
COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SCHOOLS: A TOOL FOR EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA BEYOND 2020

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on Counselling strategies for conflict resolution in schools as a tool for education and development in Nigeria beyond 2020. In Nigeria, Conflict is very often as a result of interaction in political, economic and social enterprises. In schools, Conflicts manifest in riot as behavioural and structural sources and often lead to poor academic performance of students. The purpose of the study is to find out: What are the causes of conflicts in schools; what are the Counselling strategies for conflict resolution in schools. The term Counselling is a process of helping an individual to develop and accept an integrated picture of his/her aptitude, abilities, interest and interpersonal needs to achieve maximum adjustment to the environment of which school is one of them. The likely consequences of conflict were identified and the challenges that counsellors can face in conflict resolution were determined. The study prescribed that counsellors should provide strategies for conflict resolution through multidisciplinary approach and techniques for educational development. Based on the types of conflicts and causes of conflicts, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

INTRODUCTION

Guidance and Counselling has become an integral and essential component of Nigeria educational process for all the students as they progress through the educational system. Oladele (2000) defined guidance and Counselling as a number of processes used in assisting an individual having problems in any facet of life. Counselling is a process of helping an individual to develop and accept an integrated picture of his/her aptitude, abilities, interest and interpersonal needs to achieve maximum adjustment to the environment of which school is one them. So that he can be more effective, satisfied and useful to the society in which he lives. The current rates of conflict in our secondary school need counselling services to benefit from the educational systems. To ensure that the schools are safe and discipline Counselling wears a national outlook. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) made it clear that Counselling services should be rendered to students in secondary schools in Nigeria. The aforementioned policy document noted that in view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospect and in view of personality mal adjustment among school children, counsellors and career officers will be appointed in secondary schools (NPE, 2004). This was to fulfill the Nigeria government policy statement, professional counselors are to provide services not only to ensure quality in education but also to help individual acquire the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to identify opinions, explore alternative and succeed in life peacefully.

No doubt Nwokolo (2006) noted that when counsellors perform their expected duties in school setting then the students will be satisfied as their different academic, vocational, social and personal life aspiration are fulfilled, there will be no conflict and peace will exist. Conflict is a natural part of any functional class (Shindlers, 2008). In fact it is not necessary a sign that there are problems with the school community. But it does lead to unhappiness, discomfort and or the need for members of the school to emotionally withdraw or attack (Okole, 2014). In schools, Conflicts manifest in riot as behavioural and structural sources and often lead to poor academic performance of students. Therefore conflict is inevitable phenomenon in any organization and schools as social organization do experience conflict between different groups within its jurisdiction. So, making sense of conflict resolution and providing our secondary school students with skills, knowledge and dispositions to process it effectively is essential for creating a functional democratic classroom and school environments.

Conflict in secondary schools of Nigeria has become a major concern to all stakeholders in education. Students' unrest, revolts and violence are regular features of our secondary schools today. Conflict hinders productivity, lower morale and stimulates inappropriate behaviours in individuals (Namara, 2007). Conflict in schools need to be prevented and managed for students' progress in education. This should be done through conflict resolution. Conflict resolutions are important to classroom teachers for effective and efficient teaching and learning to take place (Mayanchi, 2014). Therefore, there is need for conflict resolutions through Counselling strategies in our secondary schools to produce conducive learning atmosphere. This paper focused on Counselling for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Nigeria for Education and Development beyond 2020.

THEORIES OF CONFLICTS

There are two basic theories on conflict in this paper. Thus:

1. Traditional theory
2. Contemporary theory

The traditional theory is based on conflict are caused by trouble makers, conflicts are bad and conflict should be avoided or suppressed. The contemporary theory is based on conflict are inevitable between human being, conflict are often beneficial and natural result of change, it can be managed and resolved (Kirchoff & Adams, 1982).

Conflict has some distinctive features for easy identification (Kingsley & Fuller 1998) characterized conflicts as:

- As conflict requires two people or group to exist.
- Are inherently involves some sense of struggle or in compatibility or perceived difference among values, goals or desires.

- Action, whether overt or covert are key to conflicts.
- Power or attempts to influence inevitably occur within conflicts.

The study observed the common conflicts among secondary school students, due to students-teacher relationship, students-students relationship, students – needs relationship as well as students-environment relationship.

TYPES OF CONFLICTS

There are different types of conflicts in organizational settings. Thus:

- Intrapersonal Conflict
- Interpersonal Conflict
- Intra group Conflict
- Inter group Conflict

Intrapersonal Conflict: These occur within a person and that one can experience, with respect to the amount of resources one has by hearing internal voices that disagree. To buttress this assertion Orlich and Callhan (2001) explained in this type that individual tries to reconcile conflict within his/her own value structure. Similarly hart(2002)observed that it may not only take a toll on one's physical body but it often occupies ones thoughts and causes a great deal of emotion.

Interpersonal Conflict: This type of conflict occurs between two or more people (Meck, Heit, & Page, 2005). It is also refers to clashes that involves two or more individuals, who perceive each other as being in opposition to preferred outcomes(goals) and or attitudes, values or behaviours. While Nelson-Jones (1990) sees it as a situation in which one or both individuals in a relationship are experiencing difficulty in working or living with each other. This type of conflict usually occurs due to differences or incompatibilities, needs, goals or styles clashes.

Intra group Conflict: This emerges between people who identify themselves as belonging to the same group. It is a clash among some or all of groups members, which often affects the group progress and effectiveness. In a school situation an intergroup conflict occur within members of a class, where students sit in close proximity and interact with each other. **Intergroup Conflict:** This emerges between two or more group of people. It is highly intense and costly to the group involved (Witmet & Hacker, 1998). This occurs between two or more schools. According to Anteliffer (1998) it happens within organization at three levels. These are vertical, horizontal and line staff conflicts. **Vertical Conflict** is clashes between levels in an organization. This occurs when superiors try to control subordinates too tightly as subordinates resist the control for instance class captain or group captain in the classroom/school. **Horizontal conflict** is clashes between groups of employers at the same hierarchical level in an organization. In a school situation horizontal conflict will occur, if one department desires a longer proportion of scarce resources at the expenses of other department.

Line-staff conflict is a clash over authority relationships. As Jennings and Wattan (2004) expressed it occurs from different organizational roles of line and staff.

CAUSES OF CONFLICTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

There are different events that lead to conflicts in secondary schools. The situation or circumstance in which people find themselves, the personality of the individuals, the urge or desire for power, and the resources may lead to different types of conflicts to exist in secondary schools in Nigeria. Some of the causes are;

- A. Lack of proper preparation by teachers.
- B. Lack of good mastery of subject matter.
- C. Students' disruptive behavior.
- D. Inadequate school materials.
- E. Poor parental attitude.
- F. Lack of respects.
- G. Poor teacher- students' relationship.
- H. Poor parent- teacher relationship.

Lack of Proper Preparation by Teachers

Teachers' poor lesson preparation on part of teaching can cause conflict in school. If a teacher is poorly prepared for the lesson, it may likely not be able to control class and students may lose interest in lesson. This condition may lead to indiscipline behavior creating chaos and disruptive class leading to school conflict.

Lack of Good Mastery of Subject Matter

Teachers' poor mastery of subject matter can lead to conflict in school. If a teacher does not master the subject matter very well, the teaching is likely to be annoyed and students may lack interest in the subjects. At times some students may know the subject matter better than the teacher, therefore understand when the teacher is wrong and laugh at the teacher or ask questions to test the teachers' competency in the subject the teacher teaches. This may lead to students creating problems of class control causing conflict.

Students Disruptive Behaviour in School

The secondary school students' disruptive behavior may at a time lead to conflict. For instance students teasing a fellow student in school which may lead to fighting, taking another student's property/belonging without permission, bullying unnecessary and lack of respect to fellow students may lead to conflict in school.

Inadequate School Materials

If the secondary school students do not have enough and relevant school materials to be used in school may cause conflict. Where the school do not provide enough seating and comfortable classroom, there is likely to be trouble among students. Not only trouble between students but sometime may transfer to teachers in secondary schools. Also lack of control in class/school can result leading to bullying due to inadequate materials. All these contribute to school conflict.

Poor Parental Attitude

Parent's failure to provide school materials for their wards in secondary school may lead to conflict because in attempt to borrow some materials during class in school can lead conflict. The attitude of parent toward schooling may be discouraging if parents do not support and encourage their wards toward attendance and progress in school work.

Lack of Respect for Others in School

The lack of respect for opinion of others may occur in school situation, when students are saying something which differs from opinion of others may cause conflict. The personality of students may differ some may have tendency for extroversion/introversion, the dragging of feet, restlessness and fidgeting leading to conflict. The lack of respect for culture and norms of others in school may lead school conflict.

Poor Teacher- Student Relationship in School

The relationship between the teacher and students must be cordial and respectful for peaceful coexistence in school. The students may not be discipline where the teachers do not understand their status in school. Teachers must know their responsibilities in school and wise to with students to avoid problems leading to conflict.

Poor Parent-Teacher Relationship in School

When the relationship between parent and teachers is not cordial and good may lead to conflict. The wrong information parent received from their wards about teachers may lead to parent have wrong impression on the school resulting to conflict.

Also Shindler (2008) stated that conflict comes from many sources and it takes many forms and identifies 2 basics causes of school conflicts as: 1. Students having competing ideals, and 2. Students having competing needs and desire.

In Nigeria secondary schools witness series of schools conflict leading to anarchy in schools, violence, disorganizing timing in school activities, destruction of life and properties, and in most cases render the school environment completely insecure for effective academics progress and development. Therefore there is serious need to find Counselling strategies for conflict resolution in schools in Nigeria for education and development.

CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Conflicts results to different type of problems in secondary schools. Some of the consequences of conflicts in schools are:

1. Retardation of Development; Conflicts in schools militates against growth and development because of hostile environment it create and make learning difficult to progress in secondary school.
2. Social Dislocation; Conflicts destroy social tissues in schools that hold the society together. Such as trust, love and tolerance. If these are destroyed mistrust, hatred and intolerance exists. The social interactions in schools are always hampered by conflicts.
3. Destruction: School conflict bring about violent, which often leads to destruction of lives and properties because of the use of deadly weapon making school not friendly for learning to take place.

Generally secondary school conflicts leads to human suffering, disruption of normal activities such as educational development, positive human progress and restriction of freedom, thereby making school difficult.

Counselling for Conflict Resolution in Secondary Schools in Nigeria for Education and Development Beyond 2020

Counselling is an interpersonal relationship in which one person attempts to help another person understand and cope with problems in areas of education, vocation, and relationship (Idowa, 2004). The school is usually an educational institution where learning and teaching takes place. For these to take place safe and secure school environment is needed for education and development. Counselling for conflict resolution is the action designed to prevent and manage violence in school through Counselling. So that students can learn and teachers can perform their job in a positive, healthy and safe environment for education and development beyond 2020.

There are different Counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools based on causes and nature of it occurrence. Some of the Counselling strategies:

1. Group Therapy Counselling geared towards helping people understand and appreciate good and healthy human relationship should be adapted to the secondary school teachers and students.

2. Counselling services should organized interaction sessions with parents to enlighten the parents on the school rules and regulation, conducts and programmes. So as to cooperate with the teachers and school authority for smooth running of the school activities and ensure conflict free atmosphere in secondary schools.
3. Counsellors should organized seminar/workshop for students on what constitutes violence and it consequences. A catch them young approach to prevention of the menace of conflict should be embraced by extending enlightenment programme to the secondary school students through Counselling interaction.
4. Orientation services to create awareness for adjustment in the school environment. So that the do and do not of the school and activities should be explain and discuss with the students. The school offences and punishment will be highlighted to the students.
5. Information services keeps guidance and Counselling services alive in the school system because it involves making available to the students information needed to take educational, vocational, personal and social decision, which will enhance students development and progress in the school should be provided by student's counsellors.

CONCLUSION

Counselling strategies are techniques and approach to assist individuals in trouble. Therefore group therapy Counselling, Counselling services, orientation services and information services are essential in conflict resolution in secondary schools for education and development in Nigeria beyond 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made;

1. School counsellors should provide and monitor the under reporting of hate, crime and discriminating behaviours.
2. School counsellors should establish a formal social contract for desirable behaviours to students.
3. School authority and counsellors should regularly organized interactive forum for parents, students and teachers to enable them gain adequate information and encourage healthy well-being in the school.

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