UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.15 (1);
https://unijerps.org
2021 Impact Factor: 5.641; 2020 Impact Factor: 5.355.
January-June, 2023
Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363

CONFLICT MANGEMENT STRATEGIES AS PANACEA FOR GOOD RELATIONSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU SOUTH

Dr. Mrs. Oby Modest Ogbuoka
Dean faculty of Social Sciences
African Thinkers Community of Inquiry College of Education Enugu.

&

Rev. Sr. Dr. Anthonia Amauchechukwu Nwabugo Ani
Department Educational Management and Policy, Faculty of Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

ABSTRACT

The study examined conflict management strategies as a panacea for good relationship in secondary schools in Enugu South. The study was guided by two specific purposes and two research questions. Descriptive research design was used for the study. The study population was 50 teachers with a sample of 50. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire which was validated by lecturers in computer science. The data collected was analyzed using mean score. The result revealed that principal's autocratic administrative style causes conflict in the school with the teachers, non-involvement of teachers in some administrative duties by the principal causes' conflict. The researcher recommended that principals in secondary schools should be advised to adopt a democratic style of administration in schools so as to avoid conflict with the teachers

Keywords: Conflict, Management, Strategy and Good relationship

Introduction

Conflict in the work environment is inevitable. When two or more people have to work together and combine ideas, the doorway of conflict is ever open. However, every human organization, such as the school, needs to be properly managed and directed by a well-defined leadership to ensure effective performance by the staff towards goal attainment. Productivity, creativity and results will be greater in an institution that people show co-operative spirit in carrying out their functions or duties. Efficient organizational team-work involves teams whose activities revolve around the leadership, in terms of their operational and decision-making policies, for the achievement of their set goals (Olujide 2011).

Similarly, the school as an organization operates with an appointed leadership, who defines and assigns roles to individual teachers, based on their areas of competence, all working towards the

achievement of school goals and objectives. However, when one refuses to carry out his or her duties, or perform the roles assigned to him, conflict is bound to occur. Also, since in the school, people from different backgrounds and experiences are brought together, it becomes inevitable, that conflict may occur.

Conflicts are common occurrence among individuals in different shares of life in the society. Broom (2010) views conflict as negative outcome or something to be avoided. This implies that conflict is better prevented because it may normally result to lack of misunderstanding among people in a particular setting. Similarly, Cram and Williams (2009), observe that conflicts are seen as disagreements or problems at an interpersonal level. In the school system for instance, without conflicts principals and teachers can become complacent and not perform their duties well. In the same vein, Rummel (2011) agrees with Cram and Williams (2009) that conflict involves disagreement among individuals. This shows that conflicts involve disagreement or misunderstanding as well as problems among individuals specifically, as applied in this study, conflict is seen as misunderstanding between the principals and the teachers.

There are three identified types of conflict. These are approach-approach, avoidance-avoidance and approach-avoidance (Oboegbulem 2007). Approach-approach conflict involves making a choice between two attractive goals. This conflict type is less stressful and has happy ending. For instance a principal of a secondary school may be faced with making choice between having a founders' day ceremony or inter-house competition in his school, as a way of raising money for the maintenance of the school. In this case he may find decision making very conflicting. In approach-avoidance conflict, a choice must be made on whether to pursue a single goal that has both attractive and unattractive aspects or not. This conflict type is very stressful as decision-taking is normally delayed, for instance, a situation where the principal want extra moral lesson for the students but will not allow the students to be taxed for the extra lessons by the teachers. The Avoidance-Avoidance conflict involves a choice between two unattractive goals. In this case, an individual is forced to take a decision between two repelling alternatives. Ubah (2014) explains this to mean that one of the groups involved in the conflict tries to avoid the conflict whenever perceived. This is done by trying as much as possible by avoiding any discussion related to the matter that involves conflict. In other words, the avoidance type of conflict ensures that matters which may lead to conflict situations are avoided by all means.

Onwurah (2014) opines that some school principals operate kitchen cabinet. This implies the application of divide rule in the running of the school. Accordingly, this principal's style of management gives rise to pro and anti-principal-teachers relationship, which encourages conflict situation. Also, the way and manner the principals communicate to their teachers in the school helps to bring about conflict. Ojo (2014) asserts that some principals hoard

information that affects the teachers in the school. In the school, poor communication relationship between the principals and the teachers is a key area of conflict in the system. Thus, when the principal hoards information regarding the teacher's welfare in the school, room is created for mistrust and this may lead to far reaching consequences in the activities of the school. Conflict has several consequences in the school system Okotoni and Okotoni (2013) assert that conflict has enormous effects in the school. Parts of the repercussion in the schools are disruption of academic programmes, unplanned staff transfer hostility, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities by some staff. It could lead to positive or negative outcomes. Ogunna (2013) asserts that conflicts can bring about an innovation, new norms and new institutions as well lead to a disorganization of an existing norm in the school system. Hence, understanding conflict, its causes and consequences will enable one to be aware of the possible strategies towards its resolution. If the causes of conflict are identified and made known, the resolution is assured.

Conflict resolution is an important aspect of principal's administrative duties in the school system. Ojo (2014) asserts that conflict resolution is empowering parties involved in conflict to choose wisely and to act with every one's best interest in mind. This entails each party trying to shift grounds in the overall efforts towards resolving the conflict in question. In the same vein, Olujide (2011) sees conflict resolution as an understanding between parties to end an issue of disagreement. In other words, successful conflict resolution usually involves fostering communication among disputants, problem solving and drafting agreements that meet their underlying needs.

Statement of the Problem

Schools are learning environments which need peace and silent atmosphere as intended ideals. Conflicts are inevitable hence cannot miss where people are and coexist. It has been noted that there are high levels of conflict in public secondary schools in Enugu North LGA. The prevalent conflicts being student-student conflict, teacher - teacher conflict and teacher-student conflict and sometimes principal and teacher conflict. Despite the government efforts to curb this menace by training guidance and counseling teachers and educating school principals on how to manage their schools effectively, conflict has been an elusive matter. The effect of unmanaged conflict is expensive to our society as a whole. The researcher therefore has purposed to determine causes of conflicts among principal and teachers in secondary schools in Enugu North and how it affects the academic achievement of the students**.**

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to investigate conflict management strategies as a panacea for good relationship in secondary schools in Enugu South LGA.

Specifically, the study is designed to determine;

1. The conflict management strategies adopted by the principal in secondary schools

2. The conflict management strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. What are the conflict management strategies adopted by the principal in secondary schools?
2. What are the conflict management strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom?

Review of Literature

Concept of Conflict

No life, nation, community, organization or institution is particularly tranquile. Conflicts do not arise in a social vacuum but within people in a community or organization. No matter the size of the population in a community or organization such as the school, conflicts are inherent and take different dimensions or manifestations. Conflicts could be seen as process of interaction among social roles based upon disparities in view or positions, about ends, means, and relationships. Conflicts are common occurrences in life. It occurs within a person, between people, between organizational sub-units and between organizations. According to Oputa (2013), be it married life or family life, in the community or business life or life; it is a continuous succession of quarrels and conflicts. Conflicts, therefore, is part of life but a sad part in most cases, and at other times good. In the words of Oputa, with conflicts within society, there is a mass struggle and opposition everywhere and at every level.

The term conflict has been defined by various writers and scholars and in different ways; some from administrative, sociological and others from judicial points of view. Njoku (2010), in defining conflict from the administrative point of view, sees it as an obstacle to achieving a desired goal. It is often when someone has a chance to win at the expense of someone else. They further asserted that it does not always take two to be in conflict because some times, we are in conflicts with ourselves. According to Bittel and Ramsey (2009), conflict occurs when a desired goals or objectives are not reasonably available. In the same view, White and Bendar (2011) observed that conflicts are the interaction of interdependent people or groups, who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals. Hocker and Wilmot (2010), says that conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent groups who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other party in achieving their goals. Zwei (2007), in this same view states that: Conflict is a major disagreement that generates antagonism and opposition in the relations between persons groups and organizations. It does occur when some person, because of differences, interfere with, in term of obstruction, counteraction and opposition, the attainment of the goals and interest of others. It is in the obstruction of others incompatible, healthy, positive competition, which is a contest for

some, prized values, but rather involves, attempts by each other to obtain it.

According to Nye (2012), conflict is conceived as mutual hostility at interpersonal, inter-human, inter-group, inter-ethic, inter-cultural and inter-national level. It is a situation where the disputants are hostile to each other or to one another in order to achieve their set goals or objectives, which are usually regulated by hierarchy of human needs, selfishness, possessiveness, greediness, as well as sociological, political, cultural, psychological and religious motives. The mutual hostility can be verbal, physical or emotional, depending on the nature of the conflict in question.

Verbal hostility is expressed in the form of rebukes, defamation of character, as the case may be. Such verbal attacks may or may not result in physical quarrels, but can inflict psychological damage which inhibits good human relations in an organization. The physical hostility is expressed in the form of exchange of bows, throwing blows, inflicting injuries with dangerous instruments like knife, sword, bottle, stick and machetes. It can also escalate to fighting and wars at inter-community, inter-state, inter-ethnic, inter-religions or denominational levels, resulting to loss of life. The idea of conflict has dominated intellectual history through the centuries. Whatever the immediate focus of man's reflection, the entire fabric of political thought has been woven around problems of human conflicts, conflict between individuals and groups as they relate to one another in society.

Conflict of Management

Conflict management is the art of designing appropriate mechanism to guide the inevitable conflicts into appropriate channels. Conflict management involves implementing strategies to control the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflict at a level equal to or higher than where the conflict is taking place. The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting. Conflict management is what people who experience conflict intend to do as well as what they actually do. According to Bloomfield and Reilly (2011), conflict management is the positive and constructive handling of differences in divergence rather than advocating methods of removing conflicts, it addresses the more realistic question of managing conflict. According to Handy (2012), the following strategies have been found effective. They are: Dialogue, Arbitration, Boxing the problem, Confrontation and Neglect or silence.

By dialogue, the people or individuals in a conflict are brought together to expose and discuss the issue and problems involved in the conflict. This is aimed at gaining clearer view of the factors causing and promoting the conflict. The educational administrator takes the initiative to bring the combatants into a meaningful dialogue to examine and discuss the factors, issues and problems. It gives those in conflict the opportunity to express their feelings and bitterness and to bury the hatchet and settle the conflict. Arbitration is a process by which peace

makers, arbitrators or peace panel settles the conflict through appealing to the consciences of those in conflicts.

Dialogue, persuasive speech, exchange of ideas, empathy, and good communication can be used to resolve the conflicts. The arbitration panel is usually appointed by the school management to settle the conflict. Members of the panel are usually impartial individual acceptable to those in conflict. Sometimes, parties in conflict are given the option to choose or appoint the arbiter or the arbitrators (Handy, 2012).

In boxing, the factors responsible for the conflict are identified by the group or the organization. The problems are examined carefully through a critical evaluation, aimed at destroying the problem by exposing the trivialities or the much-ado-about-nothing inherent in the identified problem or problems. The problem can be subjected to public debate, aimed at destroying or eliminating it through constructive criticism and exposition of its triviality or emptiness (Handy, 2012)

The success or failure of any school system hinges primarily on the chief executive of the school. Secondary schools can only be productive if there is effective and efficient management of human and material resources in the system by the principal. The easiest way to control conflict is to establish or ensure good communication. A good communication device could help to minimize conflicts in schools. Decision making should spread throughout the organization and message should travel up, down and across the organization. Handy was of the opinion that feedback should be encouraged. He noted that if the communication system is open, an atmosphere of trust, reciprocity, intimacy and growth covers the need for such supplements as the grapevine. Communication is very central to the individual worker's understanding. Some of the various avenues through which information can be given include: school Assembly, bulletin board, letters and memoranda, staff meetings, school rules and regulation. Having a face-to face discussion also helps everyone to understand in the same way and be clear on every issue.

Research Methods

The research design adopted for the study was a survey research design. According to Ndubuisi (2013); A survey research design is an experimental descriptive research method in which a group of items, people or objects are studied by collecting, organizing and analyzing data from only a few people, items or objects considered to be representative of the entire group. The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Enugu South LGA of Enugu State. The population of the study consisted of 50 teachers with a sample size of 50 teachers

Simple random sampling was used to draw (10) students from each of the selected five schools giving a total sample size of 50 university students that was used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was designed by the researcher. Data were analyzed using mean score. For the

sake of taking decision, any mean that is equal to or above 2.5 is considered agreed while any mean below 2.5 is disagreed.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the conflict management strategies adopted by the principal in secondary schools?

Table 1; Mean responses on the conflict management strategies adopted by the principal in secondary schools

SN	ITEMS	X	Remarks
1	Cost	3.6	A
2	Weak infrastructure	3.5	A
3	Inadequate skilled personnel	3.8	A
4	Inadequate software	3.7	A
5	Limited access to the internet	3.6	A

From the computed mean in table 1 above, it shows that items 1-5 have the mean score of 3.6, 3.5, 3.8, 3.7 and 3.6 respectively which indicates that the respondents agreed on the listed conflict management strategies adopted by the principal in secondary schools

Research Question 2: What are the conflict management strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom?

Table 2: Mean responses on the conflict management strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom.

SN	ITEMS	X	Remarks
6	Prompt payment of teachers' salaries and allowances as at when due	3.7	A
7	Teachers should be assigned to teach only in their areas of specialization	3.5	A
8	Teachers should be rationalized among schools	3.8	A
9	Teachers should be provided with the basic amenities like good teaching environment, good home and good drinking water	3.6	A
10	Teachers should also be provided with the needed teaching facilities	3.6	A

From the computed mean in table 2 above, it could be seen that items 6-10 have the mean scores of 3.7, 3.5, 3.8, 3.6 and 3.6 respectively which shows that the respondents agreed on the listed conflict management strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom

Conclusion

Bases on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that principal autocratic administrative style, non-communication between the teachers and principal, inability of teachers to cover their scheme of work before examination and teacher's inability to discipline the students whenever they are late to school causes conflict between the principal and teachers in secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher hereby makes the following recommendations:

1. Principals in secondary schools should be advised to adopt a democratic style of administration in schools so as to avoid conflict with the teachers
2. They should ensure that there is effective communication process between them and the teachers
3. Teachers should also endeavor to cover their scheme of work on time before examination so as to avoid conflict between them and the principal
4. Teachers should also try as much as they can to discipline the students accordingly when they are late to school
5. Principal should applaud the teacher's performance whenever they are performing well so as to motivate others.

References

Bittel, I and Ramsey, G. (2009). *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization*. New York Macmillan Publishers.

Bittel, O. and Ramsey B. (2013). *Personal Background and Administrative Effectiveness of Primary School Head teachers in Cross River State*, unpublished MED Thesis, University of Calabar, Calabar.

Bloomfield V. and Reilly, F. (2011). *Educational Management*. Codat publications, Ibadan.

Bloomfield, V and Reilly, F. (2011). *Educational Administration*; Applied Concept and Theoretical Perspectives for students and Practioners. Joja Educational Research and publishers Limited.

Broom .A (2011). Towards an Understanding of Inequity. *Journal of Abnormal social psychology, 67 (5) 422-436.*

Broom, J. (2010). *Enterprise Education*: Influencing Students' Perceptions of Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 28 (2), 129-144.

Campbell, L and Ramseyer, J (2010). *Managerial Attitudes and Performance*: Dorsey.

Cram, E. and Williams G. (2011). Administration As a Social Process.

A.W. Halpin (Ed). *Administrative Theory in Education.* Mid-West Administration Centre University of Chicago.

Handy, A. S. (201). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th edition),* Oxford University Press.

Ndubuisi, F. (2013). One More Time. How do you Motivate, Employees? Harvard Business (Jan-Feb). 53-62.

Njoku, C. U. &Nwosu, A. N. (2010). Principles of management: A fundamental Approach. Owerri: Ambix Printers. Nig.

Njoku, D.A. (2010). Educationists and politics in higher educational institutions: The Nigerian experience. In Ogum, G.E.O., Anene, N. r &Muogillim, S.J (Eds.), Education for the Reconstruction of Nigerian Society. Awka: Mekslink Publishers Ltd.pp.118-121.

Nye, R. (2012). Conflict among humans. New York: Springer's Publishing Company Inc.

Oboegbulam, A. &Onwurah, C. (2011). Organization and management of education: A Nigerian perspective. Nsukka: Great A. P. Express Publishers' Ltd.

Ojo, D. (2008). *The Human Side of Enterprise,* New York: McGraw-Hall.

Okonti, A.and Okonti E. (2013).*Motivation and Personality*: New York; Harper.

Onwurah, C. U. (2014). Discipline and discipline control in schools. In T.O. Mgbodile (Ed.). Fundamentals in educational administration and planning. Enugu: Magnet Computer services.

Oputa, U.N. (2003). Sociology of education. Onitsha: Feb Publishers Ltd.

Rothaermel, F.T. (2012). Strategic management: Concepts and cases. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Ubah, S.U. &Akpa, G.O. (2014). Educational administration in Nigeria: Theory and practice. Enugu: Ichejum Publications Nigeria.

Walton, R. E. and Dutton, P. (2010). The management of interdepartmental conflict: A model and review. In Houghton, V, Mc Hugh, R. and Morgan, C. (eds.), Management of organization and individuals. Wardlorck: Open University Press.