens communication if you squash or diminish people's opinions right away, and you feel rude. You don't certainly open minds in communication, you close them. So if you're willing to listen, and show other people and give them respect that you demand. (C p. 2)

Elisabeth also pointed out the importance of respect in school operation.

Because you respect the person, you work harder to communicate with the students what is expected. (E p. 2)

**Rapport**

The participants believed that rapport helped achieve effectiveness of leadership. It helped school leaders build up close interpersonal relationships and achieve effective communication. Paul was always working on that:

… I create an atmosphere, they are going to be respected, trusted. And they know that if something goes wrong. I have to communicate with them. They must say you want me doing your job. I sensed fear when I talked to those people, and I saw in their eyes. They thought they can't let me down. And that to me is… that's kind of rapport we do have here.(P p.2)

Vivian created rapport through appreciation.

> We appreciate their responsibility with respect to our laws in the school regarding your children or that we run things here. (V p.6)

She had some specific ideas.

> Bring them in, communicate ideas of how it's going to be a great job there, chess club, I really appreciate you have watched them. I know the other day, I passed by staff member who was supervising in the hall. They didn't really have to be. And I said "I really appreciate you are all here doing this for me today", because really they were doing these for me. (V p.8)

Bob's experience showed that rapport could be built through personal connection.

> Based on my experience, I find that with staff, students and parents, get to know them personally and then they know me personally makes a big difference. What I mean by that is they don't have to know all my life history and what I do outside of my work, or all my family or where I live. But just connecting with them,..... (B p.2)

He suggested similar interest help build up rapport.

> Getting to know each other on a personal level or finding the common around when you both have a similar interest. Really improve the way. (B p.3)

Carl indicated an environment of rapport "make people feel warm and welcome".

> They're brought in, they accept it, they feel comfortable, they feel happy. This environment maybe people don't have something better or a better place to be, or maybe school is the better place to be. And it's our responsibility from the top down to make people feel warm and welcome. (C p. 2)

Diana implied rapport is also necessary between the principal and the students, it had "an effect on our relationship with him."

> Yes, relationships, and that's also I would say the relationship he has with the students, you know, depending on how he treats the students having an effect on our relationship with him. (D p.2)

**Compromise**

The data showed that sometimes, compromise was necessary for the purpose of effective communication. As part of making compromises, Paul agreed to accepting differences.

Well, then the other one is going to tell about is, accepting differences. And I have to accept it. So I have kind of been a hypocrite. I'm not a dictator. (P p.10)

Vivian insisted that a leader had to be diplomatic, "Because every type of communication we do here involves diplomacy. You have to be diplomatic. If you are not, it will come back to hurt you." (V p.1)

Bob suggested that a principal have to "be willing to accept compromise".

> As a principal there is a lot of different ideas that come across within the school, and especially with the teachers and colleagues. We all have different ideas and views about what we want the school to do or what could we get for the school, and try to improve the school image and improve the school itself. So the principal really has to be very open-minded and has to be willing to accept compromise and taking other people's ideas as well as convey his ideas. (B p.3)

**On-site Observation**

On my first visit to the school, I had a deep impression of the principal-teacher relationship.

> Then the principal suggests he show me around the school. He shows me the gym, and the classrooms. I can see the teachers are teaching wholeheartedly and the students are listening attentively. On the way, whenever he sees other teacher passing by, he introduces me to them, telling them about my research.....(Observational Journal p. 1)

> In this way, I meet some teachers. I can feel the atmosphere here in the school is warm and amicable. The principal-teacher relation is very close.(Observational Journal p. 1)

The other day, I went to see the so-called "chaos" in the school. The rapport can also be seen and felt.

> Today I arrive at the school at 8: 15 am., intending to take a close look at the beginning of a school day. As Mr. Principal used to mention to me, it is called "chaos". They call it organized chaos. (Observational Journal p. 2)

> At 8: 30, students rush in. The principal and teachers stood by on watch to maintain the order, they greet and warmly welcome the students. Alan even jokes on the students. He greets those boy students by saying, "Hi, ladies.", which makes the students dumbfounded. I can feel the strong rapport among the principal, teachers and students. (Observational Journal p. 2)

# Communication Competence

It would appear that competent communication is regarded more highly than such skills as motivating employees, decision making, delegating, flexibility, and educational background. In educational institutions, Striplin (1987) found that the ability of school principals to perform effectively as instructional leaders is contingent on their degree of competence in communication. In this study, Communication Competence articulated by the respondents focused on the following: receptiveness, articulation, appropriateness, task achievement.

## Receptiveness

The data showed school leaders must be receptive when communicating with colleagues. From his experience as a principal, Paul was very affirmative of being receptive, "You've got to be receptive to what the other people are saying, that's the communication.". (P p.9) He stressed that receptive was all about "listening" and "understanding",

> It's listening to the people of your organization, what their concerns are, appreciating their successes, understanding the niche that they may have.(P p.1)

He knew if you don't listen to people, you're going to have trouble.

> I think today it is very important. If you don't listen to people, you are going to have agony, you're going to have trouble. You have listened to community. Everybody here listens to authority in education. You've got to listen to staff, got to listen to parents, got to listen to the community. You definitely have to listen to your supervisor. (P p.6)

He knew a leader had to "be approachable".

> You have to be approachable, clear communication, you've got to model your behavior, you've got to be visible in this school, moving around. You've got to be active role in developing younger staff. (P p.10)

He had his "Open-door Policy".

> Your door is always open. And my door is always open here. You know these people come and go, you've got to be professional and organized on top of your game. You've got to be able to articulate things. (P p.12)

Vivian had her own way to be receptive, "I think everything should be up, upfront." (V p.1). She

also paid much attention to "listening and understanding".

> Anything from yourself to somebody else, you have to listen and understand before
> Listening and understanding are being, as compassionate understanding as you can be,
> no matter what the situation is. (V p.1)

And at the same time, she was aware "listening is the biggest block to communication"

> I really believe that listening is the biggest block to communication. I think we're all
> quick to talk but really often what you are talking about is based on, what you're
> hearing. If you don't get people an opportunity to communicate with you so that you
> do with or hear them out. I think that's, that's one of the biggest complaints of people
> in the work force that the powers to be. I always give them an opportunity to speak. So
> that I can truly listen and I just what they are saying to me before I can decide my plan
> of action for that person. (V p.4)

She articulated one had to listen first for better communication.

> I don't think there can be communication if they're not listening first. You understand
> just something. You respond to be fair. You have to listen first. So that you know the
> issues that you understand what their concerns are of the other people. (V p.5)

Vivian shared the same "Open-door Policy" as Paul.

> So I prefer to, verbally communicate with staff and have an open-door policy where
> they can come in and talk to me about personal issues and the professional issues
> which are affective at the day at school. (V p.2)

Alan had his expectation on the administrator, "I suppose the fact that they're open and you

know you can approach them, and that, you know, they will give you their feedback from their

experience." (A p.3)

Bob believed that in order to be receptive, administrators had to achieve listening and feedback.

> Like I have said earlier, listening, if you're not listening to what exactly been said, if in
> this communication, that's what most problems come from. It's usually a
> miscommunication or ideas not being put across properly. (B p.2)

He suggested listening and feedback were both important.

So listening is very important to understand all situations and make sure everyone is happy and content. And also feedback is very important because people need to be acknowledged and realize that what they are doing. He is on the right track. (B p.2)

Carl expected the administrator to "be receptive".

...but at the same time for the school to run effectively he has to be receptive to communication from his staff. He has to be receptive to communication from parents, from the board, from society in general.(C p. 1)

He suggested a principal should be receptive to all.

So a principal, I think, who listens to his staff, listens to the board, listens to the society, who does not just make their own path. I think they, they welcome other reason perspective. (C p. 1)

He thought a principal had to listen to all stakeholders.

He has to listen to all these stakeholders and other people. He has to be able to assess by his professionalism or his own personal conduct, place the best thing to do at that time. So he takes other people's perspective views. (C p. 2)

Diana suggested "being able to be open".

Ok, being able to be open if I have got any issues or concerns that I can easily go to them and don't have to fear they don't want to listen to...they're not interested in what I'm saying, that what I ask them, that they're going to respond to it and achieve, if I ask them to do something that's going to get done. (D p.1)

And she also suggested being "approachable".

And I can ask them and do not feel as if they don't have time for me, definitely approachable. What else enhances communication? Showing that they've got time for us.. (D p.2)

She believed things could have been done better as long as the principal was open.

And as long as our principal is open, I think something could have been done better. (D p.2) And as well the principal is open to hearing input. Then they will be a good communicator. (D p.3)

She expected a principal should "be able to listen"

A principal definitely have to be able to listen to what I have got to say, but also listen to ...other stakeholders, the parents. He's got to be able to listen to what they've got to

say. (D p.2) If they got that done, listen to all before making a decision, then that's going to make them effective administrators. (D p.2)

She also believed the importance of feedback from the principal.

> The more feedback that I get from a principal the better, because I only have been teaching for three years, so I want a lot of feedback, you know, and the ideas something how I can improve or other kind of thing that I could try differently that might work better as well as positive feedback, so that now I'm going to do a good job, be... make sure I'm getting encouraged and things...(D p.1)

Elisabeth expected the administrator to be "visible and vocal with the teachers".

> Other principals I have found in my previous years, they always hide them in the office and only do the administrative work. And that's not a good principal because they can't communicate with the teachers if they're not visible and vocal with the teachers. They have to be that way. They can't just be, saying, well I am hiding in my office doing my administration work. They are very good administrators but they are not good communicators with the teachers. (E p. 3)

*On-site Observation*

On my first visit to the school, Paul's receptiveness encouraged me a lot. I was motivated and became confident in the success of my research.

> I go into the Main Office. The secretary sees me and says "good morning," with a smile on her face. I say good morning and tell her my appointment with Mr. Principal. She tells me the principal is now in the office and shows me to the door. Mr. Principal is sitting at the table, organizing documents. When he sees me, he stands up and comes to me with a friendly smile on his face. What a warm welcome. We shake hands and sit down. The principal looks so amicable and outgoing, dressing neat, and full of energy. I show the permission from the Catholic School Board and again tell him my purpose as well as my research plan. He shows very strong interest in my research and confirms his willing to assist my research. I am so impressed. Then the principal gives me a brief introduction to the school: The School has 27-30 teachers, 320 students in Grade 7 and Grade 8. There are 12 classrooms here. Parents and Neighborhoods communities involve in the school operation. Besides mandated curriculums, some study programs are also offered in this school. Further more, Mr. Principal introduces to me the vision, commitment, mission statement, code of conduct (guidelines and standard for both faculty and students) of the school. The motto here is: "We are our brother's keeper". He also introduces the prayer of the school.
>
> Then the principal suggests he show me around the school. He shows me the gym, and the classrooms. I can see the teachers are teaching wholeheartedly and the students are

listening attentively. On the way, whenever he sees other teacher passing by, he introduces me to them, telling them about my research.....

In this way, I meet some teachers. I can feel the atmosphere here in the school is warm and amicable. The principal-teacher relation is very close.

After looking around the school, I wave goodbye to the principal. He sees me off at the gate, telling me I can come anytime to conduct my research here. I feel so encouraged and once again appreciate his kindness and cooperation. From this visit, I have got an outlook of the school and become confident about the success of my research. (Observational Journal p. 1)

## Articulation

It emerged from the data that articulation was another focus in communication

competence. Paul was aware of the significance of articulation, "I kind of think the key factors in

there is you have to be able to be articulate and explain what you mean." (P p.6)

You've got to mean what you say, say what you mean, and live what you believe. And that's essentially credibility."(P p.5)

Vivian shared the same perception.

To mean what you say and say what you mean but do it diplomatically so that there isn't an edge on, on how we come across to various communities that we serve in the school. (V p.6)

Alan assumed a leader should always make himself clear.

I suppose we are speaking about when my principal and vice principal is communicating with me, I understand what it is there they're trying to say or ask or get for me. And that I'm clear on, on the question itself and that I'm able to answer what's been asked. (A p.1)

Bob suggested an administrator pay attention to the "tone of voice".

...tone of voice, you inflecting your voice, it must be very positive and clear. Even there is a problem in the school with the students and with the staff, there shouldn't be a negative tone in your voice, especially with the students. (B p.1)

Elisabeth's perception implied that a leader should articulate his/her expectation on stakeholders

clearly.

In the school setting, I think effective communication is that all teachers understand the expectations of the administration and that they communicate if they don't understand what it is expected of them, so everyone knows what's expected as a teacher, as well as what is expected to the students. It has to be universal, it has to be everyone understanding, and trying to achieve the same goal. (E  p. 1)

*On-site Observation*

According to my observation, the principal, Paul, always had his clear-cut articulation.

I arrive at the classroom at 8 am. The Principal is busy emailing. At this moment, the teacher, Alan, comes into the office with a student to report that this student pushed some other students. Mr. Principal takes his immediate action. He makes the investigation by asking and talking to some other students, then makes a phone call and reports the issue to his parents. He talks to the kid earnestly, points out his mistake in his behavior. And makes it clear that he has violated the school regulation, and now he is suspended. He requires the kid to reflect on this inappropriate behavior by completing a research assignment---the Dangers of Aggression and Using Violence. Parents also have to sign the form to show that they have known the issue. (Observational Journal p. 4)

I was really impressed by his prompt reaction to this issue, which also showed he and the school were very close to the parental community. He wanted to articulate everything happened in the school and the parental community. He was always ready to solve problems promptly when they were still small.

Another example of his clear articulation happened in the morning announcement one day:

He announces the important issues: "in the bush area, some students threw snow at each other." He criticizes this behavior, emphasizing strong forbiddance by saying "No students getting closer to the bush. No throwing snow. This behavior must stop, or you will be seriously punished." (Observational Journal p. 3)

**Appropriateness**

The respondents talked about the appropriateness of the behaviors of school leaders. It represented the leaders' communication competence. Appropriateness includes many aspects, such as verbal and non-verbal, formal and informal, silence, sense of humor, etc.

From his experience, Paul communicated in both formal and informal ways, "So I do both, formally and informally. I think there is a special place, special time in our school, that's rather important to do both." (P p.3)

> ...there is no doubt that we have to start a formal way. Informally, I like to talk to people. I will go in the hall way, you see, when I talk to students, I talk about communicating, (yes, yes) just find out about teachers, I will ask them a little about how things are going, people knowing around. And so I think that although you make it formal, your informal contact build the rapport. (P p.3)

Vivian preferred leading instead of autocracy.

> So there are all kinds of management that falls within auspices of the term 'leader' that you have to deal with. But you're leading, you are not autocratic in what you do. I mean some leaders probably are, but that's not the style of myself's, and the principal ever like to go to. (V p.1)

At the same time, she believed "Body language and facial expression can do the talking.", and some times, silence was good,

> When you are working with students, I think there are things you can say, and then often with some students, there're things we don't have to say. It's best not to say anything because sometimes when we are verbal with students because of the heated moment type of situations. What you say can be taken the wrong way. (V p.2)

She was also aware that non-verbal type of communication is "not a good idea with staff".

> ...the non-verbal type of communication because it could be viewed as you are ignoring them, that you don't like them, that you don't talk to them, that you don't listen to them, because you're not communicating with them verbally. (V p.2)

She had her own ways of communicating informally and formally.

> There are situations that the vice principal have to deal with. You can do so informally. Sometimes it means just bring the students in or our staff members into clarify what's happen or to speak about what's happen. Nothing has to be written down, and the filed and documented because there're times when the situations don't negate, or want such action. (V p.2)

> Sometimes it's best when you have to get back to somebody, you staff ask you something, you will find something out for them, to get back to them, and verbally

> communicated. I always like to give them something in writing back, so the teachers can request me regarding changing of a period of day for some reason. (V p.2)

She gave more examples on that.

> There are other forms of communication in this school that have to be done formally, such as our newsletter. It has to be done formally because of the population of people that we have to get the newsletter out… it's impossible to, but we communicate in those ways there's also a Monday memo which is an internal type of newsletter, it's weekly. It's an update. It's a form to thank the staff for good work done. It's formal. It puts some in writing. (V p.2)

She pointed out "there is a final end of humor."

> As a vice principal, you really have to cognizant when you use humor, and how you use it. And so there's a final line, there's a final end of humor. You have to be very careful. For example, students, you are conducting an interview with the students, and they were been speaking about the issue that, in you mind you actually find kind of the humors, because of the nature of the issue, you can't show that you're humored by the issue that's at the hands. But I think it's important over the course of the vice principal's day, it's necessary. Otherwise, it's very stress for job if you don't find ways to inject humor in your day. (V p.3)

Alan supposed "every principal, every person for that matter communicate in all those ways".(A

p.1)

> I suppose it all very effective. Informal, we do it all the time. I'm in very good communication with my administrators and with big informally all the time about very formal matters. And I think in many ways the communication is best done in this way, informally. Because we can speak clearly and simply and we don't have to be very political as careful, if I can use that term, as we might have to be, you're around parents or other administrator and so on, maybe the police, for example. So I think informally, yes, it's very important. As that I think probably that's where we get tired most the accurate ideas transferred back and forth.(A p.1)

> Formally, well, certainly it happens all the time as mentioned in area, in meeting with parents and other administrators, school board counsel, parent committee, and, and so on, and there's some absolutely need for that. And I believe there's a format that should be followed. (A p.1)

> Of course while we are spoken I think quite a bit of verbal and that's, you know, I mean we communicate verbally. That's the way we get most of our business done. (A p.2)

The non-verbal, well, that happens all the time too. And for me, that's the fun stuff in the hallways that's the high sign. And that's very important too. Just, I mean, something as simple as the smile.(A p.2)

Bob had his ideas on verbal and non-verbal communication,

You inflecting your voice, it must be very positive and clear. Even there is a problem in the school with the students and with the staff, there shouldn't be a negative tone in your voice, especially with the students. (B p.1)

As well, non-verbal, there has to be clear signs that you are there to help, try to improve the situation and not speak down to them or punish them for a situation. So, if you are not smiling necessarily, be sure to have a positive calm face, not having a frown or scout on your face. Even your arms, body language, arms being cross or at your hips would, would may people fear you. So it depends. Non-verbal is just as important as verbal communication. (B p.1)

Meanwhile, he suggested both formal and informal ways,

Formal communication is very necessary, obviously, to get your points across. (B p.1)

Informal, you have to let the students to sip your lighter cyder too. So you let them know you are human being or person just say they're... you made mistakes as much as they might, or you know, let them see the lighter side of you, and you can have a good sense of humor and speak to them in a nice polite way. (B p.1)

He presented a live example,

So, for example, a principal may speak to students, first of all, about academics, be positive and polite, but then discipline. You have to speak to them with firm voice and be very, you know, authoritative, as well the principal can also show a light of good sense of humor side when he comes to sports, clubs, holidays. So with each group he speaks in different directions as well. (B p.2)

Carl also stressed the importance of both formal and informal ways.

At the same time, you want formal in some situations and then other times you want it informal. Someone who is very cold, very difficult to approach, makes communication very difficult. So at times informal communication helps the entire school or helps the whole environment of the school. (C p. 1)

Diana proposed, "A principal should do all those, verbal, non-verbal, formal, informal."
(D p.1)

Elisabeth also affirmed, " ...(the principal) has to communicate in all directions because some teachers and students are more receptive to different kind of communication." (E p. 1)

*On-site Observation*

Paul always paid attention to his behavior.

> After the prayer, the principal walks around (sort of non-verbal communication.... ), Showing the students that they have got the attention from the school and are well taken care of. When he meets some students in the corridor, he chats with them ( greetings, reminding the student of something, etc.) (Observational Journal p. 3)

He tried to make his leadership appropriate. He would rather be a friend to all stakeholders, rather than an administrator.

> Paul asks Alan to come to the office, talking about classroom teaching, kids, teachers evaluation, etc. They are talking in such an informal way. It is not like a Principal is talking to a teacher, but like two friends are talking for better solution with mutual respect. After the conversation, Mr. Principal sees off Alan at the office door.

> Then the Principal casually chats with the secretary about today's agenda, appointments, very friendly, joking to create rapport...(Observational Journal p. 4)

## Task Achievement

Task achievement, which is the ultimate outcome of leadership, is supposed to be achieved by effective communication. Paul was clear that his leadership is based on upward, downward, horizontal, and diagonal communication, which helped to achieve the tasks.

> Ok, downwards, and there might be a new policy on air ...that comes from the Board So we have to do it. You don't have the choice. (P p.4)

> Going upwards many times I will go in the situation. If I got a parents to come to school, let's say, there is a..., let's say, there is a teacher that very weak, and they are doing things that got the complaint from the parents, that we try to solve it. This is going. You say that may be some trouble, and might be going further. I called our superintendent, saying, this is what I'm doing. I've got this...this is the step I'm taking. (P p.4)

> I know about horizontally, I think I'm always doing that step. I'll go to a meeting and say, you know, this is a happening in this school. Can you, give me some suggestion about how we as a group can help about. They know I have to make up the decision at

the end. But at least I give them the opportunity to give me some feedback, and then I tell them this is my decision I want. I know it not going to be comfortable to everybody. This is what I am going to do. (P p.4)

Diagonally, I'm always talking to students. Then all the time I'm talking with students what they like, what bothers them. I keep it up with the student counselor, hear what they want to try different things. (P p.5)

He had his "passion and compassion" in this process and his job.

And in this job you have to have passion... and compassion. There is another... these two phrases I want to make sure that you hear, because I really believe them. It's not what you teach kids that they remember how you treat them.(P p.4)

He articulated that "The best communication is face to face, second would be phone call, third

you kind of going to the print."(P p.1)

Vivian also depicted her experience of 4-way communication.

One example of downward communication in our school that would be a good example, would be our Monday memo, because the information flows from Terry and myself.. The Monday memo is one of my major responsibilities in my portfolio as vice principal here. And that is a tool you're using to keep our staff updated on school issues, to express concerns about our observations, and to inform staff of what's coming up during the week in terms of people... school and conferences found raising activities, locker clean up, staff meeting, things like that. So that's a very, very, very important communication to all respect to that. (V p.3)

So I phoned the board office to speak to Paul, the superintendent of our school, to ask him what's his impression once of the day, what my decision could ultimately look like. The reasonable myself considering because it's quite upheaval, you canceled something that's scheduled to happen outside, out of the school venue. He communicated with me in a very fair way, I thought he refused to make a decision for me but guided me through some, some issue to think about, and left me with the decision to make when I spoke to him at about nine o'clock in the morning, so that's an example of upward communication that I initiated in order to help clarify for me a decision I had to make in my role as the vice principal of the school. (V p.4)

The horizontal communication happens, for myself right now, to the greatest extent for me because Paul and myself are communicating constantly with each other in the form of writing, or leave each other through email over the course of the day. (V p.4)

I think it's going to happen in the future, we'll probably decline it because I'm rather new, I'm not afraid to go diagonally to other people if I need support in my decision making, and that's mostly you move diagonal is all about phoning other schools to find

out how do you do things, fund raising. I have phoned to another vice principal in another seven-and-eight school to find out some information about their fund raising and how they run their talk shop, and, and it's just to get some information on how other people are doing things, so that I can better operate our own school.(V.p.4)

From her experience, she realized that to achieve a task, a leader has to be "non-confrontational".

I think that is one of the key factors to be non-confrontational. I was this morning with the parents who had the concern you, you have the responsibility as the leader to take the control as much as you can over the conversation, so that the conversation is soft. Because if you come across as aggressive, then you're back to the power struggle again. (V p.6)

Meanwhile, she suggested an administrator "write down things"

And make sure you write down things, so that you remember what you want to say, because you will get off the phone and say, I shouldn't have said that. And you don't ....it can become an unsuccessful case of communication as that's the most important thing and you forgot to say it. (V p.10)

Alan presented his perceptions on the 4-direction communication, and emphasized it is essential to achieve tasks.

Downward that's I suppose you are speaking direction from the ministry, from the board to the teachers. Downward the very important issues, downward the very important information and direction we need to take. Yes, absolutely. There's downward communication. We need that and that's often down in paper.(A p.2)

Upward absolutely, our administrators in this school and most of the administrators I work with are very good about asking us, how we feel of various issues and getting our input. I think sometimes they forget what it is like to be in the changes, not just to... to... to bother them anyway. But they are busy doing other thing. So it's good for them to hear what we are seen because things do change and they know that. The classroom has changed. The parent perspective and the attitudes and expectations have changed.(A p.2)

Horizontally, yes, absolutely, we speak across the board all the time, with our administrators and with our fellow colleagues. (A p.2)

Diagonally, it happens all the time. We have study groups, well, we form small teams and we quiz crossing different curriculums different people different ideas and you know we reported back to our administrators. (A p.2)

Diana suggested a leader should know how "to facilitate it all, to make sure that the

communication is going in all directions." and "he might need to sort of be a bridge" (D p.1)

Elisabeth also suggested a leader "has to communicate in all directions because some teachers and students are more receptive to different kind of communication." (E  p. 1)

Profiles of the participants in the study, the data, and the four themes: vision, commitments, interpersonal relationships and communication competence, which developed from the analysis of the data, were presented in this chapter. The interpretation of findings is presented in chapter five. It answers the research questions and discusses the findings in relation to the literature.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

## Introduction

Effective communication practices are essential in working with others in school organizations, helping to establish the tone of the vision, shape attitudes, and build commitment to the vision. School leaders must recognize that effective communication is more than nuts and bolts, and that words alone are not enough. Therefore, it is important to re-study the process of communication. Communication contributes to the principal's ability to articulate a vision that is clear and shared by both members of the organization and various constituencies. Communication builds a sense of community and ownership, which serves to guide all aspects of organizational behaviors, and that leads to change. The purpose of this case study was to explore the communication strategies used by one school principal in the daily operation of the school he administered.

For this purpose, the researcher raised the following three research questions:

1. What communication strategies did the school principal exercise in the daily administration of the school?

2. What were the factors that enhanced communication in the school?

3. What were the factors that interfered with communication in the school?

The study was conducted using a case study methodology (Bogdan & Biklen 2003). Data were collected by means of document analysis and semi-structured interviews, the research perceived four themes that emerged from the analysis of the data: vision, commitment, interpersonal relationship and communication competence. These themes illuminated the seven respondents' perceptions on school leadership for effective communication. In this chapter, the

researcher presented the interpretation of the four main themes to extend the analysis and discuss the findings in relation to the literature, in order to answer the research questions for the purpose of developing leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21$^{st}$ century.

## Communication Strategies for the School Principal to Exercise in the Daily Administration of the School

Communication is the lifeblood of the school; it is a process that links the individual, the group, and the organization.(Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996, p. 176). With our great leap into the 21$^{st}$ century, school management is now facing an increased number of challenges. It emerged from the data that to be an effective communicator, a school leader must have his/her communication strategies that: 1) hold onto an overall vision regarding school culture, growth, Christian values, and expectations 2)make commitments to accomplish the vision by means of motivation, influence, stimulation, consideration.

**Vision**

Communication occurs on a day-to-day level in schools. Effective communication practices are essential in working with others in school organizations. When the leader is an effective communicator, the vision and mission of the school can be effectively shared with staff, parents, students, and the large community. (Palestini, 1999). From the data analysis, the perceptions of the respondents showed the significance of vision for school leaders to accomplish successful school operation. These perceptions regarding vision focused on: school culture, growth, Christian values and expectations.

From four respondents' voices, the vision to foster good school culture could be perceived. For example, Diana was aware that, "Because we're Catholic school, we're strong in

morals and that kind of culture is what the principal tries to foster…". Alan stated, "… it's

Catholicity. It's the most important part of what we do here, that we, you know, to use the term

the Christian ethic is built into everything we do all day, every lesson you teach.". Paul, the

Principal, was always trying to build up the school culture, "What I do is I create an environment,

where they can do better, and they would want to do better.". Vivian, the Vive Principal,

articulated, "Well, the culture that we are trying to foster here is Christ centric."

Besides, the growth of a school is to be steered by the principal. Paul, the principal,

expressed his vision by saying, "My role is to try to facilitate growth.". The rest of the

respondents didn't mention their attitudes towards the vision to facilitate growth. However, in

the school's Eagle Planner, this vision is clearly stated. As the stakeholders of the school, they

were involved in the Planner making, and they were supposed to bear the vision in minds.

What's more, four respondents provided insights into their perception about Christian

values. For example, Carl's response is symbolic. He assumed that everyone bore the Christian

values in mind. "…we're certainly a Catholic school. So we have to reflect Catholic and

Christian values." (C  p. 2).  Paul, the Principal articulated his Christian value, "Well, we're in

the Catholic school. What we do is based on the Gospel. We don't do things because it's just

nice things to do. We do it because Jesus challenged us to make a difference, to go

forwards, …..." (P  p.7). The values held by the leader are of the utmost importance. Sergiovanni

believed, "What a leader stands for is more important than what he/she does" (Sergiovanni, 1984,

p. 106). He/She must serve as a model of those values, transforming the values of the

organization, if necessary, in order to help bring about the realization of the vision (Sergiovanni

& Carver, 1980).

Three participants demonstrated their perception on expectations (or goals). For example,

Paul had his expectations for the school development. He expected every stakeholder could be

the leader, "I'm not going to be around everyday. I have to communicate to them that they have

something to offer in leadership." This finding is consistent with the finding of Cybert's (1990)

and Nanus's (1992) that true leaders are expected to do more than simply conduct meetings,

control agendas, and keep track of events. A key piece of leadership is the ability to hold onto an

overall vision while moving a group through the process necessary to achieve that vision.

Leaders need to set long- and short-term goals, focus attention on relevant activities, manage

conflict, and empower other group members to contribute to the creative process (Cybert, 1990;

Nanus, 1992).

One more perception related to the finding is, on the first page of the Eagle Planner, the

Vision of the school was clearly printed:

> **My doors are open, come in, you are safe and welcome here**
> **I stand here as a public witness that quality learning**
> **In a Christian-centered environment, underpins the total**
> **Education of the students.**
> **I stand for distinctiveness in purpose and in outcomes**
> **I stand for academic excellence, for self-worth, for respect.**
> **I am a place where each student develops his/her potential as an individual, and**
> **Contributing responsible member of society who will:**
> **Think clearly, feel deeply, act wisely and justly, love tenderly, and will walk humbly with**
> **his or her God.**

This showed the vision of the school was not only conveyed by the conduct of the

administrator, but also demonstrated in the written form. In other words, communication in the

school conveyed the vision to every stakeholder. This finding is consistent with what Tichy and

Devanna (1986) stated:

> A very important corollary characteristic is that the leader must be able to communicate
> that vision both to internal and external constituencies. No matter how worthy a vision is,

if it does not get communicated to those who need to know, it is useless. Without vision, there is no revitalization. (p. 146).

## Commitments

To achieve the goals and vision of the school, an administrator is supposed to be committed to lead the change process, and bring those commitments into practice.(Aviolo, 1994). Those commitments are another theme emerged form the data. they include: motivation, influence, stimulation and consideration.

Three respondents, Paul, Vivian, and Alan talked abut motivation. It is part of commitment to be fulfilled by any administrator. Paul developed his own insight on motivation, "What I do is create an environment, what they can do better, and they would want to do better. I don't motivate them, they have to motivate themselves..." (P p.2). Although Paul said, "I don't motivate them", his following speech, "Becoming a leader does not mean power or authority. It means to give, or to facilitate, to guide and to mould, and to help, and to assist people." (P p.10) Paul indicated he was using his role, the principalship, to motivate people. What's more, the school Motto, "we are our brothers' keeper", motivated every stakeholder. Bass (1996) articulated Inspirational Motivation. Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. Team spirit is aroused. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed. The leader gets followers involved in envisioning attractive future states. The leader creates clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and also demonstrates commitment to goals and the shared vision.

Six participants mentioned that a good leader should have influence on their colleagues by establishing a good example of himself. Vivian wanted to make herself an example of "demonstrating a healthy citizenship." (V p.8) Diana suggested a leader "making sure he is a good loyal model for, for the teachers and the students". (D p.2). These fell into another

component of transformational leadership. Bass (1996) addressed Charismatic Leadership or Idealized Influence. Transformational leaders behave in ways that result in their being role models for their followers. The leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them. Among the things the leader does to earn this credit is considering the needs of others over his or her own personal needs. The leader shares risks with followers and is consistent rather than arbitrary. He or she can be counted on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct. He or she avoids using power for personal gain and only when needed.

Four participants presented their perception on stimulation. Paul tried "to create opportunities for people", "to promote what they are doing", "to challenge the staff to make this school interesting, fun, and positive." and to "get the expertise going", "Comfort the afflicted, those are comfort. Comfort the afflicted, but you have to afflict the comfortable. You've got to get people moving". Bass (1996) conceptualized Intellectual Stimulation. Transformational leaders stimulate their followers' efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged. There is no public criticism of individual members' mistakes. New ideas and creative problem solutions are solicited from followers, who are included in the process of addressing problems and finding solutions. Followers are encouraged to try new approaches, and their ideas are not criticized because they differ from the leaders' ideas.

Six respondents mentioned about considerations relevant to school administration. Paul suggested considering more before making decisions. (P p.10) Vivian preferred "leading", "not autocratic". (V p.1) Bob suggested a principal "accept compromise and taking other people's ideas".(B p.3)

Bass (1996) also defined individualized consideration. Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual's needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor. Followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential. Individualized consideration is practiced as follows: New learning opportunities are created along with a supportive climate. Individual differences in terms of needs and desires are recognized. The leader's behavior demonstrates acceptance of individual differences (e.g., some employees receive more encouragement, some more autonomy, others firmer standards, and still others more task structure). A two-way exchange in communication is encouraged, and "management by walking around" work spaces is practiced. Interactions with followers are personalized. (e.g., the leader remembers previous conversations, is aware of individual concerns, and sees the individual as a whole person rather than as just an employee). The individually considerate leader listens effectively. The leader delegates tasks as a means of developing followers. Delegated tasks are monitored to see if the followers need additional direction or support and to assess progress; ideally, followers do not feel they are being checked on.

The Eagle Planner presented the overall commitments of the school to all members of the school community in the written form. This path of communication helped to make all the stakeholders aware of the commitments and get the goals clear for them to achieve.

To achieve the goals and vision of the school, any administrator is supposed to commit to lead to change, and bring those commitments into practice. He/She cannot expect that others in the organization will practice behaviors that the leader does not practice. School leaders should try to be transformational leaders. The transformational leader is able to inspire the members of the organization to aspire to, and to achieve, more that they thought was possible (Aviolo, 1994; Bennis, 1986; Bosler & Bauman, 1992; Hoover, 1991; Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Kuhnert,

1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1991; Sagor, 1991; Yammarino, 1994;). He/She must be adept at using symbols (Aviolo, 1994; &Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990) to motivate, to inspire, to give value to intentions and actions (Bennis, 1984), to indicate priorities, and to show strong advocacy (Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992). The transformational leader is a teacher of the entire school community (Cuban, 1989). He/She must model, for the community, the behaviors that will lead to change (Bosler & Bauman, 1992).

### Factors That Enhanced Communication in the School

Interpersonal Relationships are the third theme emerged from the data analysis, which answered the second research question: What were the factors that enhanced communication in the school?

Paul delineated the relationships:

> Our whole communication in society is built on relationship. And relationships are built on four things: you have to respect someone, so we talk, we see double respect. We cooperate. The third one is to be able to communicate, not me telling you, but both of us. And the last one, you have to be able to accept differences. That make a sound relationships, whether it's your spouse, whether with your special friends, whether with your classmates, whether it's the community. You have the relationship. You have to have their support. (P p.7)

Obviously, human relationship is all about people, it is the base for educational leadership. (Razik & Swanson, 2001). To achieve effective communication, a leader must build up close interpersonal relationship. It emerged from the data that open minds, respect and trust, rapport and compromise were factors that enhanced communication.

Six respondents stressed the significance of open minds. Vivian stated, "I think one of the most important things with communicating in the school is open minds of communication…". Diana made it clear "…. as long as our principal is open, when not negative comments, I think things could have been done better." (D p.2)

Five participants articulated respect and trust in their speeches. Vivian believed, "no matter what, everybody in all the different ways we communicate, everybody has to be treated with dignity and respect." (V p.9) Alan was aware of the importance of trust and respect, "Well, first of all, I suppose you have to get trusting relationships, trust absolutely. And that trust comes from, I suppose for the most part, comes from the fact you have respect for that person's ability to do what they're doing. And their ability to understand what it is we are trying to do." (A p.3)

In communicating with their faculties and staffs, administrators know they must create a trusting and supportive environment. (Palestini,1999) Rapport is when two or more people synchronize their realities to some degree. They are in some kind of proximity to each other, they are willing to interact, they agree on some of the means of communicating, and they understand each other to some degree. For communication to be effective there needs to be rapport. According to my observation in the school, rapport could be seen everywhere anytime, students greeting teachers and principals, teachers and principals greeting each other, chatting in the breaks like friends rather than leaders and subordinates.

Take one of my observations for example.

> Then Paul walks to the secretary's reception desk, casually chats with the secretary about today's agenda, appointments, very friendly, joking to create rapport......
>
> Paul: Well, Laurie, what's our plan today?
>
> Laurie: Today is not that busy. You' ve got an appointment with Lisa's parent at 2 pm. And that's it.
>
> Paul: oh, no wonder the weather is so warm and cozy. (both laughter) . Any mail today?
>
> Laurie: Here you are. Just newspapers.
>
> Paul: Laurie has been here for just two months, but she seems to have known me for a long time. She knows everything now, and she has done a great job. Now she is the boss. I have to follow her. (laughter)

(Observation Journal p. 4)

In the interviews, five participants implied rapport was necessary in school operation. Bob's experience showed that rapport could be built through personal connection, "Based on my experience, I find that with staff, students and parents, get to know them personally and then they know me personally makes a big difference." (B p.2) Carl indicated an environment of rapport "make people feel warm and welcome". (C p. 2)

Three respondents mentioned or implied compromise. Bob suggested that a principal have to "be willing to accept compromise". (B p.3) As part of making compromise, Paul agreed to "accepting differences". (P p. 10) Vivian even insisted that a leader had to "be diplomatic" (V p.1)

The relationship between the individuals or groups communicating, as well as the type of climate they create during their communication, affects the accuracy with which messages are given and received. (Palestini, 1999). When people have a close interpersonal relationship, their communication tends to be more accurate and open. On the contrary, when they distrust each other, they are more likely to be secretive or hesitant to speak openly. This is why it is imperative for school administrator to establish close relationship with their colleagues if they expect to be effective.

## Factors That Interfered with Communication in the School

From the data, the respondents identified the fourth theme: Communication Competence, which consisted of the factors that interfered with communication in the school. In educational institutions, Striplin (1987) found that the ability of school principals to perform effectively as instructional leaders is contingent on their degree of competence in communication. A leader must be able to communicate in a way that "upholds and 'fits into' the existing cultural value

system or transcends that system by articulating an alternative value system" (Barge, 1994, p.

238). As such, leaders must be able to understand their environment and interpret it in a way that

makes sense to group members. Communication Competence articulated by the respondents

included the following: receptiveness, articulation, appropriateness, task achievement.

It revealed from the data analysis that all seven respondents contended receptiveness.

Paul articulated, "You've got to be receptive to what the other people are saying. That's the

communication." (P p.9) He stressed that receptive was all about "listening" and

"understanding". He also knew a leader had to "be approachable". (P p.10) Vivian had her own

way to be receptive, "I think everything should be upfront." (V p.1). She also paid much

attention to "listening and understanding". But she was aware "listening is the biggest block to

communication". (V p.4) Bob believed that in order to be receptive, administrators had to

achieve listening and feedback. He noted:

> Listening is very important to understand all situations and make sure everyone is
> happy and content. And also feedback is very important because people need to be
> acknowledged and realize that what they are doing. He is on the right track. (B p.2)

Rogers and Farson (1995) suggest that the leader must be available, approachable, and

able to listen intelligently and carefully to others, conveying the feeling that he/she is as

concerned about them as the situation that is being addressed. Further, they offer that the leader

must be attentive to both the content of the message and the feelings of the sender. The feedback

given the sender must make clear that the message was appreciated in terms of both its meaning

and the feelings with which it was conveyed. More specifically, to be an effective communicator,

the leader must be an active listener, acquiring the total meaning of the message and observing

the underlying feelings of the message, while noting and being sensitive to all verbal and

nonverbal clues displayed by the sender.

Five respondents voiced articulation. Paul was aware of the significance of articulation, "I kind of think the key factors in there you have to be able to be articulate and explain what you mean." (P p.6), meanwhile, he pointed out "You've got to mean what you say, say what you mean, and live what you believe."(P p.5) Vivian shared the same perception. She contended, To mean what you say and say what you mean but do it diplomatically so that there isn't an edge on how we come across to various communities that we serve in the school.". (V p.6)

The ability to clearly communicate during speaking and writing tasks is an essential component of effective leadership. Spoken language is our most human characteristic, which is fundamental for learning, working, and socialization. There is certainly a direct correlation between effective leadership and effective communication within the working environment. "Effective communication occurs when each party conveys ideas that are accurately understood." (Kaye, 1998. p. 44).

Appropriateness is one of the most conventional conceptions of communication competence (Larson, Backlund, Redmond, & Barbour, 1978). Appropriateness includes many aspects, such as verbal and non-verbal, formal and informal, silence, sense of humor, etc.

All seven participants expressed their perception on appropriateness. Paul communicated in both formal and informal ways, "So I do both, formally and informally. I think there is special places, special time in our school that's rather important to do both.". (P p.3) Vivian believed "Body language can, facial expression can do the talking."(V p.2) and some times, silence was good, "When you are working with students, I think that's... there are things you can say, and then often with some students, there are things we don't have to say.". (V p.2) " It's best not to say anything because sometimes when we are verbal with students because of the heated moment type of situations. What you say can be taken the wrong way.". (V p.2) She was also aware that

non-verbal type is "not a good idea with staff because it could be viewed as you are ignoring them, that you don't like them, that you don't talk to them, that you don't listen to them, because you're not communicating with them verbally." (V p.2). Meanwhile, she contended, "As a vice principal, you really have to cognizant of, when you use humor, and how you use it. And so there's a final line, there's a final end of humor." (V p.3). Diana proposed, "A principal should do all those, verbal, non-verbal, formal, informal."(D p.1) Elisabeth also affirmed, "(the principal) has to communicate in all directions because some teachers and students are more receptive to different kind of communication." (E p. 1)

Green (2001) indicates that communication in schools or school districts flows in several directions: downward, upward, horizontally, and diagonally (p. 100). Five respondents indicated that administrators had to go through all theses four directions to achieve the agreed upon goals and objectives. Paul was clear that his leadership is based on upward, downward, horizontal, and diagonal communication, which helped to achieve the tasks. Vivian shared the same opinions. Diana suggested a leader should know how "to facilitate it all, to make sure that the communication is going in all directions...."(D p.1) and "he might need to sort of be a bridge between...he is available for that." (D p.1) Elisabeth also suggested a leader "has to communicate in all directions because some teachers and students are more receptive to different kind of communication." (E p. 1)

There are more revealing from the data concerning communication competence. Paul had his "passion and compassion" in his job. He commented:

> And in this job you have to have passion and compassion, these two phrases I want to make sure that you hear, because I really believe them. It's not what you teach kids that they remember how you treat them.(P p.4)

From her experience, Vivian realized that to achieve a task, a leader has to be "non-

confrontational". She stated:

> I think that it is one of the key factors to be non-confrontational. You have the responsibility as the leader to take the control as much as you can over the conversation, so that the conversation is soft. If you come across as aggressive then you're back to the power struggle again. (V p.6)

Meanwhile, she suggested an administrator "write down things", Vivien added:

> Make sure you write down things, so that you remember what you want to say, because you will get off the phone and say, I shouldn't said that. It can become an unsuccessful case of communication as that's the most important thing and you forgot to say it. (V p.10)

It would appear that competent communication is regarded more highly than such skills as motivating employees, decision making, delegating, flexibility, and educational background. (Murphy and Peck, 1980) Communication competence helps overcome factors or barriers that interfered with communication.

# CHAPTER SIX

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary

Like management in other settings, educational administration stands at a critical juncture in theory and practice.(Razik & Swanson, 2001). Comprehension and application of various effective communications are crucial competencies needed by educators during this crucial period of educational change. The quality of a school's communication seriously affects its effectiveness. Effective communication practices are essential in working with others in school organizations. It helps to establish the tone of the vision, shape attitudes, and build commitment to the vision. School leaders must recognize that effective communication is more than nuts and bolts, and that words alone are not enough.

In order to develop leadership strategies that enabled a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21$^{st}$ century, the researcher designed a case study (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003) to explore the communication strategies used by one school principal in the daily operation of the school he administered, and raised the following three research questions:

1. What communication strategies did the school principal exercise in the daily administration of the school?

2. What were the factors that enhanced communication in the school?

3. What were the factors that interfered with communication in the school?

The study was conducted primarily through the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews in one school under one Board of Education in North-western Ontario. Seven stakeholders in that school participated in the interview. The semi-structured interviews

were carried out by the researcher, using a notepad to take field notes. The sessions were audio taped. The tape was transcribed. The respective interview lasted for approximately 20-60 minutes. During the interviews, the researcher noted any information or phrases which were especially important. The researcher asked the participants to elaborate on or to clarify these phrases. The researcher used a research journal to record the process. Meanwhile, the researcher collected official documents of the school.

By means of document analysis and semi-structured interviews, the researcher explored the process of communication for school operations. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (1) vision (2) commitments (3) interpersonal relationships and (4) communication competence. The following sections discuss the conclusion which grew out of the findings of this thesis, and the recommendations that were made.

## Conclusion

From the data analysis, the perceptions of the respondents show the significance of vision for school leaders to accomplish successful school operation. The vision covers school culture, growth, Christian values and expectations. It guides the leader's behavior(s) and decisions, and serves as a reference point for all activities within the organization. All processes and actions are judged in the light of whether or not they aid the organization in achieving its vision.(Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992). That vision speaks to the highest purposes of the organization (Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992), and serves to give meaning to the job done by every member (Tichy & Devanna, 1986) of the organization by creating shared goals to work toward. It also engenders optimism for the future of the organization. True leaders are expected to do more than simply conduct meetings, control agendas, and keep track of events. A key piece of leadership is the ability to hold on to an overall vision while moving a group through the process necessary to

achieve that vision. Leaders need to set long- and short-term goals, focus attention on relevant activities, manage conflict, and empower other group members to contribute to the creative process. (Cybert, 1990; Nanus, 1992).

The respondents also perceived a school administrator must make commitments to achieve the goals and vision of the school. Respondents described a number of commitments which they believed a school leader should fulfill. Those commitments include: 1) motivation 2) influence 3) stimulation 4) consideration. To achieve the goals and vision of the school, any administrator is supposed to commit to lead to change, and bring those commitments into practice. School leaders must be adept at using symbols (Aviolo, 1994; &Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990) to motivate, to inspire, to give value to intentions and actions (Bennis, 1984), to indicate priorities, and to show strong advocacy (Harvey, Frase, & Larick, 1992).

There is a perception among stakeholders that Interpersonal Relationships play a key role in school communication. Human relationship is all about people, it is the base for educational leadership. (Razik & Swanson, 2001). It can be perceived from the data that close interpersonal relationships enhanced communication, which contained the following factors: open minds, respect and trust, rapport and compromise. When people have close interpersonal relationships, their communication tends to be more accurate and open. On the contrary, when they distrust each other, they are more likely to be secretive or hesitant to speak openly. This is why it is imperative for school administrator to establish close relationship with their colleagues if they expect to be effective. (Palestini, 1999)

From the data, the respondents identified that Communication Competence consisted of factors that interfered with communication. Communication competence was embodied by receptiveness, articulation, appropriateness, task achievement. The respondents had a very clear

understanding of the importance of communication competence in accomplishing successful school operation. In educational institutions, Striplin (1987) found that the ability of school principals to perform effectively as instructional leaders is contingent on their degree of competence in communication. A leader must be able to communicate in a way that "upholds and 'fits into' the existing cultural value system or transcends that system by articulating an alternative value system" (Barge, 1994, p. 238). As such, leaders must be able to understand their environment and interpret it in a way that makes sense to group members. Besides, the ability to clearly communicate during speaking and writing tasks is an essential component of effective leadership. Spoken language is our most human characteristic, which is fundamental for learning, working, and socialization. "Effective communication occurs when each party conveys ideas that are accurately understood." (Kaye, 1998. p. 44).

In this study, four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (1) vision (2) commitments (3) interpersonal relationships and (4) communication competence. These four themes are interrelated and form the communication strategies in the school. They answer the research questions and actually become the leadership strategies that enable school leaders to achieve effective communication in school settings. School leaders must hold a clear vision, and fulfill commitments to achieve the goals and vision of the school. In this process, school leaders must build up close interpersonal relationships to enhance communication, and overcome factors or barriers that interfere with communication by means of communication competence.

There is more to be perceived from this study. Communication occurs on a day-to-day level in schools. School leaders must recognize that effective communication is more than nuts and bolts, and that words alone are not enough. Effective communication practices are essential in working with others in school organizations. It helps to establish the tone of the vision, shape

attitudes, and build commitments to the vision. Jewell (1998) puts this in a contemporary context by saying that "given the importance of influence, cooperation, imitation, and the leadership, it is clear that communication is the means by which things get done in organizations"(p. 448). Obviously, the quality of a school's communication seriously affects its effectiveness.

In this new century, school management is now facing an increased number of challenges, such as nurturing school culture, promoting faculty professional growth, developing school community relations, etc. When the leader is an effective communicator, the vision and mission of the school can be effectively shared with staff, parents, students, and large community. ( Palestini, 1999). Comprehension and application of various effective communications are crucial for school leaders to accomplish effective leadership during this crucial period of educational change. There is certainly a direct correlation between effective leadership and effective communication within the working environment. (Kaye, 1998. p. 44). No matter what leadership style is exercised, school leaders are trying to achieve effective communication. In school settings, Effective leadership demands effective communication; effective communication makes the effectiveness of leadership.

## Recommendations

In this study, four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (1) vision (2) commitments (3) interpersonal relationships and (4) communication competence. These four themes are interrelated and form the communication strategies in the school. They answer the research questions and actually become the leadership strategies that enable school leaders to achieve effective communication in school settings. There are more to explore for school leaders to achieve effectiveness and efficiency. Then what could be recommended for future research?

One recommendation is that future studies should focus on developing a holistic model for quality in school management to evaluate the correctness of vision and effectiveness of commitment. It emerged from the data that to be an effective communicator, a school leader must have his/her communication strategies: 1) hold on to an overall vision of school culture, growth, values and expectations 2) make commitments to accomplish the vision by means of motivation, influence, stimulation, consideration. There is no doubt that the correctness of vision and effectiveness of commitment will surely influence school operation. Then, how can the correctness of vision and effectiveness of commitments be evaluated? Could the concept of "Total Quality Management"(TQM) be applied in this field? These questions will lead to more future research.

There is communication flow in school settings. Communication in schools or school districts flows in several directions: downward, upward, horizontally, and diagonally (Green, 2001, p. 100). In this process, power also flows. Another recommendation is to study power flow in school settings. The phenomenon of educational leadership is about power. Different individuals and groups within and outside the school settings can exert power. If the use of power is manipulative and autocratic, it raises questions about the ethics of power for school leaders to explore in the future.

A third recommendation is that school leaders must update leadership constantly. A thorough knowledge of leadership theory can make some sense of the apparent chaos that the administrator faces on almost a daily basis. However, there is no one singular leadership style that is most appropriate in all situations. Recently, a plethora of research studies have been conducted on leadership and leadership styles. The overwhelming evidence indicates that there is no one singular leadership style that is most appropriate in all situations. ( Palestini, 1999, p. 57).

An administrator's leadership style should be adapted to the situation so that at various times task behavior or relationship behavior might be appropriate. At other times and in other situations, various degrees of both task and relationship behavior may be most effective.

In the 21st century, more and more challenges emerge in school management. Since the effective leader is expected to adapt his or her leadership style to an ever-changing environment, administration becomes an even more complex and challenging task, there is more for school leaders to study, the exploration on effective leadership and leadership styles should never end.

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# Appendixes

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## Appendix A

Carol Lynn Oldale, Director of Education
Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
115 Mary Street West
THUNDER BAY ON P7E 4K5

Feb. 5, 2004

Dear Carol Lynn Oldale,

I would like to ask for permission from Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board to conduct a study in one of the board's schools. This research on School Leadership for Effective Communication in the 21st Century is trying to explore the process of communication for school operations, in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

The intent of this research is (a) to investigate what leadership strategies a school leader can exercise to be an effective communicator; (b) to discover what the factors are that enhance communication; (c) to discover what the barriers are for a school leader to achieve effective communication. To accomplish this goal, I would like you to participate in some interviews in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

In this research, all the participants will remain fully anonymous. All information they provide will remain confidential and securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. However, the findings of this study will be made available to them at their request upon the completion of the study. All the participants are guaranteed that there is not risk in participating this research, and that, should they wish to, anyone may withdraw from the research at any time.

I would like to work in the school for a period of two months to accomplish this case study. Your permission and cooperation would be very much appreciated.

Thanks for your attention.

Sincerely

Ying She

# Lakehead
## U N I V E R S I T Y

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**Appendix B**

Mr. Principal
Bishop E. Q. Jennings
775 John St.
THUNDER BAY ON P7B 1Z7

Feb. 2, 2004

Dear Principal,

I would like to ask for your permission to conduct a study in your school. This research on School Leadership for Effective Communication in the 21st Century is trying to explore the process of communication for school operations, in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

The intent of this research is (a) to investigate what leadership strategies a school leader can exercise to be an effective communicator; (b) to discover what the factors are that enhance communication; (c) to discover what the barriers are for a school leader to achieve effective communication. To accomplish this goal, I would like you to participate in some interviews in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

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I would like to work in the school for a period of two months to accomplish this case study. Your permission and cooperation would be very much appreciated.

Thanks for your attention.

Sincerely

Ying She

955 Oliver Road Thunder Bay Ontario Canada P7B 5E1 www.lakeheadu.ca

# Lakehead
## UNIVERSITY

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**Appendix C**

Bishop E. Q. Jennings
775 John St.
THUNDER BAY ON P7B 1Z7

Feb. 2, 2004

Dear Participant:

I am going to conduct a study on School Leadership for Effective Communication in the 21st Century, trying to explore the process of communication for school operations, in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

The intent of this research is (a) to investigate what leadership strategies a school leader can exercise to be an effective communicator; (b) to discover what the factors are that enhance communication; (c) to discover what the barriers are for a school leader to achieve effective communication. To accomplish this goal, I would like you to participate in some interviews in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

In this research, you will remain fully anonymous. All information you provide will remain confidential and securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. However, the findings of this study will be made available to you at your request upon the completion of the study. You are guaranteed that there is not risk in participating this research, and that, should you wish to, you may withdraw from the research at any time.

Your cooperation would be very much appreciated.

Thanks for your attention.

Sincerely

Ying She

# Lakehead
U N I V E R S I T Y

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Dear Participant:

I am conducting a study on School Leadership for Effective Communication in the 21st Century, trying to explore the process of communication for school operations, in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

The intent of this research is (a) to investigate what leadership strategies a school leader can exercise to be an effective communicator; (b) to discover what the factors are that enhance communication; (c) to discover what the barriers are for a school leader to achieve effective communication. To accomplish this goal, I would like you to participate in some interviews in order to develop leadership strategies that enable a leader to achieve effective communication in school settings in the 21st century.

In this research, you will remain fully anonymous. All information you provide will remain confidential and securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. However, the findings of this study will be made available to you at your request upon the completion of the study. You are guaranteed that there is not risk in participating this research, and that, should you wish to, you may withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely

Ying She

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# Lakehead
## U N I V E R S I T Y

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# LETTER OF CONSENT

**Re: School Leadership for Effective Communication in the 21$^{st}$ Century**

I have received explanations about the nature of the study, its purpose, and procedures. My signature on this sheet indicates I understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate. It also indicates that I understand the following:

1. I am a volunteer and can withdraw at any time from the study.

2. There is no apparent risk of physical or psychological harm.

3. The data I provide will be anonymous and confidential.

4. The study results will be made available to me upon request.

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Signature of Participant                                        Date