



---

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

---

<sup>1</sup>Nweke, Emmanuel Onyekachi, <sup>2</sup>Akosubo-Ogori Ebimiere & <sup>3</sup>Amadi Mary Anyankpele  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Office Technology and Mgt, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic,  
Rumuola, Port Harcourt

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education Niger Delta University,  
Wilberforce Bayelsa State

<sup>3</sup>Department of Educational Mgt, Faculty of Education Ignatius Ajuru University of Education  
Port Harcourt

---

**ABSTRACT:** This paper delved into crisis management and effective school administration in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It deployed literature from secondary sources of journal, text books, internet sources to explore the various categories of crisis. The role of school administrators before, during and after crisis situations in schools is very paramount in running an effective school. The need to be pro-active in school management in respect of school crisis, the prevention and the hunches methods were identified as very potent methods of averting or managing crisis in a school environment. The paper anchored its theory on the contingency theory pursues to address every situation as it arises.

**Key words:** Crisis, Management, School Administration, School System, Organization.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Crisis management is the process by which an organization deals with a disruptive and unexpected event that threatens to harm the organization or its stakeholders. The study of crisis management originated with large-scale industrial and environmental disasters in the 1980s. It is considered to be the most important process in public relations. Three elements are common to a crisis: (a) a threat to the school organization, (b) the element of surprise, and (c) a short decision time. Venette (2013) argues that "crisis is a process of transformation where the old system can no longer be maintained". Therefore, the fourth defining quality is the need for change. If change is not needed, the event could more accurately be described as a failure or incident (Crombs 2012). In contrast to risk management, which involves assessing potential threats and finding the best ways to avoid those threats, crisis management involves dealing with threats before, during, and after they have occurred. It is a discipline within the broader context of management consisting of skills and techniques required to identify, assess, understand, and cope with a serious situation, especially from the moment it first occurs to the point that recovery procedures start.

Crisis management is a situation-based management system that includes clear roles and responsibilities and process related organisational requirements company-wide. The response shall include action in the following areas: Crisis prevention, crisis assessment, crisis handling and crisis termination. The aim of crisis management is to be well prepared for crisis, ensure a rapid and adequate response to the crisis, maintaining clear lines of reporting and communication in the event of crisis and agreeing rules for crisis termination. Carone, (2012) itemized the techniques of crisis management include a number of consequent steps from the understanding of the influence of the crisis on the corporation to preventing, alleviating, and overcoming the different types of crisis. Crisis management consists of different aspects including:

- Methods used to respond to both the reality and perception of crisis.
- Establishing metrics to define what scenarios constitute a crisis and should consequently trigger the necessary response mechanisms.
- Communication that occurs within the response phase of emergency-management scenarios.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

This paper anchors its theory on a contingency theory is an organizational theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. A contingent leader effectively applies their own style of leadership to the right situation. The contingency approach to leadership was influenced by two earlier research programs endeavoring to pinpoint effective leadership behavior. During the 1950s, researchers at Ohio State University administered extensive questionnaires measuring a range of possible leader behaviors in various organizational contexts. Although multiple sets of leadership behaviors were originally identified based on these questionnaires, two types of behaviors proved to be especially typical of effective leaders:

**(I) Consideration:** leader behaviors that include building good rapport and interpersonal relationships and showing support and concern for subordinates



**(2) Initiating Structure:** leader behaviors that provided structure (e.g., role assignment, planning, scheduling) to ensure task completion and goal attainment.

About the same time, investigators from the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center conducted interviews and distributed questionnaires in organizations and collected measures of group productivity to assess effective leadership behaviors. The leadership behavior categories that emerged from the University of Chicago were similar to the consideration and initiating structure behaviors identified by the Ohio State studies. The University of Michigan investigators, however, termed these leadership behaviors relation-oriented behavior and task-oriented behavior. This line of research was later extended by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton in 1964 to suggest that effective leaders score high on both these behaviors. They suggested that previous theories such as Weber's bureaucracy and Taylor's scientific management had failed because they neglected that management style and organizational structure were influenced by various aspects of the environment: the contingency factors. There could not be "one best way" for leadership or organization. Historically, contingency theory has sought to formulate broad generalizations about the formal structures that are typically associated with or best fit the use of different technologies. The perspective originated with the work of Joan (2008), who argued that technologies directly determine differences in such organizational attributes as span of control, centralization of authority, and the formalization of rules and procedures.

### **The Concept of Crisis Management**

Crisis-management methods of a business or an organization are called a crisis-management. A British Standard BS11200:2014 provides a useful foundation for understanding terminology and frameworks relating to crisis. In this document the focus is on the corporate exposure to risks in particular to the black swan events that result in significant strategic threats to organisations. Currently there is work on-going to develop an International standard. Crisis management is occasionally referred to as incident management, although several industry specialists such as Peter Power argue that the term "crisis management" is more accurate.

### **The Role of School Administrators in Crisis Situation**

A crises mindset requires the ability to think of the worst-case scenario while simultaneously suggesting numerous solutions in a school system makes a proactive school leader. Trial and error is an accepted discipline, as the first line of defense might not work. It is necessary to maintain a list of contingency plans and to be always on alert. Organizations and individuals should always be prepared with a rapid response plan to emergencies which would require analysis, drills and exercises (Cronstedt, 2005). The credibility and reputation of a school organizations is heavily influenced by the perception of their responses during crisis situations. The organization and communication involved in responding to a crisis in a timely fashion makes for a challenge in businesses. There must be open and consistent communication throughout the hierarchy to contribute to a successful crisis-communication process. Akintoye (2004) related the terms emergency management and business continuity management focus respectively on the prompt but short lived "first aid" type of response (e.g. putting the fire out) and the longer-term recovery and restoration phases (e.g. moving operations to another site). Crisis is also a facet of risk management, although it is probably untrue to say that crisis management represents a failure of risk management, since it will never be possible to totally mitigate the chances of catastrophes' occurring.

### **Crisis Management in Tertiary Institutions**

Crisis is an unexpected development, which may often embarrass the organization, frightens the public and puts company credibility and decency under intense scrutiny. In some worst instances especially in educational institutions, it creates the threat to life and property. Newson, Scott and Turk (1993) say that crisis is either violent or nonviolent. In any two categories, a crisis could be an act of nature, an intentional or an unintentional accident, "Mark (1993) sees crisis as a period of heightened uncertainty that increases the need to plan and a point in time when external or internal pressures change the objectives and operational objectives of the organization." Herman (1969) gave us a set of dimensions with which to define crisis. To Herman crisis tend to threaten the high priority values of the organization, present a restricted amount of time in which a response can be made and it is unexpected or unanticipated by the organization. Black (1986) classifies crisis as a predictable one that can occur by the nature of business or service rendered by the organization. For instance, industrial



unrest/strikes by unions and demonstrations can be predicted in higher institutions. It is known that crisis of such nature may take place but when it will occur is unknown by the organization. However the unknown crisis is unanticipated by any body either within or outside the organization. Such crisis arising from unknown situation to Awosika (1994) is referred to as disaster, violent and catastrophic. The Managing Director; zoom lens consultants limited, Jossy Nwocka (2004) in a paper delivered at the National Conference of the Nigeria Institution of Public Relations (NPR) at Awka defined crisis management as the ability of an organization or government or individual to take appropriate measure to either prevent crisis before it occurs or control it effectively and promptly when it occurs. To him crisis management is proactive, preventive and pre-planned in nature. He therefore sees it as an effective public relation strategy to ensure peace and good image of institutions of higher learning. He also sees Management of Crisis (MOC) differently from crisis Management (COM). Management of Crisis (MOC) to him means managing a crisis that has already occurred. He sees it as just a reaction to emergency situations in a panic manner. Managers in such situation employ sporadic largely uncoordinated measures to quench the fire already burning. The problems at hand are usually approached with uncertainty insecurity and lack of confidence.

### **Types of Crisis in School Environment**

During the crisis management process, it is important to identify types of crises in that different crises necessitate the use of different crisis management strategies.<sup>1</sup> Potential crises are enormous, but crises can be clustered.

Lerbinger (2012) categorized eight types of crises

1. Natural disaster
2. Technological crisis
3. Confrontation
4. Malevolence
5. Organizational Misdeeds
6. Workplace Violence
7. Rumors
8. Terrorist attacks/man-made disasters

### **Natural disaster**

Natural disaster related crises, typically natural disasters, are such environmental phenomena as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes and hurricanes, floods, landslides, tsunamis, storms, and droughts that threaten life, property, and the environment itself. And in Nigeria the wind storm crisis of 2018 in Olanada Primary School, Rumuola and Capt Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Rumuola. Similarly some schools were closed in the 2017 flooding in Ahoada East and West of Rivers State and in Bayelsa State.

### **Technological Crisis**

Technological crises are caused by human application of science and technology. Technological accidents inevitably occur when technology becomes complex and coupled and something goes wrong in the system as a whole (Technological breakdowns). Some technological crises occur when human error causes disruptions (Human breakdowns). People tend to assign blame for a technological disaster because technology is subject to human manipulation whereas they do not hold anyone responsible for natural disaster. When an accident creates significant environmental damage, the crisis is categorized as megadamage. Samples include software failures, industrial accidents, and oil spills (Barki, 2011).

### **Confrontation Crisis**

Confrontation crisis occur when discontented individuals and/or groups fight businesses, government, and various interest groups to win acceptance of their demands and expectations. The common type of confrontation crisis is boycotts, and other types are picketing, sit-ins, ultimatums to those in authority, blockade or occupation of buildings, and resisting or disobeying police. In the school environment students riot against certain management policies or any other matter in like fashion.

### **Crisis of Malevolence**

In Cabedo (2012), an organization faces a crisis of malevolence when opponents or miscreant individuals use criminal means or other extreme tactics for the purpose of expressing hostility or anger toward, or seeking gain from, a company, country, or economic system, perhaps with the aim of destabilizing or destroying it. Sample crisis include product tampering, kidnapping, malicious rumors, terrorism, cybercrime and espionage. The



Nigerian case of notoriety in cultism where young students join cults to cause mayhem in the school environment.

### **Crisis of Organizational Misdeeds**

In school Crises occur when management takes actions it knows will harm or place stakeholders at risk for harm without adequate precautions. Lerbinger (2013) specified three different types of crises of organizational misdeeds: crises of skewed management values, crises of deception, and crises of management misconduct.

### **Crisis of Skewed Management Values**

Crisis of skewed management arise in schools when values are skewed by school administrators (principals and head teachers) favor short-term economic gain and neglect broader social values and stakeholders other than investors. This state of lopsided values is rooted in the classical business creed that focuses on the interests of stockholders and tends to disregard the interests of its other stakeholders such as customers, employees, and the community. It has 3 stages precrisis -acute -chronic and -conflict resolution

### **Crisis of Deception**

Crisis of deception occur when management conceals or misrepresents information about itself and its products in its dealing with consumers and others.

### **Crisis of Management Misconduct**

Some crises are caused not only by skewed values and deception but deliberate amorality and illegality.

### **School Workplace Violence**

Crisis occur when an employee or former employee commits violence against other employees on organizational grounds.

### **Rumors**

False information about an organization or its products creates crises hurting the organization's reputation. Sample is linking the organization to radical groups or stories that their products are contaminated.

## **Crisis Management**

Alan Hilburg, a pioneer in crisis management, defines organizational crises as categorized as either acute crises or chronic crises. Hilburg also created the concept of the Crisis Arc. Erika Hayes James, an organizational psychologist at the University of Virginia's Darden Graduate School of Business, identifies two primary types of organizational crisis. James defines organizational crisis as "any emotionally charged situation that, once it becomes public, invites negative stakeholder reaction and thereby has the potential to threaten the financial well-being, reputation, or survival of the firm or some portion thereof" (Alexander, 2010).

1. Sudden crisis
2. Smoldering crises

### **Sudden Crisis**

Sudden crises are circumstances that occur without warning and beyond an institution's control. Consequently, sudden crises are most often situations for which the institution and its leadership are not blamed.

### **Smoldering Crisis**

Smoldering crises differ from sudden crises in that they begin as minor internal issues that, due to manager's negligence, develop to crisis status. These are situations when leaders are blamed for the crisis and its subsequent effect on the institution in question.

James (2012) categorises five phases of crisis that require specific crisis leadership competencies. Each phase contains an obstacle that a leader must overcome to improve the structure and operations of an organization. James's case study on crisis in the financial services sector, for example, explores why crisis events erode public trust in leadership. James's research demonstrates how leadership competencies of integrity, positive intent, capability, mutual respect, and transparency impact the trust-building process.

1. Signal detection
2. Preparation and prevention
3. Containment and damage control
4. Business recovery
5. Learning





## Signal Detection

Signal detection is the stage in a crisis in which leaders should, but do not always, sense early warning signals (red flags) that suggest the possibility of a crisis. The detection stages of a crisis include:

- Sense-making: represents an attempt to create order and make sense, retrospectively, of what occurs.
- Perspective-taking: the ability to consider another person's or group's point of view.

## Preparation and Prevention

It is during this stage that crisis handlers begin preparing for or averting the crisis that had been foreshadowed in the signal detection stage. Hilburg has demonstrated that using an impact/probability model allows organizations to fairly accurately predict crisis scenarios. He's recognized the greatest organizational challenge is 'speaking truth to power' to predict truly worst-case scenarios. Organizations such as the Red Cross's primary mission is to prepare for and prevent the escalation of crisis events.

## Containment and Damage Control

Usually the most vivid stage, the goal of crisis containment and damage control is to limit the reputational, financial, safety, and other threats to firm survival. Crisis handlers work diligently during this stage to bring the crisis to an end as quickly as possible to limit the negative publicity to the organization, and move into the business recovery phase.

## Learning

Carone (2010) asserts that in the wake of a crisis, organizational decision makers adopt a learning orientation and use prior experience to develop new routines and behaviors that ultimately change the way the organization operates. The best leaders recognize this and are purposeful and skillful in finding the learning opportunities inherent in every crisis situation.

## Crisis communication

The effort taken by an organization to communicate with the public and stakeholders when an unexpected event occurs that could have a negative impact on the organization's reputation. This can also refer to the efforts to inform employees or the public of a potential hazard which could have a catastrophic impact. There are 3 essential steps that an organization can take

to prepare for and withstand a communications crisis: 1) Define your philosophy; 2) Assess your vulnerabilities; 3) Develop a protocol.

## MODELS AND THEORIES ASSOCIATED WITH CRISIS MANAGEMENT

### **Crisis Management Strategy**

Crisis management strategy (CMS) is corporate development strategy designed primarily to prevent crisis for follow-up company advancement. Thus, CMS is synthesis of strategic management. It includes projection of the future based on ongoing monitoring of business internal and external environment, as well as selection and implementation of crisis prevention strategy and operating management. This is including current status control based on ongoing monitoring of the internal and external environment, as well as crisis-coping strategy selection and implementation (Crombs, 2005).

### **Crisis Management Model**

Successfully managing a crisis requires an understanding of how to handle a crisis – beginning with before they occur. Alan (2012) speaks about a crisis arc. The arc consists of crisis avoidance, crisis mitigation and crisis recovery. Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt found the different phases of Crisis Management.

There are 3 phases in any Crisis Management as shown below

1. The diagnosis of the impending trouble or the danger signals.
2. Choosing appropriate Turnaround Strategy.
3. Implementation of the change process and its monitoring
- 4.

### **Crisis Management Planning**

No corporation looks forward to facing a situation that causes a significant disruption to their business, especially one that stimulates extensive media coverage. Public scrutiny can result in a negative financial, political, legal and government impact. Crisis management planning deals with providing the best response to a crisis.

### **Contingency Planning**

Preparing contingency plans in advance, as part of a crisis-management plan, is the first step to ensuring an organization is appropriately prepared for a crisis. Crisis-management teams can rehearse a crisis plan by developing a simulated scenario to use as a drill. The plan should clearly stipulate that the



only people to speak to publicly about the crisis are the designated persons, such as the company spokesperson or crisis team members. Ideally it should be one spokesperson who can be available on call at any time. Cooperation with media is crucial in crisis situation, assure that all questions are answered on time and information on what was done to resolve the situation is provided. The first hours after a crisis breaks are the most crucial, so working with speed and efficiency is important, and the plan should indicate how quickly each function should be performed. When preparing to offer a statement externally as well as internally, information should be accurate and transparent. Providing incorrect or manipulated information has a tendency to backfire and will greatly exacerbate the situation. The contingency plan should contain information and guidance that will help decision makers to consider not only the short-term consequences, but the long-term effects of every decision (Carone, 2010).

### **Business Continuity Planning**

When a crisis will undoubtedly cause a significant disruption to an organization, a business continuity plan can help minimize the disruption. First, one must identify the critical functions and processes that are necessary to keep the organization running. This part of the planning should be conducted in the earliest stages, and is part of a business impact analysis phase that will signpost "How much does the organization stand to lose?" (Osborne, 2007). Practical Business Continuity Management. Business Management: Top tips for effective, real-world Business Continuity Management). Each critical function and or/process must have its own contingency plan in the event that one of the functions/processes ceases or fails, then the business/organization is more resilient, which in itself provides a mechanism to lessen the possibility of having to invoke recovery plans (Osborne, 2007). Testing these contingency plans by rehearsing the required actions in a simulation will allow those involved to become more acutely aware of the possibility of a crisis. As a result, and in the event of an actual crisis, the team members will act more quickly and effectively. A note of caution when planning training scenarios, all too often simulations can lack ingenuity, an appropriate level of realism and as a consequence potentially lose their training value. This part can be improved by employing external exercise designers who are not part of the organisational culture and are able to test an organizations response to crisis, in order to bring about a crisis of confidence for those who manage vital systems.<sup>1</sup>

Following a simulation exercise, a thorough and systematic debriefing must be conducted as a key component of any crisis simulation. The purpose of this is to create a link and draw lessons from the reality of the simulated representation and the reality of the real world. The whole process relating to business continuity planning should be periodically reviewed to identify any number of changes that may invalidate the current plan.

### **Structural-functional Systems Theory**

Providing information to an organization in a time of crisis is critical to effective crisis management. Structural-functional systems theory addresses the intricacies of information networks and levels of command making up organizational communication. The structural-functional theory identifies information flow in organizations as "networks" made up of members ". Information in organizations flow in patterns called networks.

### **Role of Apologies in Crisis Management**

There has been debate about the role of apologies in crisis management, and some argue that apology opens an organization up for possible legal consequences. "However some evidence indicates that compensation and sympathy, two less expensive strategies, are as effective as an apology in shaping people's perceptions of the organization taking responsibility for the crisis because these strategies focus on the victims' needs. The sympathy response expresses concern for victims while compensation offers victims something to offset the suffering."

### **Social Media and Crisis Management**

Social media has accelerated the speed that information about a crisis can spread. The viral effect of social networks such as Twitter means that stakeholders can break news faster than traditional media - making managing a crisis harder. This can be mitigated by having the right training and policy in place as well as the right social media monitoring tools to detect signs of a crisis breaking. Social media also gives crisis management teams access to real-time information about how a crisis is impacting stakeholder sentiment and the issues that are of most concern to them (Barki, 2012).



## CONCLUSION

Crisis management in school administration is an attempt to avoid or manage crisis event that disturbs the entire school organization and is concerned with the survival and development of stakeholders. Crisis is defined as low probability/ high impact event. Crisis management is a "systematic attempt by organizational members with external stakeholders to avert crises or to effectively manage those that do occur". Mostly crisis and crisis management studies focused on organizations and permanent organizations, without considering the overview of different stakeholders. They scarcely studied temporary organizations and settings where multiple stakeholders are involved. The aim of this dissertation is to understand crisis management by identifying crises, looking into capabilities and sense making process in empirical settings of project based organizations and mega projects.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. School administrators should be in machinery in place to handle all forms of crisis. This is to avoid on the spot thoughts.
2. Management of schools should make provision for natural crisis to take of natural and supernatural occurrences that may give rise to crisis in the school system.
3. E-learning methods accompanied with adequate infrastructure should be introduced by government in our tertiary schools to sustain learning in the event of natural or over whelming crisis.

## REFERENCES

- Akintoye, A.S., & MacLeod, M.J. (1997). Risk analysis and management in construction. *International Journal of Project Management*, 15 (1): 31-38.
- Alexander, D. (1997). The study of natural disasters, 1977-1997: Some reflections on a changing field of knowledge. *Disasters*, 21 (4): 284-304.
- Altay, N., & Green, W.G. (2006). OR/MS research in disaster operations management. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 175 (1): 475-493.
- Andriani, P., & Mckelvey, B. (2011). Managing in a Pareto world calls for thinking. *Management*, 14(2): 89-118.
- Ball, N. (1979). Some notes on defining disaster: Suggestions for a disaster continuum. *Disasters*, 3 (1): 3-7.

- Barki, H., Rivard, S., & Talbot, J. (1993). Toward an assessment of software development risk. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 10 (2): 203-225.
- Barton, L. (1992). *Crisis in Organizations: Managing and Communicating in the Heat of Chaos*. Cincinnati OH: South-Western Publishing Company.
- Berkeley, D., Humphreys, P.C., & Thomas, R.D. (1991). Project risk action management. *Construction Management and Economics*, 9 (1): 3-17.
- Billings, R.S., Milburn, T.W., & Schaalman, M.L. (1980). A model of crisis perception: A theoretical and empirical analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(2): 300-316.
- Blodgett, T.B., & Dissmeyer, V.M. (1983). Are you ready to meet a disaster? *Harvard Business Review*, 83 (3):6-12.
- Boehm, B.W. (1991). Software risk management: Principles and practices. *IEEE Software*, 8 (1): 32-41.
- Brinkmann, J. (2013). Combining risk and responsibility perspectives: First steps. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 112 (4): 567-583.
- Cabedo, J. D., & Tirado, J. M. (2004). The disclosure of risk in financial statement. *Accounting Forum*, 28 (2):181-200.
- Carone, A., & Lorio, L.D. (2013). Crisis management: An extended reference framework for decision makers. *Journal of Business Continuity & Emergency Planning*, 6(4): 347-359.
- Chase, W. H. (1984). *Issue Management – Origins of the Future*. Stamford, CT: Issue Action Publications.
- Coleman, L. (2006). Frequency of man-made disasters in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 14 (1): 3-11.
- Coombs W.T., & Holladay, S.J. (1996). Communication and attributions in a crisis: An experimental study in crisis communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 8 (4): 279-295.
- Coombs, W. T. (1999). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*. London: Sage Publications.
- Coombs, W.T. (2004). West pharmaceutical's explosion: Structuring crisis discourse knowledge. *Public Relations Review*, 30 (4): 467-473.
- Coombs, W.T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: the development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10 (3): 163-176.



- Cronstedt, M. (2002). Prevention, preparedness, response, recovery- an outdated concept? *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 17 (2):10-13.
- Lerbinger T. (2012). *The concept of school administration*. Asaba. Crimpt Press.
- Osborn L. (2007). *The administrators think*. London. London press.