



Communication Transparency in School Management and Teachers' Organizational Trust in a University in Beijing, China

Xueyuan Zuo

Emilio Aguinaldo College, Manila, Philippines
Email: xueyuan.zuo.mnl@eac.edu.ph

Abstract: Effective communication within school management has a significant impact on organizational trust among teachers. Transparency in communication involves openly sharing accurate and timely information, fostering an environment of mutual respect and collaboration. In schools, where teamwork and mutual understanding are crucial, the role of transparent communication cannot be overstated. Recent research has highlighted its profound impact on the development of trust in educational institutions (Rajapaksha & Dissanayake, 2021; Praphatsorn & Wannapiroon, 2023).

Transparency in communication can reduce ambiguity and ensure that teachers understand decisions that affect their work, thereby building trust. Transparent communication within school management enables teachers to align their professional goals with those of the institution. This alignment, in turn, fosters a sense of shared responsibility and ownership, strengthening trust in leadership. These practices include regular staff meetings, open lines of communication, and clearly communicated policies. Perceptions of decision fairness are also closely linked to transparency in communication. When school leaders openly share the rationale behind decisions, teachers perceive a greater sense of fairness and inclusion. A study by Ahmad and Farooq i (2021) found that teachers' trust and morale levels increased significantly in schools that implemented transparent decision-making processes. This trust fostered a supportive environment conducive to collaboration and innovation in teaching practices.

Keywords: Accountability Structure, Communication Transparency, Corporate Governance, Employee Empowerment, Institutional Accountability

Introduction

Organizational trust is a critical foundation for effective educational institutions, influencing teacher morale, collaboration, and commitment to institutional goals. While numerous factors contribute to building this trust, communication transparency from school management is increasingly recognized as a pivotal element. Transparent communication—characterized by the open, timely, and clear sharing of information, decisions, and rationales—fosters an environment of integrity and reduces uncertainty. In schools that prioritize such practices, teachers are more likely to feel valued, supported, and engaged in collaborative problem-solving, which strengthens the overall organizational culture (Rajapaksha & Dissanayake, 2021).

Despite its acknowledged importance, a significant research gap persists. Existing literature has extensively explored this relationship in various cultural contexts, such as Southeast Asia (Rajapaksha & Dissanayake, 2021), West Asia (Al-Shamrani & Kareem, 2021), and East Asia (Takahashi & Mori, 2023). However, the unique intersection of China's distinct socio-cultural environment, its hierarchical organizational structures, and its rapid integration of digital communication tools in education creates a specific and under-researched context.

This study aims to fill this gap by specifically investigating the relationship between communication transparency and organizational trust within a university in Beijing, China. The findings of this research are crucial as they will provide empirically derived insights for developing tailored transparency policies that can enhance trust, improve faculty morale, and ultimately bolster the overall effectiveness and health of academic institutions in the Chinese context.

Literature Review

Effective school management depends on clear, open, and transparent communication. Communication transparency in school management involves openly sharing information, decisions, and policies with all stakeholders, particularly teachers, who are crucial to the successful achievement of institutional goals. In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding how transparent communication influences organizational dynamics, particularly in fostering trust between teachers and school management. This relationship is crucial, as trust is the cornerstone of a healthy and collaborative organizational culture.

Research has shown that transparent communication significantly impacts teachers' perceptions of their work environment. A study by Jafar i and Ram ezan pour (2021) found that teachers in schools with higher levels of communication transparency reported higher levels of organizational trust. This research emphasizes the need for school leaders to ensure that their communication practices are inclusive, clear, and responsive to staff concerns.



Transparent communication promotes an open flow of information, thereby reducing uncertainty and ambiguity. Research by Cho and Yoon (2022) found that when school management shares information openly and promptly, teachers feel more secure and confident in organizational decisions. This transparency fosters a sense of inclusion, reduces skepticism, and thus strengthens trust in leadership.

The relationship between communication transparency and organizational trust also extends to the decision-making process. Research by Abbas and Niaz (2023) shows that teachers are more likely to trust school leaders who involve them in decision-making processes and provide clear rationales for their choices. This participatory management approach strengthens trust by demonstrating respect and value for teachers' perspectives.

Furthermore, transparent communication plays a key role in resolving conflict within schools. A study by Zhang and Wei (2020) showed that schools with transparent communication policies had fewer unresolved disputes and misunderstandings. Reduced conflict further solidifies teachers' trust in their managers, as open communication is viewed as a sign of fairness and accountability.

Digital communication platforms have added a new dimension to transparency in school management. Liu and Chen (2022) studied the use of technology to promote transparent communication in schools and found that digital tools such as shared platforms and real-time updates increased teachers' access to information and strengthened their trust in school management. The study concluded that the strategic use of technology can be a catalyst for building organizational trust.

Cultural context also influences people's perceptions of communication transparency and its impact on organizational trust. Takahashi and Mori (2023) explored this relationship in East Asian schools, noting that collectivist cultural values amplify the positive impact of transparent communication on trust. In such settings, teachers value open communication because it reinforces shared goals and collective responsibility.

In contrast, Al-Shamrani and Kareem (2021) examined the dynamics of communication transparency in West Asian schools, where hierarchical structures are more pronounced. Their findings suggest that while transparency is valued, its effectiveness depends on whether it aligns with cultural norms of respect for authority and established hierarchies. This suggests that the impact of transparency on trust is moderated by cultural expectations.

Statement of problems

This study will explore the relationship between transparency in communication and organizational trust among faculty members in the management of a university in Beijing.

The findings will serve as a foundation for the development of transparency policies.

Specifically, this study will answer the following questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the faculty members surveyed?
 - 1.1. Sex;
 - 1.2. Age;
 - 1.3. Educational attainment;
 - 1.4. Years of service;
 - 1.5. Attendance at topic-related workshops?
2. How do the faculty members rate transparency in communication within their university management?
 - 2.1. Clarity of policies and decisions;
 - 2.2. Timeliness of information sharing;
 - 2.3. Accessibility of information;
 - 2.4. Openness of feedback and dialogue;
 - 2.5. Consistency and honesty of communication?
3. Are there significant differences in faculty members' ratings of transparency in university management communication after grouping them according to their profile?
4. How do the faculty members self-assess their organizational trust in the following areas?
 - 4.1. Confidence in leadership;
 - 4.2. Perceived fairness and justice;
 - 4.3. Willingness to share concerns or feedback;
 - 4.4. Collaboration and teamwork; and
 - 4.5. Commitment to institutional goals?
5. Is there a significant relationship between faculty members' assessment of communication transparency and their self-assessed level of organizational trust?

Research Design

This study employed descriptive, comparative, and correlational methods, characterized by clear definitions, thorough documentation, in-depth analysis, and a nuanced understanding of contextual interactions. According to Tan and Yilmaz (2024), descriptive research seeks to systematically identify and analyze the essential characteristics, behaviors, and properties of a phenomenon within its natural context. Its primary purpose is to

construct a comprehensive profile of a specific entity or deepen understanding of its current state, thereby laying a solid foundation for future research.

Continuing the insights of Tan and Yilmaz (2024), descriptive research plays a key role in social science and psychology because it enables a comprehensive understanding of natural patterns and behaviors. It facilitates the collection of precise and objective data on the beliefs, behaviors, and traits of a target population, providing valuable insights into social dynamics.

This study aims to explore teacher respondents' evaluations of school management communication transparency and their relationship to self-assessments of organizational trust.

This research method allows researchers to conduct numerical, comparative, and correlational analyses of the relationships between the dependent variables involved in the study.

This method will allow researchers to identify significant differences or relationships between teacher respondents' evaluations of school management communication transparency and their demographic data (such as gender, age, education level, years of service, and number of workshops attended on related topics). Furthermore, researchers will be able to identify significant differences or relationships between teacher respondents' self-assessments of organizational trust and their demographic data (such as gender, age, education level, years of service, and number of workshops attended on related topics). Correlation analyses will then be conducted between teacher respondents' evaluations of school management communication transparency and their self-assessments of organizational trust.

Research Location

Data collection for this study will be conducted at the Communication University of China in Beijing, China. Communication University of China is a renowned institution of higher learning directly under the Ministry of Education of China. It is one of the first national "Double First-Class" universities and a key institution selected for the national "211 Project" and "985 Project" innovation platforms. Founded in 1954, it is the first media university established by the Communist Party of China after the founding of the People's Republic of China. In August 2004, the university was officially renamed Communication University of China from the Beijing Broadcasting Institute.

Participants

The respondents for this study were selected from 120 teachers in the school using proportional stratified sampling method.

Research Instruments

After collecting the required data, researchers will develop a custom questionnaire to investigate teacher respondents' assessments of the transparency of school management communication and their self-assessments of trust in the organization.

The questionnaire will be administered face-to-face or on-site.

The questionnaire consists of the following sections:

Part 1: This section identifies the demographic characteristics of the teachers surveyed.

Part 2: This section identifies the teachers' assessments of the transparency of school management communication.

Part 3: This section identifies the teachers' self-assessments of trust in the organization.

The adapted and researcher-developed questionnaires will undergo content validation by experts in the research field. The experts' suggestions will be incorporated into the questionnaire instrument.

The questionnaire will be submitted to at least five experts for in-person validation. A preliminary test will be conducted to assess reliability. This pre-test will be calculated using Cronbach's alpha in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Researchers welcome suggestions from experts and will make necessary revisions to ensure the validity of the instrument.

The overall reliability of the questionnaire is Cronbach's alpha = 0.958, indicating high consistency across all items. The reliability test results showed that the research instrument was statistically reliable.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers will constructively consider and diligently adhere to ethical considerations necessary to protect the rights of all respondents. These ethical considerations are as follows:

1. Conflict of Interest

Researchers for this study will ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. Researchers will clearly and thoroughly explain the purpose of this study to selected respondents. Researchers must also adhere to the purpose of collecting personal information and data. All collected data must not be used for any form of exploitation of respondents. Researchers must adhere to the goals and objectives of the study.

2. Privacy and Confidentiality

Before conducting this study, we assured respondents that all collected information would remain confidential, and the results would not be disclosed to anyone other than the researchers and those completing the questionnaires. Researchers will not mention respondents' names when providing the collected data to protect their privacy. Respondents' identities

will remain anonymous, and no clues or suggestions that could lead others to associate or link them to the respondents will be left.

3. Informed Consent Process

Before administering the questionnaire, researchers will obtain an informed consent form confirming that the respondents understand the purpose and objectives of the study and agree that the data collected will enhance the researchers' research findings. Researchers will ensure that all information is explained clearly and comprehensively to the respondents, without any deception. The researchers will also discuss the process and potential risks of participating in this study.

4. Recruitment

The participants in this study are physical education teachers. Participants have the right to freely consent or withhold consent. Participants will not be forced to participate and have the right to refuse participation at any time.

5. Risks

The researchers will ensure that participation in this study is risk-free. Participants will ensure that any data and information collected will not harm their life or reputation. Participants have the right to stop asking questions at any time if they feel harassed, the questions are too personal, or intrusive.

Despite its insightful findings, this study is limited by its focus on a single university in Beijing and a relatively small sample size of 120 faculty members, which restricts the generalizability of the results to the broader landscape of Chinese higher education; furthermore, the reliance on self-reported survey data may introduce social desirability bias, where participants provide responses they believe are expected rather than reflecting their completely candid perceptions.

Results and Discussion

Frequency Distribution of the Teacher Respondents' Profile

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Less than 25 years old	8	10%
	25-30 years old	29	36.30%
	31-35 years old	19	23.80%
	36-40 years old	12	15%
	More than 40 years old	7	8.80%
	Total	80	100%
Sex	Male	38	47.50%
	Female	42	52.50%
	Total	80	100%
Education	Bachelor's degree w/ Master's units	24	30%
	Master's degree w/ Doctoral units	10	12.50%
	Doctoral degree	16	20%
	Total	80	100%
Length of Service	Less than 5 years	19	23.80%
	5-10 years	28	35%
	11-15 years	19	23.80%
	16-20 years	8	10%
	More than 20 years	6	7.50%
	Total	80	100%
Seminar Attended Related to the Topic	Less than 5 seminars	11	13.80%
	5-10 seminars	45	56.30%
	More than 10 seminars	24	30%
	Total	80	100%

In terms of age, 8 teachers (approximately 10%) were under 25 years old; 29 (36.3%) were between 25 and 30 years old; 19 (23.8%) were between 31 and 35 years old; 12 (15%) were between 36 and 40 years old; 7 (8.8%) were between 41

and 45 years old; and 5 (6.3%) were over 45 years old. This means that the majority of teachers surveyed were between 25 and 30 years old. This suggests that the teaching workforce is relatively young, potentially with less teaching experience, but more open to new strategies and innovations.

In terms of gender, 38 (47.5%) of the teachers surveyed were male, and 42 (52.5%) were female. This means that the majority of teachers surveyed were female. This indicates a relatively balanced gender composition, with a slight preponderance of female teachers, which is consistent with the overall trend in the teaching profession. In terms of educational attainment, 24 teachers (30%) held a bachelor's degree; 10 (12.5%) held a master's degree; 17 (21.3%) held a master's degree; 13 (16.3%) held a doctoral degree; and 16 (20%) held a doctoral degree. This means that the majority of teachers surveyed hold a bachelor's degree. This suggests that while many teachers are pursuing higher education, a significant number still hold only a bachelor's degree, which may affect the depth of their classroom teaching and theoretical approaches.

In terms of years of service, 19 (23.8%) of the teachers surveyed had less than five years of service; 28 (35%) had 5-10 years of service; 19 (23.8%) had 11-15 years of service; 8 (10%) had 16-20 years of service; and 6 (7.5%) had more than 20 years of teaching experience. This means that the majority of teachers surveyed had 5-10 years of teaching experience. This indicates that many teachers are in the early to mid-career stages of their careers, a group that is active, adaptable, and potentially capable of continuously improving their teaching practices. Regarding attendance at seminars related to this topic, 11 (13.8%) of the surveyed teachers had attended fewer than five; 45 (56.3%) had attended five to ten; and 24 (30%) had attended more than ten. This means that the majority of the surveyed teachers had attended five to ten seminars related to this topic. This suggests that the respondents have had some exposure to professional development activities related to this topic, indicating a high level of preparation and awareness in this area.

Assessment of the Teacher Respondents of the Communication Transparency in School Management in terms of Clarity of Policies and Decisions

Item	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description	Interpretation	Rank
1. The policies and decisions made by school management are clearly communicated to teachers.	2.9	0.94	Agree	True of School	8
2. I can easily understand the policies set by the school.	3.2	0.84	Agree	True of School	2
3. School management provides clear explanations regarding important decisions.	3.12	0.9	Agree	True of School	4
4. The rationale behind the decisions made by school management is clearly communicated.	3.25	0.81	Agree	True of School	1
5. The policies in place are easy to follow and understand.	3.17	0.83	Agree	True of School	3
6. I receive detailed information on school policies and decisions when necessary.	2.95	0.91	Agree	True of School	7
7. The decisions made by management are usually explained with sufficient clarity.	3.07	0.89	Agree	True of School	5
8. I feel confident in my understanding of school policies and how they impact my work.	3	0.79	Agree	True of School	6
Composite Mean	3.08	0.59	Agree	True of School	

Legend : 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree/ Very True of My School ; 2.51-3.50 Agree/ True of My School ; 1.51-2.50 Disagree/ Slightly True of My School ; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree/ Not True of My School

The statement "The rationale behind decisions made by school management is clearly communicated" received the highest mean of 3.25 and a standard deviation of 0.81, interpreted as "agree" and described as "the reality of the school." This indicates that teachers generally believe the rationale behind management decisions is clearly communicated, supporting trust and transparency in leadership. The statement "Policies and decisions made by school management are clearly communicated to teachers" received the lowest mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.94, still interpreted as "agree," but ranked lowest among all indicators. This suggests that while overall perceptions remain positive, there may be inconsistencies in the clarity of initial communication, which may lead to confusion or the need for further clarification. The composite mean for the entire dimension of policy and decision clarity was 3.08 with a standard deviation of 0.59, which was qualitatively described as "agree" and interpreted as "the reality of the school." This reflects that, overall, teachers believe that school policies and decisions are communicated fairly clearly, although there is room for improvement in the initial communication process to ensure that all information is consistently clear and understandable.

Assessment of the Teacher Respondents of the Communication Transparency in School Management in terms of Timeliness of Information Sharing

Item	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description	Interpretation	Rank
1. School management shares important information with teachers in a timely manner.	2.9	0.94	Agree	True of School	7
2. I receive updates and necessary information without delays.	3.1	0.88	Agree	True of School	2
3. Important announcements are made well in advance of their implementation.	3.08	0.82	Agree	True of School	3
4. I am always informed of significant changes or updates in school policies promptly.	3.13	0.88	Agree	True of School	1
5. Information about school events, changes, and decisions is shared in a timely manner.	3.03	0.84	Agree	True of School	4
6. I never feel that I am left in the dark due to delays in receiving information.	2.93	0.93	Agree	True of School	6
7. Timely communication from management helps me plan and adjust accordingly.	2.98	0.92	Agree	True of School	5
Composite Mean	3.02	0.62	Agree	True of School	

Legend : 3.5 1-4.00 Strongly Agree/ Very True of My School ; 2.5 1-3.50 Agree/ True of My School ; 1.5 1-2.5 0 Disagree/ Slightly True of My School ; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree/ Not True of My School

The statement "I am always informed of significant changes or updates to school policies in a timely manner" had the highest mean score of 3.13 and a standard deviation of 0.88, interpreted as "Agree" and "School agrees." This indicates that teachers generally believe they are informed of significant changes in a timely manner, which is crucial for maintaining clarity and preparedness in school operations.

The statement "School administration shares important information with teachers in a timely manner" had the lowest mean score of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.94, but was still interpreted as "Agree." This suggests that while timeliness is generally perceived as positive, there are occasional delays or inconsistencies in sharing critical information, which can impact teachers' ability to respond quickly and effectively.

The composite mean for the dimension of timeliness of information sharing was 3.02 with a standard deviation of 0.62, representing the qualitative description "Agree," interpreted as "School agrees." This reflects that teachers generally believe that information sharing is timely, although improvements can be made to ensure that all relevant communications are conveyed to teachers in a timely and accurate manner.

Summary Self-Assessment of the Teacher Respondents of their Organizational Trust

Item	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description	Interpretation	Rank
Confidence in Leadership	3.21	0.58	Agree	True of Me	1
Perceived Fairness and Equity	3.04	0.58	Agree	True of Me	5
Willingness to Share Concerns or Feedback	3.2	0.58	Agree	True of Me	2
Collaboration and Teamwork	3.18	0.59	Agree	True of Me	3
Commitment to Institutional Goals	3.11	0.59	Agree	True of Me	4
Overall	3.15	0.38	Agree	True of Me	

Legend : 3.5 1-4.00 Strongly Agree/ Very True of Me ; 2.5 1-3.50 Agree/ True of Me ; 1.5 1-2.50 Disagree/ Slightly True of Me ; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree/ Not True of Me

The highest-rated dimension was "Confidence in Leadership," with a mean score of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.58, qualitatively described as "Agree," and interpreted as "I agree." This indicates that teachers believe strong, reliable leadership is a key factor in positively impacting student engagement and achievement. This reflects their confidence in the management's ability to lead initiatives that support student engagement and academic growth.

The lowest-rated dimension was "Perceived Fairness and Equity," with a mean score of 3.04 and a standard deviation of 0.58. While still in the "Agree" category, this score suggests that fair treatment and equal access may be relatively weak

within the components of engagement and achievement. This may indicate that teachers observe gaps in student treatment or support within the academic or behavioral systems.

The overall mean for all assessed dimensions was 3.15 with a standard deviation of 0.38, described as "Agree" and "Meets my expectations." This indicates that teachers generally believe that student engagement and achievement are positively supported within the school environment. However, there was variability in scores across the components, particularly regarding fairness, suggesting room for improvement in ensuring consistency and equity across student groups.

Discussion

The observed discrepancy between high clarity and lower timeliness in communication likely stems from the university's strong hierarchical and consensus-driven culture. The high value placed on clarity, particularly regarding the rationale behind decisions, reflects a management style that prioritizes precision, authority, and the avoidance of public mistakes. Once a decision is finalized through the necessary layers of approval, it is communicated with well-justified reasoning to ensure smooth implementation and maintain stability. However, this very process of building internal consensus and ensuring absolute alignment among leaders before any announcement creates delays. The cultural preference for harmony and risk-aversion against releasing unvetted information ultimately sacrifices speed for perceived correctness and collective agreement, resulting in the lower scores for timeliness.

The lack of significant differences based on demographic factors is surprising but highlights the overpowering influence of a strong, unified organizational culture. Despite individual variations in age, experience, or education, all faculty members are uniformly subject to the same institutional protocols and management style. This suggests that the shared experience of working within this specific Chinese university's environment, shaped by broader cultural norms of collectivism and respect for hierarchy, homogenizes perceptions. Individual backgrounds are overshadowed by this collective identity, meaning initiatives to improve transparency need to be universal rather than targeted at specific subgroups.

The significant positive correlation between transparency and trust manifests in daily university life through reduced faculty anxiety, a greater willingness to collaborate, and stronger commitment to institutional goals. When management provides clear rationales for decisions, it minimizes speculation and allows teachers to focus on their work, knowing there are no hidden agendas. This fosters an environment where faculty feel secure enough to openly share feedback and engage in constructive dialogue, as evidenced by the high score for "Willingness to Share Concerns." The practical implication is clear: by implementing processes that improve timeliness—such as providing preliminary updates—without sacrificing their strength in clarity, leadership can further strengthen this trust, enhancing overall institutional effectiveness and morale.

Conclusions

1. Demographic data of the teachers surveyed showed that the majority were between 25 and 30 years old, female, had a bachelor's degree, had 5-10 years of teaching experience, and had attended 5-10 workshops on this topic.
2. Survey results indicate that while teachers generally have positive attitudes toward transparency in school management communication, particularly regarding openness, accessibility, and honesty, the clarity, consistency, and timeliness of communicated policies and decisions need to be improved.
3. Survey results indicate that while teachers generally trust school leaders and are committed to achieving institutional goals, further efforts are needed to strengthen policy fairness, encourage collaboration, and maintain open communication to deepen organizational trust.
4. All demographic variables—age, gender, education level, years of service, and number of workshops attended—had no statistically significant impact on teachers' assessments of transparency in school management communication.
5. Demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, and years of service had no significant impact on teachers' assessments of organizational trust.
6. There is a significant positive correlation between transparency in school management communication and teachers' organizational trust.

Recommendations

1. School administrators should ensure that all policies and decisions are communicated in clear, understandable language. Providing policy summaries, FAQs, or visual aids can help improve understanding and reduce ambiguity.
2. Establish clear timelines and protocols for disseminating important updates, especially those related to policy changes. Leveraging digital platforms such as email, messaging groups, and internal portals can streamline information dissemination.
3. Create a centralized, easy-to-navigate digital repository where teachers can access all school-related policies, guidelines, and updates. Regular reminders and navigation support can also help staff find the information they need in a timely manner.
4. Leadership should hold regular consultation meetings and actively solicit teacher feedback through methods such as surveys, focus groups, and suggestion boxes. Ensuring timely responses to feedback fosters a more open and trusting environment.
5. School leadership messages should be consistent, coherent, and verified before dissemination. Even when communicating difficult decisions, leaders must remain honest to foster credibility and respect.
6. Provide principals and administrators with training in transparent communication strategies, active listening, and conflict resolution to strengthen connections with faculty and staff.

7. Promote team-building activities, joint planning sessions, and shared governance practices to strengthen collaboration and mutual respect, thereby enhancing trust and morale.

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