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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of community participation in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 4,536 while the sample was 368 respondents. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of 368 respondents. The instrument for data collection was self-structured questionnaire titled "Community Participation in Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CPCRAQ)". Three experts validated the instrument used for the study from the Department of Educational Management, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The instrument was trial tested on 30 respondents in Ijero L.G.A of Ekiti State which was not part of the area used for the study. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to establish the reliability estimate and the overall reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions that guided the study, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance. The major findings of the study were that communities to a great extent participate in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State. Findings also revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents on the influence of community participation in conflict

resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the principals as the managers of secondary school should as a matter of importance be able to identify nature or causes of conflicts in their schools before it affect school as a whole and that the school authority should identify resources persons within the community and reach out to them when the need arises.

Keywords: Community Participation, Conflict Resolution, Administration, Public Secondary School.

Introduction

Conflict is in evitable in any given school. Conflict can be described as coming into clash, collision or being in opposition or at variance with other person or group of persons. It also mean trife, controversy, discord of action, disagreement in opinions and antagonism of interest or principle. Adejuwon and Okewale (2009) defined conflict as the result of interaction among people, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence. Ihuarulam (2015) maintained that conflict is a condition of disharmony or hostility within an interaction process which is usually the direct result of clash of interests by the parties involved. Whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another, then conflict is bound to occur. Conflict could also be seen as a disagreement over social issues, beliefs and ideologies.

In the school system, conflicts are also inevitable. This is more so in an organization as a secondary school with a structure that allows two or more units or groups to share functional boundaries in achieving its set objectives. In secondary school, people with differing nature - students, teachers and administrative staff have to work harmoniously together. The organizational structure is such that staff and staff, students and students, staff and students share functional boundaries to exchange knowledge. Secondary school education occupies a very unique position in the educational system in Nigeria, because it is that level that determines the academic and professional career of students. Education at secondary school level is defined by Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2014), as the form of education children receive after

primary education and before the tertiary stage. The aim of secondary education is to prepare the individuals for useful living within the society; and for higher education. Nigeria as a country is faced with a lot of crises in her educational industry (Ijamu, 2015).

The goal of secondary education is pursued through its main functions and activities of teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, service to the community, and being a storehouse of knowledge (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). In carrying out these functions, there used to be conflicts within and among the categories of people within the school community, namely students, academics, non-academics and their unions. These categories of people have different purposes and expectations from the university. In pursuance of their individual and group purposes and expectations they sometimes disagree with one another due to their differing ideals which result to conflict. Secondary schools in the study refer to all the secondary schools that are owned, financed and managed by the Ekiti State government. The school is the agent of socialization after the home. Therefore, the school exists for the community and the community exists and acts as clients to the school. Therefore, the community through various groups could participate in conflict resolution for effective administration of the school.

The nature of conflict that occurs in secondary schools in Ekiti state, Nigeria varies from one secondary school to another. These include intra-personal conflict, inter personal conflict, inter-group conflict, ethnocentric conflict and subordinate conflict among others. Intra-personal conflict deals with crises arising from within the human personality. It concerns how the individual takes in, processes and produces information. It is mostly psychological in nature. Inter-personal conflict is mutual hostility between two people who have incompatible goals, needs and approaches in ethnocentric conflict is one motivated by discrimination between indigenous and non-indigenous school members and subordinate conflicts have to do with hierarchy of position between two persons or groups among others their relationship.

An example is academic and non-academic staff in conflict. They are both working towards similar goals. Inter-group conflict is the conflict that takes place among department, units, sections or group of persons in the secondary school. Also, in secondary school system, we

have personality clashes, communication gap, unresolved power tussle, role conflict and interpersonal conflict, among others according to (Oboegbulem and Onwurah, 2011). Personality clash is a very strong difference in motives, style or values in dealing with people that are not resolvable. For example, if individuals differ in their style of dealing with people, they will be unproductive working in teams to execute a task. A hasty man will not have a harmonious working relationship with a slow man. The consequences of conflicts on the school organization have been regrettable. Part of the repercussions on school is disruption of academic programmes, hostility, stress, anxiety, unnecessary tensions, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities. It also renders school environment uncomfortable for serious academic activities. Hence, there is a need for community participation in school conflict resolution with different management strategies of conflict in secondary school administration.

Administration is the ability to put persons into working order and telling them what to do and how to do it so that a specified end will be accomplished. Administration is generally defined as the process of working with and through others to efficiently accomplish organizational goals. Ogunbiyi (2017) defined administration as a determined action taken in pursuit of conscious purpose. It is the matching of available labour and materials in order to gain that which is desired at the harvest cost of energy, time and money. The central purpose of administration in general is the coordination of human and material resources towards the attainment of some predetermined objectives. Administration of secondary school in this study refers to the extent to which secondary schools achieve its goals by producing students who have gained knowledge, who are disciplined and have developed appropriate skills and moral value system that can make them function in the society through effective school administration. It entails working with and through teachers, non-teaching staff and students to get things done effectively.

Theoretical framework

The sociological conflict theory

While conflict is accepted as a central fact of society, every society has its unique conflicts. Greek thinkers from Heraclitus to the Sophists

treated conflict as a primary social fact. Jean Bodin, the harbinger of modern theories of sovereignty, expanded the ideas of conflict from Niccolo Machiavelli who founded the origin of the state and its key institutions in the same place. Thomas Hobbes (1651) developed them into a materialistic rationalism. There are two distinct traditions of conflict theory useful for the study. The power relations tradition of political philosophy, reflecting view of: Machiavelli, Bodin, Hobbes and Mosca who have analyzed conflicts in the policy in terms of power relationships as well as seeing the state as the central object of analysis. Sociological Conflict Theory is largely a synthesis of these two traditions focusing on the unequal distribution of rewards in society. While Karl Marx is its leading architect, Wright Mills, Ralf Dahrendorf, Irving Louis Horowitz, Lewis Coser, Herbert Mucus, Randall Collins and Andre Gunder Frank are among the noted conflict theorists of contemporary sociology, whose direction of argument, we adopt in understanding the role of conflict in the Nigerian public secondary schools.

In secondary school administration, community participation is the process by which communities through various groups assume responsibility for their own welfare and develop a capacity to contribute to the development of their schools by being involved in the school conflict resolution. This takes the form of getting engaged in school matters through representations of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Old students Association, Board of Governors (BOG), School Based Management Committee (SBMC), social clubs, and women Association among others. For the purpose of the study, PTA, BOG, and Principals were also used to elicit the needed information on how community participate in conflict resolution in public secondary school in Ekiti state. Parent Teachers Association may be described as a voluntary organization whose membership consists of teachers in an individual school and the parents of the students who attend the school they support (Bagin, 2011).

In terms of composition, it is made of between six to ten executive members who are selected at a general PTA meeting of a school involving all parents or guardians in the community who have their children in the school. Board of Governors on the other hand, is voluntary in nature with a legal mandate. In both developed and developing countries and especially within the last thirty years there has been a growing move through legislation to involve communities in

the education of their children through school governing bodies. While school principals are the chief executive officers of the school, they play a vital role in maintaining healthy relationships between the schools and the communities. Ugwuanyi (2013) maintains that communities do actively participate in the provision of personnel and play a vital role in taking part in the decision making of the school in order to know exactly how the school is being managed and operated since their children are there to bring glory home. Also, Aguba (2009) reported that communities do participate in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and other organizations participation.

Communities see lots of roadblocks to getting involved in their child's education, therefore, participate in decision making to help find lasting solutions to the challenges that might be impeding effective school administration. One of the advantages of involving communities in school creates a greater sense of ownership, morale and commitment among the stakeholders. It is disheartening when institutions of learning institutions such as secondary schools that are supposed to be a model of democratic unity, principles, and cooperation degenerate into conflicts between academic and non-academic staff as a result of controversies. The existence of conflict in the secondary schools if neglected can result to chaos, breakdown of law and order, and decline in attainment of established standards of performance. However, there have been diverse opinions concerning the management strategies of conflict in our secondary schools such as negotiation, effective communication, confrontation, dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and clarification of goals and objectives. It is on this note that the researchers assessed how communities participate in conflict resolution through various groups in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti state, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There have been claims that the incidence of conflicts between academic and non-academic staff in secondary schools have been affecting the basic environmental conditions required for effective teaching and learning in the school. The seemingly chaotic situation is said to have undermined many programmes aimed at enhancing

knowledge and skills in the various secondary schools. As noted at the background of this study, some of these conflicts have caused stress, tensions, disorganized timing of school activities and in most cases rendered school environment unconducive for serious academic activities and created ineffective management. As a result of ineffective management of conflicts, many secondary schools' conflicts are said to turn to violence and some seem to have become unresolved. Regrettably, the opinions of people concerning the management strategies of conflict between academic and non-academic staff of secondary school seems lack sufficient empirical evidence because no study known to the researchers has been carried out in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria to determine these. Consequently, this gap in knowledge has informed the need for this study. The study therefore investigated the influence of community participation on conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study was to influence of community participation in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify the nature and causes of conflicts in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State?
2. establish how community participate in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the nature and causes of conflicts in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State?
2. How do community participate in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Community participation does not significantly influence conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study area was Ekiti State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 4,536 while the sample was 368 respondents. Yaro-Yamen formula was employed to get the sample size. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the 368 respondents. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of 368 respondents. The instrument for data collection was self-structured questionnaire titled "Community Participation in Conflict Resolution Questionnaire" (CPCRQ)". Three experts validated the instrument used for the study from the Department of Educational Management and Test and Measurement, Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. The questionnaire was developed along the lines of the research questions raised for the study. The questionnaire was arranged in two clusters each with 5 items. Cluster 1 sought information on nature and causes of conflicts and Cluster 2 on how community participate in school conflict resolution. The experts were requested to assess the relevance of the items in addressing the research questions bearing in mind the purpose of the study. These experts, after scrutinizing the instrument, made very important observations and corrections. The instrument was trial tested on 30 respondents in Ijero L.G.A of Ekiti State which was not part of the area used for the study. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to compute the reliability estimate and the overall reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained.

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation (SD) to answer the research questions while the hypothesis was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The decision level was determined by the use of criterion mean of 2.50 for clusters 1, 2, 3, 4 respectively. Mean of 2.50 and above were agreed while mean that fell below 2.50 were disagreed. A

four-point liker ating scale was used to find out the influence of community participation on the administration of secondary schools in Ekiti state. The rating scale is as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) - (4points), Agree (A) - (3points), Disagree (D) - (2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD) - (1point).

Results

Research Question 1: What are the nature and causes of conflicts in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State?

Table 1: Mean Responses of PTA, B.O.Gs and Principals on the nature of Conflicts in the Administration of Public Schools in Ekiti State

S/ N	Items	P.T.A		B.O.G		Principal		Grand		Decision
		\bar{x}	SD.	\bar{x}	SD.	\bar{x}	SD.	\bar{x}	SD.	
1	Unclearly defined staff role leads to conflict.	2.59	0.64	2.60	0.69	2.54	0.59	2.57	0.64	Agree
2	Competition for scarce resources and their allocations will bring two groups into conflict.	2.61	0.76	2.55	0.73	2.63	0.66	2.59	0.71	Agree
3	Personality differences between staff.	2.54	0.61	2.67	0.51	2.76	0.48	2.65	0.53	Agree
4	Differences in staff perceptions of their duties lead to disagreement.	2.74	0.50	2.54	0.43	2.70	0.47	2.66	0.46	Agree
5	Poor human relationship between the academic and nonacademic staff.	2.68	0.71	2.69	0.59	2.56	0.58	2.64	0.62	Agree
	Cluster Mean							2.62	0.59	Agree

Key: \bar{x} = mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

The analysis of data as presented in table 1 revealed the mean responses of the PTA, BOGs and principals on the nature and causes of

conflicts in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti state with their corresponding standard deviations. It can be seen in the Table that the respondents agreed with all the items 1, 2, 3 4 and 5 with a grand mean scores of 2.57, 2.59, 2.65, 2.66 and 2.64, respectively. With the cluster mean scores of 2.62 which meets the bench mark of 2.50 and above at four point rating scale. This means that all the items in table 1 are nature and causes of conflicts in administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti state.

Research Question 2: How do community participate in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools?

Table 2: Mean Responses of PTA, B.O.Gs and Principals on how Community Participate in Conflict Resolution in the Administration of Public Schools in Ekiti State

S/ N	Items	P.T.A		B.O.G		Principal		Grand		Decision
		\bar{x}	SD.	\bar{x}	SD.	\bar{x}	SD.	\bar{x}	SD.	
1	School authority usually consults the community on school conflict matters arising.	2.69	0.44	2.50	0.59	2.54	0.51	2.58	0.51	Agree
2	Community ensure that he intermediary do not take side between parties in school conflicts.	2.57	0.86	2.63	0.61	2.59	0.66	2.59	0.71	Agree
3	Community takes time to study what caused disagreements between people involved in conflicts before involvement.	2.61	0.49	2.51	0.59	2.76	0.61	2.62	0.56	Agree
4	Community advises on the use of non-violence means such as	2.54	0.55	2.50	0.49	2.70	0.37	2.58	0.47	Agree

	dialogue, peace panel to settle conflicts in school.									
5	Make enquiry on causes and how to resolve the crisis from both sides.	2.88	0.61	2.59	0.49	2.56	0.28	2.67	0.46	Agree
	Cluster Mean							2.61	0.54	Agree

Key: \bar{x} = mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

The analysis of data as presented in table 2 showed the mean responses of the PTA, BOGs and principals on how community participate in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti state with their corresponding standard deviations. It can be seen in the table that the respondents all agreed with all the items 1, 2, 3 4 and 5 with a grand mean scores of 2.58, 2.59, 2.62, 2.58 and 2.67, respectively. With the cluster mean scores of 2.61 which meets the bench mark of 2.50 and above at four point rating scale. This means that all the items are ways through which the community participate in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti state.

Hypothesis

Community participation does not significantly influence conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Table 2: ANOVA Results of the Responses of PTA, BOGs and principals on Community Participation in Conflict Resolution

	Subjects	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Conflict resolution	Between Groups	15.874	2	7.940	2.561	.081
	Within Groups	1135.428	365	3.111		
	Total	1151.302	367			

The table above presents the result of ANOVA analysis of the respondents on community participation in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State. From table 3, it can be seen that $F = 2.561$ at between degrees of freedom (df) and within degree of freedom of 2 and 365, respectively, when $p = 0.081$ (significant value) and alpha value was given as $p = 0.05$ level for the three groups (PTA, BOGs and principals). Since p value of 0.081 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is thereby accepted. It therefore implied that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean responses of PTA, BOGs and principals on the influence of community participation in the conflict resolution on the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Discussion of Findings

Nature and Causes of Conflicts in the Administration of Public Schools in Ekiti State

The analysis of data presented in table 1 revealed the result of the responses of the respondents on causes of conflict in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti state. According to the responses of the PTA, BOGs and principals in table 1, causes of conflict in the administration of public secondary schools include unclearly defined staff role which led to conflict, competition for scarce resources and that their allocations usually brings two groups into conflict, personality differences between staff, differences in staff perceptions of their duties leads to disagreement and poor human relationship between the academic and non-academic staff. The finding agreed with that of Ihuarulam (2015) who found that breach of communication, poor human relationship, unclearly defined goals and objectives, unequal attention to staff welfare, differences in staff perceptions of their duties, personality differences, inadequate representation of the groups in decision making, competition for scarce resources among others are sources of conflict in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti state. The finding also corroborates the finding of Oboegbulem and Onwurah (2011) who found that among others, personality clashes, communication gap, unresolved power tussle, role conflict and interpersonal conflict, role

dissatisfaction, over loading of information as well as absence of enough meaningful information may lead to conflict in secondary school.

Community Participation in Conflict Resolution in the Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Ekiti State

The analysis of data presented in table 2 revealed that community has been participating in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State to a great extent. This can be seen from the responses of the PTA, BOGs and principals in table 2. These include that school authority usually consults the community on school conflict matters arising, community ensure that the intermediary do not take side between parties in school conflicts, community takes time to study what caused disagreements between parties involved in conflicts before involvement, community advises on the use of non-violence means such as dialogue, peace panel to settle conflicts in school and make enquiry on causes and how to resolve the crisis from both sides. The finding agreed with that of Onyedieke (2011) who found that community participated through PTA and Council of Chiefs in resolving conflict situation in school by use of different intervention techniques for peaceful co-existence in the school. The finding also corroborated the outcome of Uguanyi (2013) who found that community participate in school conflict resolution through moral intervention techniques by recommendation of the use of proper and clear demarcation of line one duty and invitation of influential PTA members to have a dialogue of conflicts. With the level of community participation in the conflict resolution on secondary school administration in Ekiti State through the finding, it could be expected that their influence would enhance the tone of public secondary school administration in the State.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study and the discussion, the study found that causes of conflict in schools included unclearly defined staff role which led to conflict, competition for scarce resources and their allocations will bring two groups into conflict, personality differences between staff, differences in staff perceptions of their duties led to disagreement and poor human relationship between the academic and

non-academic staff. The finding also established that communities participated in conflict resolution in the administration of public secondary schools in Ekiti State to a great level. It can therefore be concluded that since school as a social institution is established within the community, community therefore as the host needs to reciprocate by creating a good and cordial relationship with the school because of many advantages they both render to each other. Symbiotic relationship always exists between the school and the community which led to the success of the two and enhance effective administration of the school.

Recommendations

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

1. The principals as the managers of secondary school should as a matter of importance be able to identify nature or causes of conflicts in their schools before it affect school as a whole.
2. School management should always involve the community through various groups in conflicts resolution strategies and also involve them in taking disciplinary action against any staff that is guilty of professional misconduct among others.

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