

The influence of principal – teacher conflict on teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in Awka South of Anambra state

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of principal-teacher conflict on teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in Awka South of Anambra State, Nigeria. The design adopted for the work was a descriptive survey design. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 528 teachers in the 18 public secondary schools in the study area. The sample size of 286 teachers was selected using random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled, “Influence of Principal-Teacher Conflict on Teachers’ Job Performance Questionnaire”. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A dealt with effects of principal-teacher conflict on teachers job performance while section B was concerned with management strategies adopted to resolve principal-teacher conflict. The instrument for the study was validated by three experts; two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Educational Foundations all in the Faculty of Education, Anambra State University, Awka. The reliability of IPTCTJPPSSQ was established through pilot-testing and analysis using cronbach alpha which yielded the correlation coefficients of 0.84 and 0.86 respectively with an overall value of 0.85 which was considered high enough for the instrument to be reliable. The findings of the study revealed that principal-teachers’ conflict is a distraction of the two parties from their call of duty and that at that such crisis period, competence and commitment are negatively affected. It was therefore recommended that principals of secondary schools should minimize conflicting with their teachers by adopting an administrative pattern that will accommodate all shades of opinions of staff and recognise the efforts of teachers for job well done.

Keywords: influence, principal, teacher, conflict and job performance

Introduction

Conflicts are regular occurrence in the work place, the school setting inclusive. By definition, it is the simultaneous operation of unagreeable ideas. Oboegbulem (2015) states that conflict is a disagreement or argument between two persons or more. The existence of conflict in any organisation or educational institution does not mean administrative failure. Adeyemi (2009) ^[2] looks at conflict in the school setting from a moral perspective. To him, the difference between the performance of the school head (the principal) and what the teachers working with him expect him to do, that is, their perception of the responsibilities of the principal, explains the concept of conflict.

The management of any organisation including a school consists of conflict and conflict resolution. This is because as Edumark (2014) ^[4] puts it, nobody works in isolation. This presupposes that human beings from different backgrounds with divergent academic and social background disagree with each other from time to time.

On what comes in the school system that can cause conflict especially between principals and teachers, Walter and Dutton (2010) outlined the following, mutual task dependence, task-related asymmetric, performance criteria and rewards, organisational differentiation, role dissatisfaction, dependence on common resources, communication, obstacles, personal skills and traits and role ambiguity. From the above list, it could be deduced that the conflict between the principal and teachers emanates from ideological differences, variations in role perception of each other and role conflict or role ambiguity.

The principals are the administrative and executive heads of secondary school. They are the heads and supervisors of pedagogy and they assign job responsibilities or roles to teachers. Therefore, they are supposed to be knowledgeable with academic and administrative competences. Babatunde (2014) ^[3] classifies the functions of the principal into; development and implementation of educational programmes, development of the teaching and non-teaching staff, students’ relation function, school community relationship and the administration of finance. In addition to the above functions, the principal creates the school climate that allows effective teaching and learning. He equally supervises the teachers to ensure that the various subject curricular are qualitatively delivered. In doing this, the principal sometimes becomes autocratic and this is where teachers rise in opposition against his leadership and there is conflict.

The teacher is the field worker in the school system (Edumark, 2014) ^[4]. He executes the curriculum and he is the major human factor in the realization of teaching and learning objectives. He is one who had gone through approved professional training in education at the appropriate level in order to impart knowledge and character to others. He is a teacher because he has been certified to teach. He uses the lesson plan to facilitate students’ learning procedure.

As pointed out earlier, conflict and conflict resolution characterise every work environment including the school. Its effect on teachers’ job performance needs much to be desired. In most cases, it depends on the conflict

management strategies adopted. According to Adejumobi and Ojikutu (2013) conflict in a school affects the climate of the school and the outcome depends on the level in collaboration with the unity of purpose between the principal and teachers as designated or stipulated. Additionally, concentration on curriculum implementation could be disrupted by conflict. Oluwole, Okolo, Ivagha (2016) added that time and energy that would have channelled to work are directed to trivial issues that border more on personality or role conflict and at the end, the students are the ones that suffer.

As to whether conflict in the school setting especially, conflict between the principal and teachers impacts positively on teachers' work, Walton and Dutton (2005) stated that the factors that lead to the conflict the extent of the damage done and the strategies for managing such conflict could be the deciding factors.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict in every school, especially between the principal and teachers is an outcome of unagreeable ideas between the two. This is more when the expectations of the teachers from the principal are of variance with what he (principal) does. In Anambra state, conflict in schools are more on role conflicts and sometimes on role ambiguity. Cases abound where principals of schools apply autocratic principals to enforce compliance to instructions from them. The difference between the use of such force and teachers response becomes conflict. All these conflicts between the principal and teachers in Anambra state seem to impede teachers' job performance. At the period of such conflicts, the productivity of teachers and even that of the principal drop in content and in quality.

It is important to state that these conflict situations between the principal and teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra state have not been thoroughly investigated. It is on account of this, that the study is directed at ascertaining the influence of principal-teacher conflict on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions

1. How does principal – teacher conflict influence teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra state?
2. What are the conflict management strategies adopted in resolving principal – teacher conflict in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses aided the study

1. There is no significant relationship between principal – teacher conflict and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra state.
2. There is no significant relationship between conflict management strategies and the resolution of principal – teacher conflict in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Method

The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey design. Nworgu (2015)^[7] defined descriptive survey design as those studies that aim at collecting data and describing the features and characters of a given population, in a given way. The population of the study consisted of 528 teachers in the 18 public secondary schools in Awka South Local Government of Anambra State. The size of 286 teachers was selected using sample size random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Influence of Principal – Teacher Conflict on Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (IPTCTJPPSSQ)". The instrument consisted of two sections A and B. Section A dealt with the effect of principal – teachers' conflict on teachers job performance while section B is concerned with conflict management strategies adopted to resolve principal – teacher conflict. The instrument for the study was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of IPTCTJPPSSQ was established using pilot – testing and analysis using Cronbach alpha formula yielded correlation coefficients of 0.84 and 0.86 respectively with an overall value of 0.85 which was considered high enough for the instrument to be reliable.

For the purpose of analysis, each of the items was scored. The four-point rating scale was used to score the responses of the respondents item by item. Each item was weighted and calculated as strongly agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. Data were collected by the researcher himself and the mean and standard deviation and t-test were used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. In testing the null hypotheses, where p-value was equal or greater than 0.05, the null hypotheses was accepted but if otherwise, it was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

How does principal – teacher conflict influence teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Awka South of Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents mean ratings and standard deviation on influence of principal – teacher conflict on teachers' job performance (N = 280)

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remark
1		3.60	0.91	Strongly Agree
2	Conflicts arise out of inconsistent ideas between the principal and teachers.	3.82	0.86	Strongly Agree
3	Principal – teacher conflict affects teachers' job performance negatively It diverts teachers' attention from their job to issues in conflict. It demoralises teachers and affects their competence.	3.10	0.71	Strongly Agree
4	The two parties in conflict cannot work together with a common purpose. It is a distraction to the school as both parties can longer concentrate.	2.80	0.88	Agree
5	It affects the orderly prosecution of subject curriculum.	3.82	0.93	Strongly Agree

6		2.86	0.68	Agree
		2.90	0.89	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.82	0.98	Strongly Agree

Data in Table 1 shows the grand mean score of 3.82 and standard deviation score of 0.98. This is an indication that the secondary school teachers in Awka South of Anambra strongly agree that principal – teacher conflict influence teachers’ job performance. The item by item analysis shows that out of 6 listed influence of principal – teacher conflict on teachers’ job performance, items 1, 2, 3 and 4 are rated strongly agree with mean scores ranged from 3.60 and 3.82, while the remaining three items are rated agree by teachers.

The standard deviations for all the items ranged from 0.68 to 0.93, indicating that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Research Question 2

What are the conflict management strategies adopted to resolve principal – teacher conflict in public secondary schools in Awka South of Anambra State? (N = 280)

Table 2

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remark
1		2.04	0.69	Disagree
2		3.76	0.93	Strongly Agree
3	Principal – teacher conflict can be resolved by withdrawing from the conflict	3.20	0.81	Agree
4	One conflict management strategy that can be used to resolve it is dialogue	2.88	0.59	Agree
5	Collectively seeking for a common solution to a conflict			
6	Negotiation can be used to resolve principle-teacher conflict	2.90	0.87	Agree
7	Principals can use reward to resolve conflict with teachers.			
8	Motivation of teachers by the principal can as well be used to resolve conflict or even minimize it.	3.58	0.76	Strongly Agree
9	Principal – teacher conflict can be resolved through collaboration	3.64	0.79	Strongly Agree
	Principal – teacher conflict can be resolved through compromise			
	Principals can use punishment to resolve conflict with teachers	2.76	0.75	Agree
		2.00	0.89	Disagree
	Grand Mean	2.87	0.79	Agree

Data in Table 2 reveals that teachers strongly agree that dialogue, motivation and collaboration are used to resolve principal – teacher conflict with mean scores ranged between 3.58 and 3.76. Teachers agree that negotiation, collaboration use of reward, and compromise are used to resolve principal-teacher conflict with mean scores ranged between 2.76 and 3.20 while they disagree that withdrawal, and used of punishment are used for resolving principal-teacher conflict. The grand mean score of 2.87 shows that the respondents agree that seven out of the nine conflict

management strategies are used in secondary schools to resolve principal-teacher conflicts. The standard deviations for all the items ranged from 0.59 to 0.93, showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Testing of Null Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between principal – teacher conflict and teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of significant relationship between principal – teacher conflict and teachers’ job performance

Source of Variation	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
Principal-teacher conflict	280	3.63	0.85	278	0.86	0.03	Significant
Teachers’ job performance	280	2.89	1.19				

Table 3 shows that t - value of 0.86 at 278 degree of freedom with calculated p-value of 0.03 which is less than the significant value of 0.05 (0.03 < 0.05). This shows that there is a significant relationship between principal – teacher conflict and teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra state. Therefore, the null hypothesis therefore was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between conflict management strategies and the resolution of principal – teacher conflict in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of significant relationship between conflict management strategies and resolution of principal – teacher conflict

Source of Variation	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
Conflict management strategies	280	4.29	0.86	278	1.21	0.01	Significant
Resolution of principal-teacher conflict	280	3.18	0.97				

Table 4 shows that t - value of 1.21 at 278 degree of freedom with calculated p-value of 0.01 which is less than the significant value of 0.05 (0.01 < 0.05). This shows that there is a significant relationship between conflict

management strategies and the resolution of principal – teacher conflict in public secondary schools in Anambra state. Therefore, the null hypothesis therefore was rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the study in Table 1 showed that there is a significant relationship between principal-teacher conflict and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Awka South Local Government of Anambra State. Conflict is synonymous with crisis and it is a period when temperament surges out against reasonableness (Hutchison, 2012). At this moment, both parties in conflict are distracted and the consequence is that performance will drop both in quality and in quantity. This finding is in agreement with Godfred (2013) ^[5] who submitted that a quality exchange of relationship between principal and teachers has a significant impact on their performance as they inter-face with their job. Taking redundantly, school or organisational conflict has never left members of staff at the same place. In most cases, it is a setback (Edumark, 2014) ^[4].

The findings in Table 2 indicated that there is a high and positive relationship between conflict management strategies and teachers' job performance. It was agreed that negotiation, collaboration, use of rewards and compromise are the best strategies for conflict management. According to Adeyemi (2009) ^[2], the use of these strategies in conflict management will always result in positive effects or outcomes. The opposite he continued could be negative. In most cases however, the outcome has always been negative (Oluwole, Okolo, and Ivagher, 2016) ^[9].

Conclusion

Conflict is a disagreement between two persons or more that have inconsistent ideas, belief or needs. In every school, be it secondary school or tertiary, it is a period of anger and as such a distraction from teachers' rules of engagement. What comes out of such conflicts depends very much on the management strategies adopted.

Recommendation

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are submitted;

1. Principals of schools in the study area should minimize conflicting with their staff by adopting an administrative style that is all-inclusive.
2. The Ministry of Education should intensify and enlarge their supervisory duties to include exercising over-sight functions on the work relationship between principals and their teachers.
3. Principals should be more motivational in their relationship with their teachers. Teachers should be appreciated for good job performance.
4. Where error or mistake is dictated, the offence should be addressed and not the offender.

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