

SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AND THE INCIDENT OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR AMONG STUDENTS IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA.

By

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Abstract

This paper examines the concepts of conflict, deviant behavior and their antecedents in colleges of education in Nigeria. It makes a clarification of causes and types of conflict management in higher institutions of learning. The paper observes that management staff, students teachers, government, trade union may be sources of conflicts for one reason or the other. Nevertheless, the outcome of such conflicts causes prolong of academic activities, destruction of life and properties, in some cases render school environment completely insecure for serious academic activities not beneficial to students, institutions and the society at large. The paper recommended that the way forward is that the management of institutions and government should properly handle the institutions with democratic leadership style. They should also create avenues for discussing and designing method to resolve the conflicts. The paper concludes that a conflict is an attendant feature of human interaction in every organization which cannot be eliminated; a cordial relationship should be maintained between staff, students and the school authority. More so, students and trade union should be involved in decision making process which appeared to be the most effective way forward in the management of Colleges of Education.

Key words: Social Conflicts, Administration, Colleges of Education, Management, Nigeria

Introduction

The contemporary world is increasingly multicultural and the identify conflicts resulting from this sometimes threatens sustainable human development. This makes the promotion of understanding and dialogue to be a prime issue in the management of multiculturalism, global peace and security. Oloyede, (2019). Conflict is an inevitable friction in any organization. Efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society particularly tertiary institution of learning. Conflict in collages of education is inescapable. Conflicts exist at every level of our academic world. And while conflict can be negative and can cause deep rifts in the frame work of institution, it can also be used as a tool to take the institution and people in it from stagnation to a new level of effectiveness. What makes the difference is conflict management Hotton,(2020)

Organizational behavior is positively related to organizational output. For this reason, the educational administrator needs to take conflict management issues as a very important issues because conflicts is an attempts towards resolution and are perhaps the most powerful force existing for bringing about changes in pattern of organizational behavior Hanson, (2019).

Indeed one of the commonly expressed concerns of organizational people in developing countries is that permanence of internal conflicts in the organization. Conflicts will always occur but a well-managed conflict will not degenerate to violence since violent will erupt without conflict as an antecedents, one can assume that many of the conflicts in tertiary institutions and insecurity degenerated is because of their antecedents/cause were not properly managed or that the conflicting parties did not explore the power of communication and conflict managers personality in resolving the crises. (Agbona, Yusuf & Onifade, 2009).

The important of tertiary education to the national development cannot be overemphasized. However, no meaningful development can take place in a crisis-ridden system torn apart by crisis as witnessed in educational institution in Nigeria today. Today, students, staff (academics & non-academics) poses conflict as militancy in the nation's tertiary institutions inform of violence revolts, protest, unrest as well as incessant closure of school for months in the wake of unrest. This becomes regular characteristics of Nigerian tertiary institutions (Adeyemi, Ekurdayo & Alonge, 2010). The educational administrator is faced with myriads of problems arising from conflicts and so, one should be able to device necessary conflict management mechanisms if the objectives of the school are to be achieved.

Conceptual frame work

Tertiary institution are always in crises when conflicts occur, which vary from campus to campus depending on the size, location, student population, mission, specialization, governance and unionization. What can trigger conflict, perhaps even large scale ones, on one campus may be inconceivable on another. Aguba, (2009) referred to conflict as a struggle or contest, when workers and management have incompatible, conflicting or irreconcilable views, on issues, that could lead conflict. He maintained that it is unthinkable to find any of industrial harmony has elements of industrial conflict in one form or the other.

Ezegbe in Ndil (2020), defines conflict as mutual hostility in inter human relations in educational institutions in Nigeria, mutual hostility can occur in form of results, black mailing, withdraws of love and support, withdraw of resources, salaries, wages, fringe benefits, or incentive, sudden transfer, suspension, violent demonstration and so on. Conflict can occur at the level of interpersonal; inter group/organization or intra-organizational relationship involving chief executive (vice chancellors, provost, rector) and the rest of the staff, the student and school authority, the community and the school. Many people view conflicts as an activity that is almost totally negative has no redeeming qualities. While other school of thought accepted it as days functional, destructive and the same times as a catalyst for change, creativity and production (Posisha & Ogbuvwa, 2019). Conflict results from human interaction in the context of incompatible ends and where one's in ability to satisfy needs or ends depend on choices, decisions and behavior of others. It is therefore possible to argue that conflict is endemic in nature of human relationships and societies, it is the result of interaction among people, and unavoidable concomitant of choices and decision and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence (Adejuwon & Okewale, 2009) Alabi, (2010) sees conflict to be in opposition to another or each other, or disagreement'' Kesterner and Ray (2019) sees conflict as a two parties, individuals, group, state are involved and strived for goals which can only be reached by one party, and or want to employ incompatible means to achieve a certain goals. It thus implies struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the groups or individual involved are not only to obtain the desired values but neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals.

When differences come to force, collisions, strives, controversies, discords, friction and disagreement cannot be avoided. These are evidences of conflicts. This phenomenon informed the submission of Akomolafe (2002) that conflicts is unavoidable in any organization.

Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) believe that conflicts are inevitable, while Gilhin (2004) submitted that conflict is a normal part of man's social relations. No human organization is thus immune to conflict

Types and sources of conflicts

Institutions of learning, both secular and non-secular, are perfectly qualified to be regarded as organizations in all respects. Tertiary institutions have very prominent roles to play in the nation's overall development. Many reasons could be adduced for the increase in the level of occurrence of conflicts in recent times when compared to some years back. (Oku, Emerado and Okeke (2008) identified the following types of conflicts.

- **Role conflict:** A person conforms to two or more contradictory sets of roles at the same time: conformity to one role would prevent the execution of another.
- **Personality conflict:** a person who holds a principal (e.g. democratic principle) finds himself operating another principle (e.g autocratic principal).
- **Role – personality:** a person's role expectation is at variance with this need disposition. For example, a provost is expected to use school equipment to improve the lots of the school but if he sell them in order to enrich himself, he will be experiencing role-personality conflict.
- **Cognitive conflict:** This Centre on difference in perspectives or judgments about issues. Legitimates differences of opinion can be expressed, better ideas can be developed and problems can be solved when this type of conflict occurs. Its constructive in nature.
- **Affective conflict:** This has to do with person's emotion and it is directed against people. It can lead to anger, bitterness, goal displacement and lower quality decision. It is destructive in nature
- **Organized conflict:** This is a group activity. It has for example the blessing of the entire group to sue for conflict, if a union is support a conflict, it is an organized conflicts
- **Unorganized conflict:** This is the type of conflict in which individuals responds to conflict in their individual way or the best way they think would resolve or aggravated the conflict .This type of conflict may not have the blessing of the entire group or union.(Iyayi, Oshio and Okojie,2011) agreed with the above that conflicts can broadly be two types at work.

Organized and unorganized, and maintained that conflict occurs with employer, public or private which may take the form of:

- Peaceful bargaining and grievance handling
- By boycotts
- By political action
- By restriction of output, of sabotage
- Insubordination and physical attack
- By absenteeism
- By personal turn over, ban on overtime
- Strikes

According to them, industrial situation in which workers experience sufficiently acute deprivation, unrest will be expressed in some form. Sources of conflicts according to iyayi, Oshio, and Okojie, (2011) are numerous some are peculiar to respective tertiary institution and others located outside the school. That is to say sources of industrial conflict are internal, and external both often influencing one another.

Internal sources of conflict would include:

- Style of management
- Nature of physical environment of the work place
- Orientation of staff
- Other conditions of service
- Fairness and efficiency or otherwise of the promotion system, and
- Effectiveness and fairness of grievance and disputes procedure

The external sources of conflict include:

- Government's industrial, economic and educational policies,
- Nature of labor legislation
- Unpatriotic and unethical behavior of political class
- National economic mismanagement
- General distribution of wealth and power in society.

For a comprehensive perception of conflict, Nye (1973) presented a conceptual framework of the dynamic of conflict promoting factors as shown below:

Individual characteristics

- Defensiveness
- Authoritarians
- Prejudice
- Blind conforming and obeying tendencies
- Aggressiveness
- Frustration
- High level of needs
- Stress from over loading
- Non satisfaction of human needs
- Selfishness/ greediness
- Poor distorted communication
- Unhealthy rivalry
- Hared/ racism/ discrimination
- Poor motivation
- Un-conductive working / learning environment etc.



Interaction pattern

- Completion
- Domination
- Provocation



→ Conflict that is Mutual

→ Hostility

Conceptual Frame Work Of Dynamics Of Conflict Factors

Conflict promoting factors affect each other; individual characteristics are capable of instigating and intensifying interaction pattern, and vice versa (the arrows between these two sets interaction patterns. Once begins tends to intensify, and add to the very factors that produce it.

Management of Conflicts and the Way Forward in Colleges of Education

Analysis of conflicts in colleges of education shows that they affect the attainment of institutional goal positively or adversely. Conflict in some cases could facilitate cooperation, foster goal attainment in any institution if properly handled. On the other hand conflicts among staff, students, institutional and authority and community, if not well managed, could lead irreparable loss of lives, destruction of properties and disruption of normal academic activities. The survival of any institution therefore, largely depends upon the developmental of better means of resolving conflicts (Aja, 2012). Management is the process by which human and non-human resources are coordinated to accomplish a given set objectives. (Nwachukwu, 1998), conflicts management according to Albert (2010) refers to the coordinated and timely application of political, economic, military and security measures taken in response to a situation threatening peace, with the aim of defusing the tensed situation, preventing escalation or achieving a peaceful settlement of a dispute. Aja in Handy (1978) indicates that the major way forward in management of conflicts include dialogue, arbitration, boxing the problem, confrontation and neglect/silence.

1. **By Dialogue:** the people in conflicts are brought together to expose and discuss the issues and problems involved in the conflict aimed at gaining a clearer view of factors causing and promoting the conflict. It gives those in conflicts the opportunity to express their feelings, their grievances and views on the matter. A healthy dialogue frees the mind of grudges and bitterness to bury the hatchet and settles the conflict.
2. **Arbitration:** is a process by which peace maker, arbitrators or peace panel settles the conflict through appealing to the conscience of those in conflict..
3. **By Confrontation:** the issue and problem can be subjected debate between those in conflicts or neutral groups in order to expose the problem and convince the combatants of its emptiness.
4. **In Boxing the Problem:** the group or organization identifies factors responsible for the conflicts. The problem is examined carefully through a critical exudation of its aims and destroying the problem or exposing the triviality or the much ado-about nothing inherent in the identified problem(s).
5. **Neglect or Silence:** can be use occasionally by chief executives to prove to those in conflict that the conflict is not important to merit the attention of the administrator. Neglect or Silence involves delaying tactics, which can disarm the combatant emotionally as they wait for days or months on end, without any practical action on the part of chief executive. The bottled-up emotion/anger can dwindle as they delay, neglect or silence continues to end the conflict caution should be taken in the use of particular strategy, because, silence or neglect may also gather momentum one day to erupt like volcano which may do more destruction than good.

In resolving tertiary institution conflicts, developing a constructive communication process and influential conflicts negotiator's personality are very important. No doubt, schools cannot avoid experiencing one conflict or the other but a great deal of such conflict can be managed and be guided from disrupting school efforts towards attaining it manifest and latent goals if the conflicting parties are systematic in the way they communicate their grievances, situation of the conflict and readiness to negotiate for peace and if the negotiator mediating the

resolution process is of good personality (Agbonna, Yusuf & Onafide, 2009). Conflict management in schools demand appropriate leadership style of the school administrator or chief executive. Demers in Magaula (2007) articulated three strategies of peaceful crisis resolution between and among warring parties, mediation, arbitration and reconciliation. Other strategies that can contribute to conflict management include effective catharsis, super-ordinate goals, empathy, grit theory, culture of civility, synergy, an address by an influential person, satisfaction of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, prayers and separation devices.

Management of deviant behavior

Deviant behavior refers to behaviors, section of deviant that does not conform to the society or what society approves. It also constitutes all forms of crime and delinquency. In a nutshell, it is any behavior that is contrary to the emotional, social norms, values, law and order.

Today, there are manifestations of deviant behavior in institution; sub-institution and social group to the extent social members in air societies are not exempted. It is however worthy of note that no behavior is deviant in its own itself just as man is not deviant in his own nature. It is therefore the society that defines certain forms of behavior as deviant or normal.

There are fundamental issues worth outlining here first, an individual's behavior may be influence by their attitude second, and their behavior may be a prediction of their intentions. One may ask, what is attitude? And what is intention and how they can be useful in explaining what ones behavior is likely to be?

Causes of deviant behavior in colleges of education in Nasarawa state

The dictionary definition of the verb "to deviate" is to run aside from away or cause, to depart from a procedure or link at thought or reasoning, deviants therefore involves variation, and deviant behavior is thud variant or unusual. A deviant person is the one who is unusual typically different from other. To call something deviant implies a departure from means or an unacceptable behavior. (Haralam, 2008).

The following are few identified cause of deviant behavior in schools or classroom by the American Observer (2007).

- i. Large and over side schools
- ii. Overcrowding environment
- iii. Poor instructional material supply
- iv. Disjointed family (of students)
- v. Parent inadequacies
- vi. Frequent changes of schools for students
- vii. Bullying in the classroom or the school in general

Deviant behavior starts manifesting in children even before arrival into secondary schools when taken for granted by the homes or communities. Also behavior such as noise making in the classroom when not checked or punished in time may take another dimensions. It should be noted here the punishment does not necessarily mean corporal punishment, because such punishment when administered constantly make the students to become deviant.

Students in school display pattern of rule violating behavior in an attempt to reaffirm their freedom from parent and other adults at the adolescence stage if such behavior continues to go unpunished or wrongly punish may become too critical to handle. For example, when students sneaks out of school to attend some social events inside the town which result in their returning to school pretty late, and if found out and give a dozen strokes each, they may choose to make a habit of skipping classes altogether (after all, it is only some stroke of the cane). This behavior may result in serious truancy, negative self-concept and eventually crime.

Deviant behavior in our school in Nasarawa state have a problem metamorphosing into a serious challenge in school administrators teaching staff and students are now realizing that their school face serious problem in the classroom for example, teachers spend more time trying to maintain law and order than actual teaching.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that just as conflicts abound in human beings so it is in colleges of education. The school administrator therefore needs managerial expertise and leadership qualities to bring the staff, students and community together to fight a common course create conflict free situation for academic success. Ola and Oyibo (2000). Observed that the current orientation is that conflict is an inherent aspect of every organization that dysfunction conflict should be resolved, while functional conflicts should be accepted and in fact encouraged. Nigerians leaders as well as management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria also need to create avenues for discussing and designing popularly accepted non-violent strategy for managing conflicts. However, should instance deviant behavior in school persist, the school should be hold responsible since school is one of the behavior modification. The pattern of such behavior among students in school is such that boys and girls mostly between the ages 17-23 are often most involved.

Recommendation

It is recommended that school authorities in colleges of education should be more democratic in handling students' affairs, involved students in decision making process especially on issues that borders on them, Students should be called for dialogue from time to time to curb conflicts Authorities of colleges of education should always embark or focus more on preventive strategies in order to reduce crisis rather than curative measures. Conflict management in colleges require giving consideration to problem solving techniques along with proper use of authority, observance of rules and regulations, proper structuring of institution, provision of adequate communication networks and encouraging meaningful participation of stakeholders in resolving conflicts.

The strategies of the state in managing conflict need to be redesigned. For instance, the use of military operatives to trouble shoot crisis in colleges institutions were not the best way of managing conflict as they had increase the number of casualties.

In the work of mohammed Bhai as cited in Magagula (2007) courses on conflicts management and resolution, peace education, civic education good governance, basic and human right, separation of powers of government, respect for the rules of law and teaching of peace as a General Nigerian Studies (GNS) with a view of making Nigerian colleges of education conflict free is one of the lasting solution.

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