

## Principals' Conflict Resolution Strategies and Teachers' Job Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The thrust of this study was to investigate the relationship between Principals' conflict resolution strategies and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools. The area of the study was Akwa Ibom State. The specific purpose of this research was to find out if principals' conflict resolution strategies namely cause identification and integration strategies relate to teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. Two research questions were raised and were duly converted into two research hypotheses to guide the study. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The sample size of the study consisted of one thousand and fifty (1,050) public secondary school teachers and two thousand, one hundred (2,100) Senior Secondary two students randomly sampled from the population of six thousand, two hundred and ninety three (6293) teachers and twenty thousand, five hundred and ten (20,510) students respectively. Data collected from the study's instruments called Principals' Conflict Resolution Strategies Questionnaire (PCRSQ) and Teachers' Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (TJEQ) were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. Results of the findings revealed that cause identification and integration strategies had significant relationship with teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. In the light of these findings, it was recommended that the government should ensure that school principals are retrained regularly and constantly through school-based workshops, conferences, and seminars on effective conflict resolution strategies in-order to enhance teachers' job effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Principals' conflict resolution strategies, teachers' job effectiveness, public secondary schools

### 1. Introduction

The school organization achieves its goals through teachers' effectiveness in facilitating teaching-learning processes. Teachers' job effectiveness as used here refers to the ability of teachers to organize their job processes and professionalism in a manner that enables them to perform more work and adequately produce expected results in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities (Eric, 2015). Effective teachers communicate very well in the classroom and they encourage students' contributions in the learning process. They enforce classroom discipline by daily monitoring and taking of roll-call, being punctual to class and giving adequate corrective measures to students who may exhibit anti social/learning behaviour. They equally supervise students' academic activities through monitoring their classroom activities, guiding them on their project work, assessing and marking their notes. In the midst of these activities, conflict which is a phenomenon that is unquestionably identified with human relationship in any organization may set in.

In the school organization, conflict emanates from the interactions between members (students, staff, management and the community) and across the organization as members strive to achieve the goals and objectives of education resulting in: student/student conflict, student/staff conflict, staff/staff conflict, principal/staff conflict and school/community conflict. In secondary schools, like every other organization, variables such as principals' leadership styles, principals' change management strategies and principals' conflict resolution strategies may be potential causes of conflict and they may significantly relate to teachers' job effectiveness. Bartol and Martine in Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem and Odigwe (2014) submitted that poor recognition of teachers' autonomy, lack of objectivity, inadequate flow of information and perception of issues of interest are causative agents of school based conflict. With such conflicts, teachers cannot

contribute meaningfully to teaching - learning process which is central to the provision and actualization of qualitative education and goals of education as enshrined in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. This further leads to increase loitering by students, increase in the level of noise making in classrooms, poor evaluation of students' class work and delay in submission of students' assessment scores to relevant authority. These problems that attribute to poor teachers' job effectiveness may be linked to many variables including ineffective principals' conflict resolution strategies.

Such conflicts if not resolved amicably can disrupt the school system and may lead to poor teachers' job effectiveness. Only happy and emotionally satisfied teachers to a great extent show a positive attitude that contributes to improved students' academic success and achievement of educational goals. Conflict resolution therefore entails ending conflict by ways that address the remote cause of the issue(s), with resolutions that are just and acceptable by conflicting groups (Burton in Cunningham, 1998). Conflict resolution strategies stand for internal mechanisms that enable various authorities to get to the root of problems in order to resolve conflict in a manner that is acceptable to the conflicting parties (Adeyemi and Ademilua, 2012). If conflict is resolved well, it brings about harmonious working relationship otherwise it leads to disunity among teachers and other staff. This study therefore is concerned about principals' conflict resolution strategies as it relates to teachers' job effectiveness.

Conflict resolution strategies are techniques that facilitate conflict resolution. They enable school principals resolve conflict by involving teachers affected by the conflict to change their view, gain from the conflict and be effective in their job performance in terms of their classroom communication, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. For the purpose of this study, cause identification strategy and integration strategy of conflict resolution were adopted and investigated with regards to their relationship with teachers' job effectiveness. Cause identification strategy is a technique for resolving conflict which emphasizes the identification of the underlying cause of the conflict. Matoria and Gankar (2007) opined that this strategy is important because it leads to the identification of the source of the conflict which paves way for the finding of a solution acceptable by the conflicting parties. Integration strategy on the other hand is a mechanism for resolving conflict which emphasizes absorption of conflicting parties' ideas about the conflict to facilitate the respect of conflicting interests of parties while resolving the conflict. McGee and DeBernardo (1999) opined that integration strategy is the best because integrating of parties' ideas about the conflict helps the conflicting parties to understand the situation they are into and prepares them for effective participation in resolving the conflict. It is in the light of this background that this paper attempts to examine the relationship between Principals' conflict resolution strategies and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### 1.1 The problem

Problems relating to teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State have raised everybody's concern. Research has shown that educational system in the State is besieged by problems such as poor classroom teaching processes, poor maintenance of classroom discipline, ineffective classroom supervision, ineffective communication between teachers, learners, and parents, poor assessment and evaluation of students' learning, delayed distribution of results et cetera. Despite efforts made by government to improve take home pay of teachers and professional development of school principals, teachers' job effectiveness remains poor. This lack of effectiveness among teachers promotes loitering during classes and poor co-ordination of co-curricular activities. It leads to poor academic performance noticeable in students' internal and external examinations.

Monetary and non-monetary incentives by the government have failed to enhance teachers' job effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. This is evident in the researchers' view that there is no organization that conflict does not exist, (Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem and Odigwe 2014). The way school principals handle conflict affects job effectiveness of teachers. In the face of this problem of teachers' job ineffectiveness, it is pertinent and of utmost necessity to ask the question: How do principals' conflict resolution strategies relate to teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom?

### 1.2 Research questions

1. How does cause identification strategy relate to teachers' job effectiveness?
2. To what extent does integration strategy relate to teachers' job effectiveness?

### 1.3 Hypotheses

1. Cause identification strategy does not have any significant relationship with teachers' job effectiveness.
2. Integration strategy does not significantly relate to teachers' job effectiveness.

### 1.4 Research Methodology

The correlational design was adopted for this study. This study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria with the population of six thousand two hundred and ninety three (6,293) teachers in public secondary schools and twenty thousand five hundred and ten (20,510) senior secondary two students. This population spreads across two hundred and thirty five (235) public secondary schools in twenty five (25) Local Education Committees in thirty one (31) Local Government Areas of the state. Among teachers and students that constituted the population of the study, there were three thousand two hundred and thirty five (3,235) female and three thousand and fifty eight (3,058) male teachers and ten thousand seven hundred and fifty seven (10,757) female and nine thousand seven hundred and fifty three (9,753) male students (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, 2015).

Stratified random sampling technique was used. A sample of one thousand and fifty (1,050) teachers: Five hundred and twenty nine (529) female and five hundred and twenty one (521) male teachers were randomly selected. In addition two thousand one hundred (2,100) senior secondary two students were randomly selected through balloting to assess their teachers' job effectiveness. The researchers used structured instruments to collect data. The instruments named: "Principals' Conflict Resolution Strategies Questionnaire (PCRSQ) and Teachers' Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (TJEQ) were constructed by the researchers who have personal experience in the teaching profession. The instruments consisted of a 4 point modified Likert scale comprising 12 and 18 items which measured principals' conflict resolution variables and teachers' job effectiveness variables respectively. To ascertain the extent to which the items in the instruments measured what they were intended to measure, the instruments were presented to experts in Measurements and Evaluation for face validity after construction. To estimate and establish the dependability and how consistently the instruments work, the data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Reliability method. The coefficients obtained showed that the reliability coefficients of the variables of the study, which ranged from 0.78 to 0.84, were reliable enough to be used to measure consistently what they were purported to measure. It should be noted that, seventeen (17) copies of questionnaire were not properly filled hence, were discarded. This is responsible for a total of one thousand and thirty-three (1,033) copies of questionnaire used for data analysis.

## 2. Data Analysis and Results

Hypothesis one: Cause identification strategy does not have any significant relationship with teachers' job effectiveness. The dependent variable in this hypothesis is teachers' job effectiveness sub-divided into classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. The independent variable is cause identification strategy. The statistical technique deployed to test this hypothesis is Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis. The result is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) analysis of the relationship between cause identification strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State (N=1,033)

Variables	$\Sigma X$	$\Sigma X^2$	$\Sigma Y$	$\Sigma Y^2$	$\Sigma XY$	$r_{xy}$
Classroom teaching (Y <sub>1</sub> )	22174	486250	18422	334604	399269	0.48*
Maintenance of classroom discipline (Y <sub>2</sub> )	16097	254347	16097	254347	348290	0.46*
Supervision of students' academic activities (Y <sub>3</sub> )	16051	255315	16051	255315	348201	0.47*

\* P < 0.05, df = 1,031, critical r = 0.115

From Table 1, calculated r-values for: classroom teaching (0.48), maintenance of classroom discipline (0.46) and supervision of students' academic activities (0.47) were all found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.115 needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level, with 1,031 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis for all sub-variables of teachers' job effectiveness was discarded. This means that there is a significant relationship between cause identification

strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. The positive r-values obtained for all the sub-variables of teachers' job effectiveness mean that increase in the use of cause identification strategy in resolving teachers' conflict in the school organization will lead to increase in teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities.

Hypothesis two: Integration strategy does not significantly relate to teachers' job effectiveness.

The dependent variable in this hypothesis is teachers' job effectiveness sub-divided into classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. The independent variable is integration strategy. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical technique was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) analysis of the relationship between integration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State (N=1,033)

Variables	$\Sigma X$ $\Sigma Y$	$\Sigma X^2$ $\Sigma Y^2$	$\Sigma XY$	$r_{xy}$
Integration strategy (X)	21847	473021		
Classroom teaching (Y <sub>1</sub> )	18422	334604	399269	0.44*
Maintenance of classroom discipline (Y <sub>2</sub> )	16097	254347	348290	0.45*
Supervision of students' academic activities (Y <sub>3</sub> )	16051	255315	348201	0.46*

\* P < 0.05, df = 1,031, critical r = 0.115

From Table 2, calculated r-values for: classroom teaching (0.44), maintenance of classroom discipline (0.45) and supervision of students' academic activities (0.46) were all found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.115 needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level with 1,031 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis for all sub-variables of teachers' job effectiveness was rejected. This means that integration strategy significantly relate to teachers' job effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. The positive r-values obtained for all the sub-variables of teachers' job effectiveness mean that increase in the application of integration strategy in resolving school conflict among teachers will bring about increase in teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities.

### 3. Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that cause identification is an effective conflict resolution strategy which brings about increased teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis was retained while the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that increase in the use of cause identification strategy to resolve school conflict by principals leads to increased teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. The result of this study which shows that cause identification is an effective strategy for resolving school conflict was corroborated by other similar studies: Friends School of Minnesota (2002) found that one way to achieving peaceful resolution of conflict is by beginning with the identification of the key issues, by approaching the conflicting parties and letting them have a say about the situation. Hauan and Yazdanifard (2012) opined that identifying the underlying interests, needs and concerns revolving around any school conflict helps in gaining a lasting solution to the conflict.

This result was in agreement with the findings of Mamoria and Gankar (2007) that cause identification strategy strongly relates to teachers' job effectiveness. The authors also reported that unfolding the major cause of conflict is the first step to resolving conflict. This strategy is important because it leads to the identification of the source of the conflict, which paves way for the finding of a solution acceptable by the conflicting parties. The finding of this hypothesis was also in line with the research findings of Romani and Zhimin (2010) which pointed out that effective communication in order to identify the root cause of conflict is essential to resolving school conflict. The finding of this hypothesis emphasized the importance of cause identification as a strategy in resolving school conflict. This confirmed the earlier findings of Moore in The Mediation Process (2009) that the most important aspect of conflict resolution is spotting out the source of the conflict which helps providing possible ways on how the conflict can be resolved.

This finding attested to the fact that in every conflict within and outside the school organization, there must be something responsible for the conflicting behaviours exhibited by those involved in the conflict. If the cause of school

based conflicts is not identified, appropriate strategies adopted and administered in order to resolve the conflict from its root, the conflict would not be resolved effectively. So the higher the adoption and application of cause identification in resolving school conflict by school principals, the higher teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. By extension, the findings of this study suggested that conflict resolution subsumes conflict analysis, since it begins with data collection. School principals attempting to resolve school conflict must first of all identify the real cause of the conflict possibly through data collection. The analysis of the data gathered would guide them on the next action to take in order to find a lasting solution to the conflict else the morale of the conflicting teachers would deteriorate thereby affecting their job effectiveness. The outcome of this study should not be disregarded because it has proven that if school principals make cause identification strategy one of their top priorities in resolving school conflict it would enhance better teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of educational activities of students.

The result of hypothesis two revealed that increase integration strategy strongly increased teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was detained, while the null hypothesis was discarded. As observed from the responses of the research instrument, teachers admitted that integration of conflicting parties' ideas in resolving school-based conflict by school principals brings about effective conflict resolution, which improves and sustains their job effectiveness. The finding of this study affirmed other similar studies: the study of Friends School of Minnesota (2002) amplified that the views and ideas of the conflicting parties should be carefully listened to and integrated into the resolution process to enhance a satisfactory solution. Huan and Yazdanifard (2012) found that the integration of parties' ideas makes them feel that they are not left out in the resolution process. It equally makes them have a certain degree of hope that their needs would be respected. Msila (2013) noted that failure to consider the opinions of the conflicting parties by school principals in resolving conflict often result in poor or failed conflict resolution. Oboegbulem and Alfa (2013) found that integrating the opinions of the conflicting parties into the resolution process encourages them to work together in finding lasting solution to the conflict.

This finding is in agreement with the research findings of Mamoria and Gankar (2007) which had it that integration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness were strongly related. They further noted that integration of parties' ideas as a strategy in resolving conflict achieves solution in the best interest of individuals and organizations. This finding was likewise in consonance with the research findings reported by McGee and DeBernardo (1999) that for conflict to be resolved effectively, school principals who act as mediators must help the conflicting parties to distinguish between positions and interest. It is only after the interest is known can all options be explored.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Within the limits of the research findings, it was reasonably concluded that cause identification strategy and integration strategy related positively to teachers' job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom. Hence Principals' conflict resolution strategies in conjunction to other motivational techniques are the most effective solution to the problem of teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. State government should ensure that school principals are regularly and constantly retrained through school-based workshops, conferences, and seminars on effective conflict resolution strategies.
2. Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board should make funds available to secondary school principals to enable them organize in-service programmes for all members of the school community as a way of assisting them to improve upon their understanding of conflict and their reaction when confronted with it.
3. Principals of schools should not allow their personal interest and inclination to negatively influence their choice of conflict resolution mechanism as this can impede the effective resolution of school conflict.
4. Teachers should be adequately trained on conflict issues in order to instill in them the right behavioural orientation toward conflict handling.

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