



Perceived Influence Of Principals' Administrative Strategies On Conflict Management In Public Senior Secondary Schools In Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined perceived influence of principals' administrative strategies on conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprise 1985 respondents consisting of 35 principals and 1950 teachers from 35 Public Senior Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis which is made up of 20 secondary schools in Obio/Akpor and 15 Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A sample size of 272 respondents consisting of 17 principals and 255 teachers were derived through simple random sampling and purposive sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Perceived Influence of Principals' Administrative Strategies on Conflict Management Questionnaire". The instrument was face and content validated by experts in the Departments of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain reliability indexes of 0.95 and 0.86. Findings from the study showed that principals' administrative strategies, specifically effective communication and teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that school principals should not always carry the burden of the school alone but should involve other stakeholders who can collaborate to contribute both financially and materially to the growth of the school and wellbeing of the students in order to avoid incessant conflict.

Keyword: principals' administrative strategies, effective communication, conflict

INTRODUCTION

Conflict occurs when personnel in the school disagree or take opposing stand concerning issues or happenings in the school and this can be shown or expressed in the form of argument, protest, anger, action and disbelief. Atieno, Kiplagat and Yego (2016) emphasized that conflicts are inevitable among personnel in social organizations as well as in education institutions, and it is believed that there will always be disagreement among school administrators, teachers, students and stakeholders. Conflicts hampers smooth running of school activities and may be presented through: students refusing to obey school rules, students not doing home works and assignments as well as manual work, non-respect of students to their principals and teachers, students engaging in vices like theft, fights, bullying others, or not attending lessons as well as teachers not respecting the principals or not completing scheme of work, refusal to teach as well as not coming to class to teach regularly among others (Atieno, Kiplagat & Yego, 2016). The success or failure of the above in the school depends on the quality and nature of principals' administrative strategies. This has made conflict management central to the attainment of quality

education. The educational enterprise has to do with the gradual growth of human intellect, character and effective citizenship. For qualitative education to be achieved in a nation, the teacher (human resources), financial and instructional facilities (material resources) must be co-operatively organized by the principal.

Principals' administrative strategies is concerned with various ways in which human and material resources are utilized to achieve school goals. These strategies include such elements as planning, decision making, organizing, coordinating, motivating, directing, evaluating, staffing, and budgeting. Khan (2005) stated that principals' administrative strategies is an effective mobilization of human resources based upon appropriate, training and placement of an appointed staff in order to achieve the set goals and objectives. In the same vein, Aja (2015) viewed principals' administrative strategies as an important management function concerned with obtaining, developing and motivating the human resources required by an organization to achieve its objectives. The use of a set of administrative strategies by principals is informed by the fact that the principal is a planner, director, controller, coordinator, organizer, adviser and a problem-solver. The principals must be able to adopt some administrative strategies in order to manage conflicts that may arise in the school.

Conflict is any disagreement or opposition that exist between two or more parties. It usually happens in a school environment. Conflict often happens and results to clash, argument and collusion among and between members of the school community. Adeyemi and Aderniula (2012) noted that conflict is all forms of arguments, protests, demonstration, aggression and other destructive behaviours. Conflict arises from any incompatible situation or incompatibility of interests, needs, values and ideas among others. According to Olaleye and Arogundade. (2013), conflict consists of actions which are designed or meant to express sad feelings articulated with perceived anger to get need met, and in a way or manner that can cause destruction and interfere with someone 'else's happiness and ability to make sure that whatever that is needed is met. Conflict may arise between two individuals when there is high level of independence, having different goals, ideas, values, needs and value system as well as the different aspirations, perceptions, expectations, interests or incompatible personalities (Phemchandani, 2014).

In the educational system, the principal is the central figure towards the realization of school goals. However, gaps in the principals' administrative strategies will no doubt cause set-back in teaching-learning process and as well lead to escalation of conflict within the school confluence. To forestall these, the principal needs to communicate effectively and allow teachers' involvement in the decision making. Staff enjoy their relationship with principals who communicate well with them, allowing them express their feelings and ideas and also accommodate them in the decision making than principals who exhibit authoritative leadership in the school. These strategies when implemented appropriately, can help create a conducive school environment void of conflict. The school principal is the most important person in a school setting. As the chief executive of a school, he/she is charged with the responsibility of managing the day to day affairs of the school and ensuring that all members of the school community are moving in the right direction (Ngeripaka, Nkporbu & Acheya, 2019).

Key elements in principals' administrative strategies in conflict management in this study is effective communication and teachers' involvement in decision making. The way principals communicate plays a vital role in the conflict management in the school. Effective communication provides a strong basis for the attainable successes accorded in organizations through its creation of conducive and congenial working relationship and environment among workers, members of the society and the general public (Adeyemi & Ademilua, 2012). Akuffo (2015) noted that effective communication helps in resolving school conflict as it provides avenue for the school administrator to teach or tell his subordinates to be very clear and transparent in their communication with another, think twice before speaking and also learn never to speak offending words to others. Poor communication has always resulted in misunderstandings and eventually conflict. Therefore, for any conflict situation to be resolved, or prevented from degeneration, communication has to be clear and precise (Asemamaw & Narayana, 2014). Principals' effective communication is essential for conflict management, as it decrease fear of being rejected, struggle for acceptance and recognition, a greater predisposition to listen to the other and recognize their positive aspects, a strengthening of self-esteem, an increase in the degree of security, and

a decrease in defensive-offensive behavior (Aliasgari & Farzadnia, 2012). Where there is crisis/conflict situation in a school setting, principals' effective communication will enable all parties in conflict to communicate and understand the other party's mind, intention, interest, ideas and vision. This will provide an avenue to come to terms and as such, the situation will be resolved.

Again, teachers' involvement in decision making allows for expression of ideas that borders on staff and how to avoid them so that they will not degenerate into conflicting situation. Staff cooperation is believed to be an indisputable asset to the school principals while involvement in decision making process by the teachers could ease the principal's mounting problems as efforts would be put together to intellectually solve problems that could have remained unsolved by the principals alone. Obare (2015) noted that teachers can participate in decision making either as individuals, in committees or as a group. Wainaina, Iravo and Waititu (2014) conducted a research about effect of teachers' participation in decision making on the organizational commitment amongst academic staff in the private and public universities in Kenya and found that decisions made in consultation with teachers are more effective, particularly those teachers who are involved in decision-making are better equipped to implement such decisions. Osuji and Koko (2016) stated that teachers' participation can influence both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as job satisfaction and job commitment; which no doubt can in turn prevent conflict within the school community. Participation in the decision making in the school makes teachers feel like they are a part of a team with a common goal, and find their sense of self-esteem and creative fulfillment heightened which influence conflict management. There are many areas in which teachers can be involved in decision making, schools can particularly encourage and open avenues for teachers to participate in activities outside the classroom such as textbook selection, curriculum development, learning assessment, student placement, personnel staffing and professional development (Lin, 2014). This is because teachers who participate in decision-making are expected to make more sincere efforts to implement those decisions especially where conflict could have occurred (Ojukuku & Sajuyigbe, 2014). This approach can be used as a tool to reduce conflict in the school and improve job satisfaction and commitment. All these strategies are necessary in public senior secondary schools in order to avoid or manage conflict because personnel in education institutions have different ideologies, culture, vision and role preference and this for sure makes for disagreement in ideas and visions which make conflict inevitable and common in schools.

From the forgoing, it is pertinent to state that principals' administrative strategies and conflict management targets at improving the quality of education. It aims at improving healthy organizational climate and congenial setting that will lead to greater performance. Thus, it becomes necessary that every school administrator should ensure that conflict situation in their various schools are properly managed to create a friendly environment that will enhance qualitative education and academic performance. It is in light of the above that this study examined perceived influence of principals' administrative strategies on conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

There has been increased cases of conflict situations in secondary schools in Rivers State which has led to lack of coordination in administrative effectiveness by school administrators. This has led to poor administration/management of school activities, poor staff-relationship and poor level of academic performance.

Personal observation showed that conflict in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State has become a cankerworm which has eaten too deep into the fabric of our education system in the state. It has made the schools highly unmanageable. There are cases of students portraying different types of unruly behaviours amongst themselves and to the teachers and principals, to the extent that the teachers, students and principals cannot relate freely with one another. The schools and Educational authorities are worried about this situation. Thus, the seemingly lack of inter personal and intra personal relationship among these stakeholders has been worrisome.

The increasing high level of disrespect among these stakeholders in the school setting has eroded the norms and value system of our education system, to the extent that the effect of value re-orientation on the students cannot be sustained any more. The above situation is further compounded by the prevailing art of arrogance by the staff members (teachers) to the heads as well as the students to the teachers. This

reality underscores the essence of this study and it is the premise upon which this study is conducted. More so, in a society where there is public outcry on the falling standard of education, much is needed to ensure that conflict situation in public senior secondary schools is properly managed using the best and appropriate administrative strategies to bring about a congenial working relationship between the principal and teachers. From the aforementioned problems, it became imperative to examine perceived influence of principals' administrative strategies on conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Therefore the purpose of this paper was to examine perceived influence of principals' administrative strategies on conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the extent to which principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.
2. ascertain the extent to which teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?
2. To what extent does teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

- Ho₁ There is no significance difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.
- Ho₂ There is no significance difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

METHODS

The research design used for the study was the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprise 1985 respondents consisting of 35 principals and 1950 teachers from 35 Public Senior Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis which is made up of 20 secondary schools in Obio/Akpor and 15 Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A sample size of 272 respondents consisting of 17 principals and 255 teachers were derived through simple random sampling and purposive sampling technique. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 17 schools from the 35 schools in the study area which represent 48.57% of the total population; while the purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 teachers from each of the schools which gave a total of 255 teachers and represented 12.85% of the total population. A self-developed questionnaire titled: "Perceived Influence of Principals' Administrative Strategies on Conflict Management Questionnaire (PIPASCMQ)" was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument had two (2) sections; Sections A and B. Section A dealt with demographic information while Section B had 10 questionnaire items based on the objectives of the study. The response scale was structured on a 4-point Likert rating scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, and Very Low Extent with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by experts in the Departments of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine and obtain reliability indexes of 0.95 and 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions with a criterion mean of 2.50. Questionnaire items with ratings below 2.50 denoted 'Low Extent while 2.50 and above signified 'High Extent. The hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Analyzed data therefore, with calculated z-values above the z-critical value of ± 1.96 were rejected and below ± 1.96 were accepted.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *To what extent does principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?*

Table 1: Mean Perception Scores of Principals and Teachers on the Extent Principals' Effective Communication Influence Conflict Management in Public Senior Secondary Schools

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Principals N=17			Teachers N = 255		
		\bar{X}	σ	Rem	\bar{X}	σ	Rem
1	Effective communication helps to reduce anxiety among the parties in conflict	2.69	0.65	HE	2.69	0.67	HE
2	Effective verbal communication contributes to successful resolution of conflict in schools among stakeholders	2.73	0.67	HE	2.72	0.69	HE
3	Effective communication helps parties in conflict to control ones emotions and reduce anger.	2.69	0.65	HE	2.72	0.66	HE
4	It creates room for listening and allows for parties in conflict to ask questions for clarification	2.73	0.69	HE	2.74	0.73	HE
5	It promotes wealthy and mutual understanding of disputed issues among disputants.	2.67	0.68	HE	2.68	0.70	HE
Grand \bar{X} and SD		2.70	0.67	HE	2.71	0.69	HE

Results on table 1 showed the grand mean values of principals and teachers responses to questionnaire items (1-5) as 2.70 and 2.71 and corresponding standard deviation of 0.67 and 0.69. This infers that to a high extent principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?*

Table 2: Mean Perception Scores of Principals and Teachers on the Extent Teachers' Participation in Decision Making Influence Conflict Management in Public Senior Secondary Schools

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Principals N=17			Teachers N = 255		
		\bar{X}	σ	Rem	\bar{X}	σ	Rem
6	Involving teachers in decision making for expression of ideas that borders on staff and how to avoid them degenerates conflict	2.55	0.81	HE	2.79	0.85	HE
7	Principals sharing decision making powers with the teachers creates conducive and congenial working relationship	2.84	0.54	HE	2.85	0.56	HE
8	Teachers involvement in formulating policies in the school makes them put sincere efforts to implement those decisions especially where conflict could have occurred	2.88	0.79	HE	2.89	0.82	HE
9	School administrators consulting teachers before taking final decision on any issue makes teachers feel like they are a part of a team with a common goal and desist from conflict	2.88	0.74	HE	2.91	0.75	HE
10	Teachers sharing and exchanging ideas with school administrators regularly reduces conflict in the school and improve job satisfaction and commitment.	2.92	0.69	HE	2.96	0.68	HE
Grand \bar{X} and SD		2.81	0.71	HE	2.88	0.73	HE

Results on table 2 showed the grand mean values of principals and teachers responses to questionnaire items (6-10) as 2.81 and 2.88 and corresponding standard deviation of 0.71 and 0.73. This infers that to a high extent teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Hypotheses

Ho₁ There is no significance difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Table 3: z-test Analysis of Difference between the Perception Scores of Principals and Teachers on the Extent Principals' Effective Communication Influence Conflict Management in Public Senior Secondary Schools

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	SL	Decision
Principals	17	2.70	0.67	270	0.73	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Teachers	255	2.71	0.69					

Data on Table 3 above revealed that at 0.05 level of significance and 270 degree of freedom, the z-calculated value of 0.73 was less than the z-critical value of ±1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted, which states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Ho₂ There is no significance difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Table 4: z-test Analysis of Difference between the Perception Scores of Principals and Teachers on the Extent Teachers' Participation in Decision Making Influence Conflict Management in Public Senior Secondary Schools

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	SL	Decision
Principals	17	2.81	0.71	270	0.76	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Teachers	255	2.88	0.73					

Data on Table 4 above revealed that at 0.05 level of significance and 270 degree of freedom, the z-calculated value of 0.76 was less than the z-critical value of ±1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted, which states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings in table 1 revealed that to a high extent principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State with average mean score of 2.71. Data in table 3 revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent principals' effective communication influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State with z-calculated value of 0.73 which was less than the z-critical value of ±1.96. This finding is in agreement with Asemamaw and Narayana (2014) who noted that for any conflict situation to be resolved, or prevented from degeneration, communication has to be clear and precise. This findings also agrees with Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012), who asserted that effective communication provides a strong basis for the attainable successes accorded in organizations through its creation of conducive and congenial working relationship and environment among workers, members of the society and the general public.

Findings in Table 2 revealed that to a high extent teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State with average mean 2.85. Again information in table 4 further revealed that there was no significant difference

between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State with z-calculated value of 0.76 which was less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 . This finding corroborates with the findings of Wainaina, Iravo and Waititu (2014) who conducted a research about effect of teachers' participation in decision making on the organizational commitment amongst academic staff in the private and public universities in Kenya and found that decisions made in consultation with teachers are more effective, particularly those teachers who are involved in decision-making are better equipped to implement such decisions. In consonance, Ojukuku and Sajuyigbe (2014) noted that teachers who participate in decision-making are expected to make more sincere efforts to implement those decisions especially where conflict could have occurred.

CONCLUSION

The objective of principals' administrative strategies is to develop a detailed and systematic methodology to define the criteria for identifying the best practices for conflict management in public senior secondary schools. Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that principals' administrative strategies, specifically effective communication and teachers' participation in decision making influence conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals should organize seminars and workshops aimed at improving rapport between the principals and their staff. Effective communication on long and short term negative effects of conflict should be made between teachers, principals and parents, and that guidance and counseling should be strengthened to educate both principals and teachers on better strategies of managing conflict in secondary schools.
2. School principals should not always carry the burden of the school alone but should involve other stakeholders who can collaborate to contribute both financially and materially to the growth of the school and wellbeing of the students in order to avoid incessant conflict.

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