



Serving with Ears and Heart: The Practice of Direct Communication in Enhancing Educator Performance

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
<p>This study explores the implementation of a direct communication approach in personnel administration at SMP Negeri 58 Bandung, specifically in the context of collecting Employee Performance Target (SKP) documents. Employing a descriptive qualitative case study method, the research reveals that one-way digital communication methods previously used were ineffective in ensuring timely and accurate administrative compliance. Through the application of personalized, empathetic, and dialogic direct communication—both face-to-face and via tailored digital messages—significant improvements were observed in document submission punctuality, data completeness, and teacher engagement. The approach also strengthened mutual trust and transformed organizational culture from passive and bureaucratic to collaborative and participatory. While challenges such as time constraints and varied teacher responsiveness were noted, the benefits outweighed the limitations. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that humanistic and interpersonal communication strategies remain effective in enhancing internal service quality and administrative performance within educational institutions.</p> <p>© 2024 UPI Journals and Publications Office</p>	<p>Article History: <i>Submitted/Received 11 Sept 2024</i> <i>First Revised 7 Nov 2024</i> <i>Accepted 29 Nov 2024</i> <i>First Available online 5 Dec 2024</i> <i>Publication Date 31 Dec 2024</i></p> <p>Keyword: <i>direct communication, school administration, personnel management, interpersonal communication, organizational culture</i></p>

1. INTRODUCTION

Personnel administration constitutes a vital foundation in school [governance](#) (Albadri, Septima, & Syahputra, 2024). The role of administrative staff extends beyond mere archiving and data management; they also serve as intermediaries between school management and educators or education personnel. However, in practice, communication barriers often emerge as a key issue, leading to delays in administrative processes, policy miscommunication, and low employee job satisfaction (Mulyasa, 2018). One approach proven effective in organizational settings is direct communication (Nisa & Misidawati, 2024). Direct communication is defined as the process of conveying messages openly, honestly, and efficiently without intermediaries, enabling faster information exchange and minimal distortion (Croucher et al., 2015). In the context of schools, direct communication has not yet become a widespread culture, particularly in interactions between administrative staff and teachers (Zaifullah, Cikka, & Kahar, 2021). Many decisions or instructions are disseminated through message groups or circular letters, which are typically one-way and passive in nature (Warat, 2024). This can result in varied interpretations and reduce the effectiveness of message delivery (Gunawan, 2016). In fact, findings by Sonesh et al. (2015) suggest that direct communication significantly influences perceptions of organizational justice and employee satisfaction, especially in complex work environments such as educational institutions.

Before the implementation of direct communication at SMPN 58 Bandung, the main issue in personnel management was the low effectiveness of two-way communication between administrative staff and teachers or educational personnel. Information was predominantly conveyed through circular letters or digital messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, which tended to be one-way, minimally interactive, and often left unread or unattended by recipients. A concrete case occurred when the collection of Employee Performance Target (SKP) documents for the monthly recap was delayed by several teachers. Although the information had been shared through the school's WhatsApp group, some teachers admitted to not reading the messages due to the high volume of group notifications, resulting in missed communications. Consequently, the submitted documents were inconsistent, some were incomplete, and the verification process was hindered. This situation demonstrates that one-way communication is not always effective, particularly

when lacking personal engagement. It highlights the limitations of one-way communication patterns that rely heavily on mass digital media without personal involvement (Nirmalasari, 2020). In fact, the effectiveness of internal communication within educational organizations is highly influenced by emotional engagement and interpersonal relationships among individuals, rather than merely the communication channels used (Gunawan, 2016). Furthermore, it has been noted that the quality of school administrative services is directly correlated with the quality of interpersonal communication built between administrative staff and teachers (Syafitri, Sesmiarni, & Devi, 2023). When communication is conducted in a personal and direct manner, there is an improvement in the understanding of instructions, clarity of procedures, and the emergence of collective responsibility in fulfilling administrative duties (Suriansyah & Aslamiah, 2020).

The recurring issue of delays in the collection of SKP documents indicates that a one-way communication approach via digital media remains ineffective in delivering administrative information that requires an immediate response (Rismawati, Ibrahim, & Arifudin, 2024). These delays and incomplete submissions of SKP documents have the potential to cause serious administrative consequences, including delays in reporting to the education office, disruptions in employee performance evaluations, and decreased accuracy in the school's personnel data system. Such impacts directly affect the school's accountability in managing its human resources (Fattah, 2018). Therefore, a more communicative and participatory approach is needed. Based on my academic experience and research in the field of coaching, the principle of direct communication was chosen as a solution because it emphasizes two-way, open, and direct communication that fosters trust between the parties involved (Mellyawati, 2023). Direct communication enables administrative staff to provide personalized explanations, receive real-time feedback, and create a more empathetic and solution-oriented dialogue space.

Direct communication in the context of coaching or workplace services can enhance role clarity, commitment, and individual accountability in task completion (Maulana & Tumanggor, 2023). This aligns with findings that highlight the importance of personal approaches and active engagement as critical factors in effective communication within complex work environments such as educational institutions (Sonesh et al., 2015). The implementation of this practice also represents an actualization of my academic competencies in the field of human resource development training, while simultaneously

serving as an effort to provide administrative services that are not only efficient, but also foster healthy, trustworthy, and professional working relationships.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a single case study design, focusing on the implementation of a direct communication strategy in the personnel administration services at SMP Negeri 58 Bandung. The aim of this study is to provide an in-depth depiction of the process and impact of applying direct communication within the context of collecting Employee Performance Target (SKP) documents, with emphasis on changes in teachers' administrative behavior and the quality of work relationships formed. The subjects of this research included the author, serving as the school's administrative staff and also the practitioner implementing the strategy, along with teachers and education personnel (tendik) who acted as partners in the administrative communication process. Data were collected using three primary techniques: participatory observation, documentation, and informal interviews. Participatory observation was conducted during the implementation of direct communication, in which the researcher recorded response patterns, response times, and the dynamics of communication occurring in both face-to-face interactions and digital messaging. Documentation was obtained from archives of SKP submissions, both before and after the practice was implemented, including data on submission timeliness and document completeness. Additionally, informal interviews were conducted with a purposively selected group of teachers to explore their perceptions of the direct communication approach, particularly in terms of understanding instructions, administrative motivation, and the quality of interpersonal interaction.

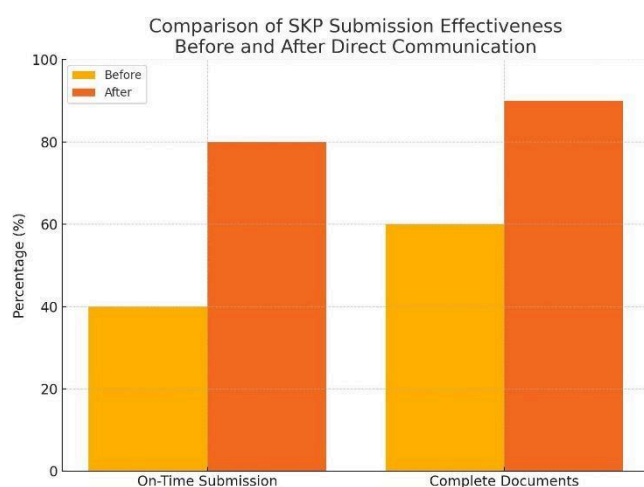
The implementation of direct communication was carried out systematically in two stages. The first was the preparation stage, which involved identifying weaknesses in previous communication patterns and designing communication scripts focused on message clarity, empathy, and motivational prompts. The second was the implementation stage, where communication was conducted directly—either through face-to-face meetings in the office or via personal and context-sensitive private messages. The researcher integrated coaching principles into these interactions to facilitate two-way dialogue, rather than merely delivering administrative instructions passively. The collected data were analyzed thematically using an open coding approach to identify common patterns in teacher responses and administrative outcomes. The analysis focused on five key indicators:

timeliness of document submission, completeness of data, frequency and quality of direct communication interactions, feedback from teachers, and changes in perceptions toward the school's administrative services. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing results from observations, documentation, and interviews, and by confirming the findings with informants as a form of participatory validation.

The entire research process was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles. The researcher ensured that all interactions were carried out transparently and without exerting pressure on the informants. The identities of the teachers who participated in the study were kept confidential, and all data collected were used solely for the purpose of improving the quality of educational services. Thus, the methods employed in this study not only address specific administrative issues but also contribute to strengthening communication approaches rooted in humanistic values within the school environment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the direct communication strategy in the personnel administration services at SMP Negeri 58 Bandung has shown significant results in improving the effectiveness of the Employee Performance Target (SKP) document collection process. These outcomes were obtained through data triangulation from participatory observation, administrative documentation, and informal interviews with teachers who were partners in the communication process. Overall, the observed impacts can be categorized into four main aspects: timeliness, document completeness, increased participation, and improved working relationships.



First, in terms of the timeliness of document submission, there was a notable improvement following the implementation of direct communication. Before the practice was introduced, more than half of the teachers submitted their SKP documents past the deadline, and some failed to submit at all until follow-up reminders were sent through the WhatsApp group. After the direct communication approach was applied—through personal office conversations and light coaching-based private messages—the majority of teachers (approximately 80%, based on manual records) submitted their documents on time during the first month of implementation. This change indicates that the presence of direct interpersonal communication can effectively foster a stronger sense of responsibility (Fitriah & Reohendi, 2022). Second, regarding the completeness and accuracy of document content, this approach also had a positive impact. Previously, many submitted documents were inconsistent in format, with some missing required data such as performance indicators or evaluation periods. After receiving direct explanations about the structure and content of the SKP documents, the number of technical errors decreased significantly. Based on observations, by the second month of implementation, more than 90% of documents adhered to the prescribed format without needing further corrections. This suggests that direct communication not only accelerates the collection process but also improves the quality of data entered into the school's administrative system. Third, this practice also led to increased participation and engagement from teachers in the administrative process. Through face-to-face communication, teachers were given space to ask questions, express challenges, and discuss their understanding of personnel policies. One teacher shared in an interview, "When it's explained directly, I feel more understood and respected. If it's through the group message, I'm sometimes hesitant to ask questions for fear of being ignored or seen as inattentive." This testimony illustrates that direct communication encourages more open and participatory interaction and strengthens teachers' sense of ownership over administrative tasks. Fourth, and equally important, is the development of a more collaborative and positive working relationship between administrative staff and teachers. Prior to the implementation, administrative relations tended to be formal and passive; teachers viewed personnel services as merely bureaucratic functions. However, following the application of a personal approach, a more warm and respectful relational dynamic began to emerge. The interactions fostered through direct communication also helped reduce the psychological distance between these two functional groups. Teachers began to

see administrative staff as partners rather than just messengers of bureaucratic instructions. This shift was evidenced by an increase in teacher initiative to consult directly on other HR-related matters beyond SKP, such as leave requests or clarification on promotions.

Nevertheless, this practice is not without its challenges. One of the primary obstacles is the limitation of time and energy, as the direct communication approach is personally intensive and requires significantly more effort and time compared to mass digital communication. Additionally, there is variation in teachers' responsiveness to this approach; not all teachers demonstrated openness or active responses, even when engaged in direct dialogue. Some continued to show passive tendencies, particularly those accustomed to one-way communication patterns. Despite these challenges, field data indicate that the overall benefits of this approach outweigh its limitations. Beyond its positive impact on work efficiency, this approach also contributes to transforming the school's organizational communication culture—from rigid, bureaucratic, and one-directional to more dialogic, inclusive, and relational. The researcher ensured that every interaction was conducted transparently and without pressure on the informants. The identities of the teachers participating in the study were kept confidential, and all collected data were solely used for the purpose of improving the quality of educational services. Thus, the methods used in this study not only address specific administrative problems but also contribute to reinforcing communication practices grounded in humanistic values within the school environment.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the direct communication approach in personnel services—particularly in the process of collecting SKP documents at SMPN 58 Bandung—has proven to produce significant positive impacts. Issues such as delays, incomplete documentation, and lack of understanding of administrative instructions were successfully addressed through more personal, open, and empathetic communication. This approach improved the timeliness of document submission, strengthened teachers' sense of responsibility, and fostered more collaborative working relationships between administrative staff and teachers or educational personnel.

Moreover, this practice has initiated a shift in the school's communication culture—from one that was previously passive and one-directional to one that is more dialogic and participatory. The implementation of this practice also demonstrates that humanistic and

interpersonal human resource management strategies remain relevant and effective in the school context, especially in enhancing work efficiency and internal service satisfaction.

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