ADMINISTRATIVE CONFLICT AND PRINCIPLES' WORK PERFORMANCE IN UYO SENETORIAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated administrative conflicts and principals work performance in Uyo senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. An Ex-post research design was adopted for the study. Principals and vice-principals in public schools in the area constituted the study sample selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were collated using the administrative conflict and principals' work performance questionnaire (ACPWPQ) designed by the researcher and administered on 250 secondary school administrators in Uyo senatorial district. Five research questions and four null hypotheses were formulated with regards to role, personality, inter-group and work performance of the administrators. All the four null hypotheses were tested at 0:05 level of significance using the Pearson Product Mordent Correlation analysis and multiple regression as the statistical tools used for the data analysis. The result revealed that, role conflict has significant but negative relationship with principal's work performance. Also identified with significant but negative relationship principal's work performance was personality conflict. Finally, Inter-group conflict was also observed to have significant but negative relationship with principal's work performance. The conclusion was that administrators should limit their roles, so as to satisfy society's expectations. Based on these findings, some recommendations were made including that; school administrators should see conflict as part of the school organization. It was also recommended that refresher course, symposia and workshops on administrative conflict and work performance strategies should be organized for administrators to improve their professional skills.

KEY WORDS: Conflicting factor, school administrators, performance, studies, role conflict, principal's work performance, schools.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is part of life. There is no society, community, organization or inter-personal relationship whish does not experience conflict at some point or another in the course of daily interaction. Conflict is a state of opposition or disagreement between two people or groups of people who have different goals and values. An individual may also experience conflict within him/herself. For example, conflict issues in choosing a life partner, career, religion affiliation and so on.   The school as a social system is comprised of administrative staff, academic and non-academic staff, informal groups and student. The interaction of these groups from diverse interests increases complexity; this can have a noticeable effect on their very identity. The principal as a school climate moderator has the duty of seeing that he/she manages school conflict effectively so that the school work is not disturbed.

Since principals of secondary school are responsible for all actions that take place in the school, they are faced with a number of situations, which may interfere with the performance of their jobs. The conflict situation could be in the different roles that they are expected to play, which may be in conflict with others, such as the principal presiding over meetings while he is expected to attend to his administrative work in the school. They could also be faced with conflicts that relate to their personalities. For example, an administrator may find it very difficult to display an appropriate behavior. A situation may also arise where the principal spends too much time socializing with the teacher at the expense of other administrative duties. Furthermore, the relationship between the school and the neighboring community could sometimes create a conflicting situation for school principals, particularly if it is a negative relationship. Another instance is when there is a difference in approach to discipline of student among teachers, which could pose a conflicting situation for the principal. In effect, systems do not function well, unless they are properly managed and effectively administered. Like other formal organizations, the school has human products. This gives rise to unique problem of organizational control in schools.

In the secondary school system, conflict is inevitable between school principals and their teachers and even among teachers, between student and teachers and sometimes between teachers and community members. Wherever people assemble and associate together for a common purpose, there is always bound to be some form of conflict. In a master-servant or boss-subordinate or better still, principal-teacher relationship, conflict is common probably because organizational objectives are usually incompatible with employee needs. Conflict may also occur between system's component and parts of the environment. For example, conflict can arise between bureaucratic role expectations of staff in the school system and value structure of the community. There are a host of role conflicts to which organizational members are susceptible. The numerous bureaucratic expectations associated with one's formal position in the organization often are inconsistent and produce strains. For example, the vice-principal of a small school may be expected to serve as both disciplinarian and counselor, or the principal may be subject to a variety of different and incompatible expectation from divergent groups such as the school and the superintendent, the parent-teachers' association and the local teacher's association.

Statement of the Problem

In Marxian analysis, conflict is attributable to an enduring power struggle between works and their employers over the control of various aspects of work. Inequality is distribution of proceeds of industry, job insecurity of the workers, and poor management control/strategies breed grievances which lead to conflict. It is evident that conflict abounds in schools because of the interaction of people from diverse backgrounds. Since the achievement of school objectives and goals depend on the correct management of conflict, it is necessary that, conflict be properly managed as they emerge. The fundamental problem of this study is to determine the relationship between role conflict, personality conflict, and inter-group conflict on the work performance of the principals in secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the stud is to:

1. Determine which administrative functions are most stressful to secondary school principals
2. Determine the relationship between role conflict and principals' work performance

Research Questions

The following research questions formulated guided the study

1. What is the most conflicting factor for school administrators in the performance of their studies?
2. What relationship exists between role conflict and principal's work performance in schools?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

H_o1 There is no significant relationship between role conflict and principals' work performance.

H_o2 There is no significant relationship between personality conflict and principal's work performances.

Literature Review

Types of Conflict in Organizations and their Management

Ratzburg (1999) classified conflicts into five categories as being: relationship, data, interest, structural and value conflicts. By relationship conflicts, Ratzburg (1999) means that conflict occurs because of the presence of strong negative emotions, misperceptions and

stereotypes, poor communication or miscommunication or repetitive negative behaviours. Relationship problems often fuel disputes and lead to an unnecessary escalating spiral of destructive conflicts. Data conflicts occur when people lack information necessary to make wise decisions, are misinformed, disagree on which data is relevant, interpret information differently, or have competing assessment procedures. Some data conflicts may be necessary since they are caused by poor communication between the people in conflict. Other data conflicts may be genuine incompatibilities associated with data collection, interpretation or communication. Most data conflicts will have data solutions.

Interest conflicts are caused by competition over perceived incompatible needs. Conflict of interest results when one or more of the parties believe that in order to satisfy his or her needs, the needs and interest of an opponent, must be sacrificed. Inter-based conflict will be commonly be expressed in positional terms. A variety of interest and intentions underlie and motivate positions in negotiation and must be addressed for maximum resolution. Inter-based conflict may occur over substantive issues (such as money, physical resources, time etc). Procedural issues, (the many the dispute is to be solved) and psychological issues (perception of trust, fairness, desire for participation, respect, etc). Timen and Peterson (1986) maintained that people who actually agree on an issue but who are unable to effectively communicate the agreement, assume that, they disagree, giving rise to pseudo conflict. But egos conflict occurs when people get emotionally involved to a point that there is some threat to their egos. Petetomade (1995) highlighted three forms of intra-personal conflicts namely: mutually exclusive positive, positive negative and negative.

Mutually exclusive positive-goal conflict is also described as approach-approach conflict and it occurs when an individual is forced or motivated to choose between two or more equally attractive desirable positively but mutually exclusive goals.

Positive Negative goal conflict also called the "approach-avoidance" conflict occurs when the individual is motivated to approach a goal and at the same time is motivated to avoid it. The single goal contains both the positive and negative characteristics for the individual. Similarly, **Negative-negative goal** conflict also know as "avoidance-avoidance conflict occurs when an individual is forced to choose two goals neither of which is viewed favorable, both are equally unattractive and undesirable (Peretomode, 1995).

According to Korman (1971), approach-approach conflict can be analysed in terms of the Festinger's (1957) well known theory of cognitive dissonance. In simple terms, dissonance is the state of psychological discomfort or conflict created in people when they are faced with two or more goals or alternative to a decision. Although these alternatives occur together, they do not belong or fit together. The theory states that the person experiencing dissonance will be highly motivated to reduce or eliminate it and will actively avoid situations and information, which would likely increase it. For example, the young person faced with two equal attractive job opportunities, would experience dissonance. According to Festinger (1957) theory, the young person would actively try to reduce the dissonance. The individual may cognitively rationalize that, one job is really better than the other one, and once the choice is made, be

sincerely conceived that, it was the right choice and actively avoid any evidence or argument to the contrary.

Approach-avoidance conflict is a type of conflict, which is most relevant to the analysis of organizational behavior. Normally, organizational goals have both positive and negative aspects for organizational participants. Accordingly, the organizational goal may arouse a great deal of conflict within a person and may actually cause the person to vacillate anxiously at the point where approach equals avoidance.

Avoidance-avoidance conflict is analogous to approach-approach conflict. This type of conflict does not have a great deal of impact on organizational behavior. Avoidance-avoidance conflict is usually easily resolved. A person faced with two negative goals may not choose either of them and may simple leave the situation. If this can be done, the conflict is quickly resolved. In some situations, however, the person is unable to leave. This could be true of persons in non-voluntary organization such as inmates in a prison, patients in a hospital or draftees in the armed services. To a lesser extent, most personnel in modern organization are also restricted from leaving.

Latten Conflict

This contains the basic conditions for potential conflict in an organization. Some of such conditions are competition for scarce resources, role conflict, drives for autonomy divergence or individual goals and frustration etc. This stage is latent because the conditions that lead to conflict are ever present but are however "suppressed".

Perceived Conflict

In this stage, element in the latency stage emerge and are recognized by one or both parties to the conflict.

Felt Conflict

Focused anxieties are created at this stage between conflicting parties. This sometimes moves beyond intellectual awareness to a personalized feeling of anxiety. Commenting here, Pondy (1986) supported the views of Rue and Byars and maintained that at this point, tension is beginning to build between the participants, though no real struggle has yet begun.

Manifest Conflict

This is a stage when open conflict behavior is exhibited; such overt behavior includes sub stage, open aggression, withdrawal, apathy and minimal job performance.

Conflict Aftermath

The conflict has been ended by resolution or suppression. This establishes new condition that will lead either to effective cooperation or to a new conflict that may be more severe than the first. In spite of the submission above, other than notable authors like Henry (1987, p 149), Brownson (1999, p 228) argued that conflict does not necessarily pass through

all these stages. Furthermore, participant in a conflict may both be at the manifest stage of conflict while the other participant is at a perceived stage.

Role Conflict and Performance

Behavioral scientists agree that an individual confronted with role of conflict experiences psychological stress that they may result in emotional problem and indecision. Research by Ivancevich and Donelly (1994) showed that it occurs frequently and with negative effects on performance over a wide spectrum of occupations. While managers can do little to avoid (conflict) certain kinds of role conflicts, many kinds can be minimized. For example, some role conflicts (especially intra-role conflict) can result from violations of the classical principles of chain of command and unity of command. Role strain or conflict can be reduced through a number of processes. These are through rationalization, compartmentalization and adjudication. Rationalization is a defense mechanism whereby a person re-defines a worrisome or painful situation in a way that allows him to escape the guilt or pain generated by that situation. In the context of the role conflict, the person acts differently in such a way that he is able to put up comfortably with the situation.

To avoid the stress and anxiety inherent in a role conflict, there is the need to explain away the situation in terms that are acceptable to the person entangled in the conflict. An example is the Christian soldier who rationalizes in the participation in the number of enemy soldier in the war front by claiming that, he is defending his nation. By pleading self or national defense, he succeeds in justifying his acts thereby freeing himself from culpability arising from the breach of the Christian injunction or expectation to "forgive those who wrong you" and to "turn the other cheek" Rationalization covers up the reality of conflict and allows us to believe that no conflict exists after all.

Compartmentalization, as the term suggest, implies the fencing of an individual roles in separate parts or compartment of his life, and responding to only one set of role demand at a time. The working woman who also is a wife often finds that her family roles are in conflict with the job place demands. Her job may require her to stay up late in the office, but she is home to take care of the family. Such conflicting pressure generates a strain that can be resolved by the women deciding to operate within one single role at a time. This is the compartmentalization responses. While at workplace, she shuts off her home responsibilities, and while at home, she does not remember her office work.

The third role conflict reduction mechanism "adjudication" differs from two devices already explained in that whereas the first two are unconscious and unintentional; the latter is both intentional and conscious device and strategy. Adjudication is the turning over to a third party for a difficult decision, an emerging role conflict thereby absolving oneself of responsibility or blame. By passing the buck as it were, the individual succeeds in shifting the problem of decision-making and the potential guilt that may follow to a third party. This way he forces himself from the pressure of the situation (Rahim, 1985).

They early management writer's rationale for these two principles was that violation would probably cause conflicting pressure on the individual. In other words, when individuals

are faced with conflicting expectations or demands from two or more sources, the likely result is a decline in performance. The school administrators are the leaders in educational establishment. They have certain roles to issues affecting staff, students and the entire school system, taking decision which either affect the student and staff of the school and so on.

In the cause of performing these function in the school system as leaders, they may run into a number of conflict which may be inter-personal, role, personality (e.g. in dealing with problems in the school, these may be conflict between parent and teachers). Also in terms of roles conflict, his role as a school administrator, may conflict with his role as a person e.g. family duties, religious duties, community duties etc.

METHODS

Design of the study

The design of the study was an ex-post-facto design in carrying out the study.

Area of the study

The study area was Uyo Senatorial District in Akwa Ibom State.

Population of the study

The population of the study consisted 86 principals (Academic) and 164 vice-principals (Administration) from government owned secondary school in Uyo senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, (Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, 1995).

Sample and sampling technique

No sampling was done because the researcher conveniently used the whole population.

Instrumentation

A researcher-made instrument termed "Administrative Conflict and Principal's Work Performance Questionnaire (ACPWPQ) was used for the study.

Validation of Research Instrument

In order to ascertain that the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, face content and construct validity of the questionnaire were ascertained by giving the instrument to three experts in test, Measurement and Evaluation.

Reliability of the Instruments

To test the reliability of the research instruments, the instrument was administered to 20 administrators, at Ikot Ekpene Senatorial district, other than the ones used for the study. The reliability index of the whole test was (0.83). This ratio was considered adequate and could be accepted that the instrument would measure what it meant to measure.

Administration of the Instrument

The questionnaire was administered in person by direct delivery system (DDS) to the subject in the schools in Uyo Senatorial District. The respondents (administrators) were given enough time to complete the questionnaire, because of their tight administrative schedules in school. A total of two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were put into circulation.

Methods of Data Analysis

The results that were obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Analysis. All hypotheses were tested at (0.5) alpha level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One

The research question sought to find out the most conflicting factor for school administrations in the performance of their duties. In order the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in table 1.

Table 1

Percentage analysis of the most conflicting factor for school administrators in the performance of the duties

S/NO	FACTORS THAT CAUSE ADMINISTRATIVE CONFLICT	FREQ	%
1	My Person	98	15.31
2	Family Duties	115	17.97
3	Religious Studies	67	10.47*
4	Community Duties	102	15.94
5	Staff Problems	126	19.69
6	Students Problems	136	20.63*
	TOTAL	640	100

** **The highest percentage frequency**
* **The lowest percentage frequency**
Source: Field Survey

Table 1 presents the result of the percentage analysis of the most conflicting factor for school administrators in the performance of their duties. From the result, it was observed that the most conflicting factor for school administrators in the performance of their duties as responded by the respondent was "student's problem" (20.63%). This was seconded by "staff's problems" (10.69%). The third conflicting factor was "communities' duties" (15.94%). The fourth in the list was identified as "family duties" (17.97%). My person was identified as the fifth in the order (15.31%), while the least conflicting factor for school administrators in the performance of their duties as responded by the respondents was religious studies (10.47%). The result therefore means that there are various factors for school administrators in the performance of their duties with problems from student on the lead.

Research Question Two

The research question sought to find out the relationship that exists between conflict and principal's work performance in schools. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive analysis of the relationship that exist between role conflict and principal's work performance in schools

Variable	N	Arithmetic Mean	Expected Mean	r	Remarks
Role		13.63	12.5		
	250			-0.70*	*Moderately strong negative relationship
Principal's Work Performance in Schools		25.11	25		

Source: Field Survey

Table 6: presents the result of the descriptive statistics of the relationship existing between role conflict and principal's work performance in schools. From -0.70, the two variables were observed to have moderately strong negative relationship at 70%. The arithmetic mean for role conflict 13.63 was observed to be greater than the expected mean scores of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards to the principals' work performance in work 25.11was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 25. The result therefore means that there is remarkable negative relationship between role conflict and principal's work performance in schools.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between role conflict and principals' work performance. In order to test the hypothesis, Pearson Product Movement Correlation analysis was used to analyze the data.

TABLE 3
Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between role conflict and principal's work performance.

Variable	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Role conflict (x)	3408	47536		
			84130	-0.70
Principal's work Performance(y)	6277	161471		

Significant at 0.05 level; df=248; Critical r-value = 0.139

The table presents the obtained r-value of (-0.70). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.139) at 0.05 level with 248 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (-0.70) in it absolute from (0.70) was greater than the critical r-value (0.139). Hence, the result was significant relationship between role conflict and principal's work performance, meaning that the higher the level of role conflict encountered by the principal, the lower his level of work performance and vice versa. The result therefore is in consonance with the view of Wanger and Hollenbeck (1992), Ivancevich and Donelly (1994) who considered role conflict as a major cause of individual stress in an organization and that role conflict results from the situation where an individual is involved in many different roles with each having a complex role set. There is a tendency that school principal can develop individual stress due to a number of role set facing them, thereby making it difficult for them to satisfy the specific roles as school administrators.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between personality conflict and principal's work performance. In order to test the hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to analyze the data.

TABLE 4:

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between personality and principal's work performance in schools.

Variable	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Personality conflict (x)	3956	63656		
			97524	-0.89*
Principal's work Performance (y)	6277	161471		

Significant at 0.05 level; df = 248; N = 250; critical r-value = 0.139

The above table presents the obtained r-value of (0.89). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.139) at 0.05 level with 248 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (-0.89), in its absolute from (0.89) was greater than the critical r-value (0.139). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant relationship between personality conflict and principal's work performance in schools, meaning that the higher the level of personality conflict encounter by the principal the lower ohis level of work performance and vice versa. This findings is in agreement with the opinion of Holy Miskel (1987) who observed that personality conflict arises from the basic incompatibilities in the need structure of the individual and that when this conflict is allowed has the tendency of reducing principals' work performance. Principals exhibit inappropriate organizational behavior because of personality conflict. Consequent upon the excessive need to drive a good car, build house etc, some principals assume the position of the school bursar or cashier in order to misdirect the school fund.

Conclusion

It was concluded that there is significant relationship between role conflict and principal's work performance, meaning that the higher the level of role conflict encounter by the principal the lower his level of work performance and vice versa. Also, there is significant relationship between personality conflict and principal's work performance in schools, meaning that the higher the level of personality conflict encounter by the principal the lower his level of work performance and vice versa.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the research work, the following recommendations are deemed necessary:

1. Principal should consider administrative conflict as part of the school organization and then evolve appropriate management skills of managing these conflicts for the survival of the school organization.
2. The principals should ensure that while managing the administrative conflict, it should not affect their work performance which is very paramount.
3. Principals should delegate some of the roles to vice principals, teachers, even students where necessary.
4. Symposium, conferences, seminar and workshops should be organized regularly in order to equip the principals with adequate skills to manage administrative conflict and enhance their work performance.

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