



Conflict Management Strategies and Administrative Effectiveness: Issues in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the influence of conflict management strategies on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. In carrying out this study, four hypotheses were formulated. The study adopted a survey research design. A total of 150 teachers were selected from a population of 607 using a simple random sampling technique. Conflict Management and Principals Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (“CMSPA EQ”) was employed for data collection. The instrument was validated and appropriate corrections were accomplished. To establish the reliability of the instrument it was pretested using 20 teachers sampled from the area of study that did not take part in the actual study and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained. The dependent t-test analysis was used in testing the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed a significant influence of communication strategy, mediation strategy, dialogue strategy, and negotiation strategy on the administrative effectiveness of principals in public secondary schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. It is recommended among other things that Principals should improve their communication skills and provide communication channels for effective conflict resolution. They should be aware that lack of access to information breeds rumors and invariably results in crises.

KEYWORDS: Administrative Effectiveness, Communication, Conflict Management, Dialogue strategy, Mediation, Negotiation.

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts in secondary schools appear to occur frequently in the Nigerian state of Akwa Ibom. This could be because of the structure of the educational system, where pupils and administrators appear to disagree on important socio-cultural and academic issues. Some secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State have been notorious for severe fighting and cult wars for a decade. This case is not exceptional to only Uyo High and Ewet Technical College. Several other schools within and outside the Metropolis have witnessed some forms of conflict among students and students-to-teachers. It has been noted that relating to one another is a challenge for secondary school students. The number of secondary school student fights is highly concerning. These include altercations between students, confrontations in groups, disputes within courses, and even disputes across schools. The fact that some pupils even attacked their instructors and other non-teaching staff members is even more concerning.

Students bully each other all the time, especially in public schools. Some pupils carried guns to school in case they got into an altercation. It seems that altercations and fights have recently become commonplace at several schools.

Another problem that has been seen among students is verbal abuse. During conversation, students attack one another by using ambiguous language, defamatory statements, and all types of "dirty" language. It is very impossible to witness students carrying on deep discussions without them breaking out into arguments and verbal "wars." The dynamics between these pupils and their teachers are not all that different in this instance. Pupils call their teachers "funny" names, which is incredibly disrespectful. Even worse are the scenes in which pupils harass and disparage their lecturers in front of the class.

To address these cases, administrators are expected to carry out administrative duties such as staffing, organizing, overseeing, planning, evaluating, collaborating, leading, and maintaining facilities, equipment, and teaching materials. In addition, principals are responsible for maintaining cordial relationships between staff and students in and outside the school; ensuring students' welfare is not compromised, as well as managing the school's finances and accounts. Based on observations within the educational system, tensions arise around several topics, such as the regular increases in school tuition, religious issues, clothing codes, inadequate classroom facilities, and subpar services. In public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, it is a common observation that conflicts arise even if the authorities exist and employ a variety of ways to control them. Additionally, investigations indicate that there may be a connection between the administrative efficacy of the authorities and the tactics they are using to manage these conflicts in institutions.

It is well known that certain publicly-funded high school leaders carry out their responsibilities depending on their recruitment expertise. By skipping seminars and conferences to keep their administrative abilities up to date, they appear to lack regular learning and growth, and as a result, they frequently employ antiquated methods in the management of their schools. This appears to have an impact on their ability to effectively supervise instruction, assign tasks, and collaborate on decisions in secondary schools.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of conflict management strategies on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. The study sought specifically to:

- (i) Determine the influence of communication strategy on administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.
- (ii) Determine the influence of mediation strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.
- (iii) Investigate the influence of dialogue strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.
- (iv) Determine the influence of negotiation strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- (i) There is no significant influence of communication strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.
- (ii) Mediation strategy does not significantly influence the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.
- (iii) Dialogue strategy does not significantly influence the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.
- (iv) There is no significant influence of negotiation strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The degree to which principals carry out the aforementioned administrative duties determines how effective they are as school administrators. According to Jaiyeoba (2003), effectiveness is the extent to which a school or organization uses its human and material resources to accomplish a specified goal. According to Adegun (2005), high productivity, optimism (high motivation), instructor turnover, level of cooperation, optimization of each person's potential, maximum usage of available resources, and value addition to society are indications of effective administration. Additionally, according to Babayemi (2006), The All-Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS) in 2004 listed indicators of a secondary school that is effectively run. These indicators include: learners as well as employees who follow rules; students and educators who stay engaged throughout lessons; a significant decrease in exam malpractice; the keeping of all school records; high performance on junior and senior secondary certificate assessments; outstanding management by the principal; an orderly educational environment; and parents who rush to get their children admitted. Additionally, the principal needs to create precise controls.

There will inevitably be conflict in any business organization or institution. The Chinese have accepted the concept of conflict for many centuries. The Chinese term for "crisis" is "woi-ji," which is an amalgam of the words "danger and opportunities." Conflict can be advantageous or detrimental to entities, organizations, or governments, depending on how the company, schools, or state uses the scenario to its benefit. If a disagreement is not properly resolved or handled, it can hurt the business, group, or state. Conflict occurs constantly in our daily, public, and private lives. These disputes can be small-scale, internal to groups, or between communities of nations, and are caused by ethnic, racial, religious, or economic differences in values, beliefs, and attitudes toward issues. Disputes are part of human nature, but the right thing to do in the face of conflict is to prepare for and be prepared to occasionally help promote peace rather than to hope for conflict to never occur. Every time and anywhere that individuals come into contact, there is a chance for confrontation. There is a significant rise in the likelihood of conflict when individuals form groups to pursue shared objectives. For many individuals, conflicts are associated with negativity because only the most severe disputes make news. Not every conflict is the same. On all fronts, we have conflicts. We argue with our relatives and coworkers. "Disputes are rarely settled amicably, "Most disputes are resolved by individual compromise.

The goal of Management Strategies of Conflict (MSC) is to develop critical and creative thinking skills so that students can learn how to diagnose problems and implement effective

responses. They are a course of action intended to accomplish a particular objective (Amoh and Bacal, 2007). Although there are several conflict management techniques, the researcher only took into account those that were most directly relevant to the topic of the study. Among these tactics, according to Oboegbulem and Onwurah (2011), are dialogue, negotiation, and mediation as well as effective communication.

One of the best ways to handle disagreements is through excellent communication. It's a procedure where groups receive all the information they require on schedule. Since it has been shown that ineffective communication leads to misunderstandings and eventually conflicts, information is important in conflict management. To prevent conflicts, communication must be accurate and unambiguous (Oboegbulem, & Onwurah, 2011). Another tactic is mediation. This is a scenario in which an impartial third party facilitates tough discussions between organizations that are at odds. Through free, honest, and therapeutic venting, disputants can let out their frustrations and rage during mediation. It gives disputants a stronger sense of their value and authority. Through mediation, parties to a dispute can access a fast, easy, and reasonably priced venue (compared to litigation). By encouraging an egalitarian ethic, it also assists disputants in equalizing interpersonal power clashes (Oboegbulem, & Onwurah, 2011). In dialogue strategy, disputing parties hold in-depth, significant conversations with one another with the goal of better understanding the other side via negotiations, as opposed to resolving a dispute, as is typically the case with negotiation or mediation. Argumentants dispel unfavorable preconceptions, concentrate on ingrained emotions, wants, and values, and grasp the disagreement and its problems from all angles. It's a procedure when groups at odds are brought together (in person) to discuss the issue and exchange opinions. In a dialogue, both parties to the conflict express their emotions and worries, listen to each other's needs, and are open to change as a result of what.

Another way to resolve disputes is through negotiation tactics. This is an official dialogue between opposing representatives attempting to come to a consensus. The goal of negotiation is to provide both parties to a dispute the opportunity to voice their concerns and come to a resolution. As a result, the disagreement will be successfully resolved (Amoh & Bacal, 2007). If conflict in public secondary schools is not addressed, it can lead to anarchy, a collapse of law and order, and a reduction in the achievement of performance criteria. Regarding conflict management techniques used in secondary education, such as conversation, mediation, effective communication, and negotiation, there have been differing views expressed. However, as far as the researcher is aware, no study has been conducted to support these ideas, hence there is not enough actual data to support them. In light of this, the researcher is looking into the administrative efficacy and dispute resolution techniques used by principals in public secondary schools in the Uyo Education Zone.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Ofodile and Ofole (2018), Shahmohammadi (2014), and Mura (2015) conducted a study on conflict management and aggressive behaviors among students in Secondary schools. Their papers highlighted mediation as one strategy for lowering conflict between people or groups at home, at school, or at the workplace. They observed that giving pupils the tools they needed to resolve conflicts on their own in a constructive and useful way may come from teaching them conflict management and resolution techniques. Additionally, pupils' communication skills, self-confidence, and sense of self can all be enhanced by this kind of instruction. This paper's

main focus is on exploring the history of mediation and outlining the fundamental components of peer and adult mediation programs.

Promsri (2019) also researched on effects of conflict resolution strategies on students' compassion and violent behavior: evidence from accounting students at a Public University in Bangkok, Thailand. Five Explanatory study designs were adopted for the study with the population of the study comprised all 1,059 undergraduate students who registered in a four-year program in accounting in the study area. One of the major findings showed a strong correlation between compassionate skills and less violent behavior among students. Mura, et al., (2009) investigated conflict management among secondary school students. Talware, S. L., et al., (2022) also examined conflict management among students in Indian schools using exploratory research where past researches on secondary schools' conflict management were studied. The researchers found that disruptive behavior in the classroom poses a serious threat to students' academic success, presents a considerable learning obstacle, and contributes significantly to the stress that teachers experience at work. It was indicated that one of the main issues and challenges facing teachers was misbehavior by students and classroom management. Based on a review of the literature it was concluded that conflict resolution was a critical component of education because without effective student conflict management, teachers would not effectively instruct their students, and students would not be able to learn.

METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of conflict management strategies on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 607 teachers in all the public secondary schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. A total of 150 teachers were selected from the entire population of teachers in the public secondary schools in the Uyo Education zone using simple random sampling. The Conflict Management Strategies and Principals' Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (CMSPA EQ) was employed to gather relevant information for this study. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A contained the communication strategy items, Section B contained mediation strategy items, Section C contained the dialogue strategy items Section D contained the negotiation strategy items Section E contained the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools items. The instrument has a four-point Likert Scale which includes SA (strongly agreed), A (Agreed), D (disagreed), and SD (strongly disagreed). The instrument was validated and appropriate corrections were implemented. To establish the reliability of the instrument it was pretested using 20 teachers sampled from the area of study that did not take part in the actual study and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained, which means the instruments were reliable enough for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using dependent t-test analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant influence of communication strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 1: Dependent t-test Statistics on the Influence of Communication Strategy on Administrative Effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. n = 150

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-calculated	t-critical
Communication Strategy	150	21.88	4.78	149	6.45	1.962
Administrative Effectiveness of Principals	150	17.84	5.51			

Calculated $P > 0.05$, calculated $t > 6.45$, at df 149

Results of the dependent t-test statistics in Table 1 show that the calculated t-value of 6.45 was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.962 when tested at 0.05 level of significance using 149 degrees of freedom. This implies that the result is significant. The result of the analysis revealed that there is a significant influence of communication strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained.

Hypothesis 2:

Mediation strategy does not significantly influence the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Dependent t-test Statistics on the Influence of Mediation Strategy on Administrative Effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. n = 150

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-calculated	t-critical
Mediation Strategy	150	20.54	5.33	149	4.23	1.962
Administrative Effectiveness of Principals	150	17.84	5.51			

Calculated $t > 4.23$, $P > 0.05$ at df 149

Results of the dependent t-test statistics in Table 2 show that the calculated t-value of 4.23 was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.962 when tested at 0.05 level of significance using 149 degrees of freedom. This implies that the result is significant. The result of the analysis revealed that mediation strategy significantly influences the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained.

Hypothesis 3:

Dialogue strategy does not significantly influence the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3: Dependent t-test Statistics on the Influence of Dialogue Strategy on Administrative Effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. n = 150

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-calculated	t-critical
Dialogue Strategy	150	19.77	4.87	149	3.33	1.962
Administrative Effectiveness of Principals	150	17.84	5.51			

Calculated $P > 0.05$, calculated $t > 3.33$, at df 149

Results of the dependent t-test statistics in Table 3 show that the calculated t-value of 3.33 was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.962 when tested at 0.05 level of significance using 149 degrees of freedom. This implies that the result is significant. The result of the analysis revealed that dialogue strategy significantly influences the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained.

Hypothesis 4:

There is no significant influence of negotiation strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Dependent t-test Statistics on the Influence of Communication Strategy on Administrative Effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. n= 150

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-calculated	t-critical
Negotiation Strategy	150	21.35	4.66	149	5.70	1.962
Administrative Effectiveness of Principals	150	17.84	5.51			

Calculated $P > 0.05$, calculated $t > 5.70$, at df 149

Results of the dependent t-test statistics in Table 4 show that the calculated t-value of 5.70 was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.962 when tested at 0.05 level of significance using 149 degrees of freedom. This implies that the result is significant. The result of the analysis revealed that there is a significant influence of negotiation strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDING

Findings of the study in Hypothesis One revealed that there is a significant influence of communication strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. The finding is in line with the study conducted by Adeyemi (2009). The findings show that conflicts have not been effectively managed by principals of schools because of their inability to effectively utilize the strategies for resolving conflicts.

The findings of the study in Hypothesis Two revealed that mediation strategy significantly influences the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. The finding is in line with the study conducted by Lateef & Yahaya (2019) who examines the conflict management strategies and administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Sokoto metropolis. The study established a significant relationship between dialogue, competition, prevention, communication, and administrative effectiveness.

The findings of the study in Hypothesis Three revealed that dialogue strategy significantly influences the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. The finding of the present study is in line with the study by

Osuji (2005) who investigated conflict management strategies of secondary school principals and teachers in Owerri Education zone.

Findings of the study in Hypothesis Four revealed that there is a significant influence of negotiation strategy on the administrative effectiveness of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. The finding by Bankole in 2010 is also related. The study's findings revealed, among other things, the nature of conflicts includes: inter-personal conflicts, intrapersonal conflicts, intra-departmental conflicts, situational conflicts, and industrial and labor conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study were summarized as follows: Effective communication is a conflict-resolution method. This is because without efficient communication, people cannot make their problems known to one other, and there would be no meaningful interaction. Mediation is also important in settling conflict. It involves a neutral body coming in to investigate the matter. Without mediation, it will be difficult to manage conflict because even dialogue needs a mediator. Dialogue is one of the effective strategies for managing conflict in an institution because dialogue is a discussion between two or more people that aims at settling problems among them. Dialogue enables both parties to come together, sit down, and discuss the issue. Negotiation can also be used to manage conflict because, through negotiation, the issue will be resolved, by striking a balance between the conflicting parties.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

- (i) Principals must enhance their communication skills and establish lines of communication. They should be aware that a lack of access to information generates rumors, which inevitably lead to catastrophes.
- (ii) Principals should promote the formation of committees for conflict resolution through mediation.
- (iii) Principals should employ dialogue strategies to manage school issues. They should be receptive to student grievances before they escalate. This could be accomplished by engaging students in debates about current issues in schools and allowing them to participate in decision-making.
- (iv) Secondary schools should incorporate negotiation as a conflict resolution approach to foster teamwork, prevent crises, and enhance performance.

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