

Conflict Resolution Strategies in Non-government Secondary Schools in Benue State, Nigeria

Angie Oboegbulem

University of Nigeria, Nisukka, Nigeria

Idoko Alphonusu Alfa

Government Secondary School, Makurdi, Nigeria

This study investigated perceived CRSs (conflict resolution strategies) for the resolution of conflicts in non-government secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided this study. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing 15% of the population which gave a total of 500 respondents. The instrument used was CRSs questionnaire. This was used to collect data from respondents comprising principals, teachers, proprietors, and students. A four-point scale was used for the ratings of the respondents. Mean and *SD* (standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions. *T*-test statistic was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2, while a one-way ANOVA (analyses of variance) was used to test hypothesis 3 at significance level of 0.05. The major findings of the study are unnecessary interferences with the administration of the school by the proprietors and arbitrary increase of school fees by the school management, among others, constitute major sources of conflict. Findings on strategies for resolving conflicts include: agreeing on the procedure taken for the resolution of conflicts, encouraging parties to work together, taking staff and students' comments and suggestions, and involvement of school disciplinary committee and public complaint commission, among others. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: conflict, resolution, CRSs (conflict resolution strategies), board of governors, teaching service boards, focus group

Introduction

Effective administration of Nigerian secondary school system, to a large extent, depends on a cordial and cooperate working relationship among principals, teachers, proprietors, and students. The harmonious working relationship, mutual implementation of decisions, and peaceful academic environment will be jeopardized, if the school and members of the school community are often in conflict (Abanyam, 2001).

Best (2006, p. 19) defined conflict as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. The researchers view conflict as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals. Conflict entails discord in actions, lack of concordance in opinion in order to achieve one's own goal. It connotes disagreement, distortions, inconsistencies, and antagonisms existing in a particular system. Obi (2004, p. 15) perceived conflict as human and social problems which involve mutual hostility, differences, disagreements, opposition resulting to man's inhumanity to man, use of violence, and turning point

or crisis, which can escalate to the level of psychological warfare, physical or naked war.

In all human interactions and organizational behaviour, conflicts are bound to occur. All organizations, such as schools and colleges, have conflict potentials since they are a collection of people with diverse personality. In other words, conflict is an inbuilt aspect of the organizational behaviour system. Hence, Flippo as cited in Edewusi (2003) and Akinwonmi (2005) pointed out that a total absence of conflict in any organization would be unbelievable, impossible, undesirable, and boring, and a strong indicator that such conflict is suppressed.

The existence and prevalence of such conflicts and their traumatic effects cannot be ignored. It needs to be controlled and resolved because when this mutual hostility is not resolved, the effect is disharmony and dearth of peace. According to Oputa (2003, p. 13), peace advances development, growth, and progress. Peace is order, peace is brother-hood, and peace is life itself.

The consequences of conflicts on the school organization have been regrettable. Part of the repercussions on schools is disruption of academic programmes, inadequate staffing as a result of unplanned transfer, hostility, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities. In some cases, school results were withheld or cancelled, as a result of emergency transfer of subject teachers. Hence, there is a need for resolution.

Resolution is an act of finding a solution to problems or a conflict. CRS (conflict resolution strategy), therefore, is a method desired to develop peaceful means of amicably ending a state of conflict (Burton, 1990). Miller (2003) described CRS as a variety of approaches arrived at terminating conflicts through the use of constructive ideas. In this paper, the concept of CRS is a situation where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense of it. This can be achieved in Nigerian schools, if school administrators are sure or certain of what strategies to employ.

School administration has been adversely affected by lack of knowledge of CRS. Most administrators handled conflict by a trial and error approach, because there were no specific procedures and methods of resolving conflicts (Olu & Abosedí, 2003). In most of the non-government secondary schools in the state, students are not allowed to participate in decision affecting them. In such schools, students do not know the importance of student representative council and they hardly know how to channel their grievances. The staff members, on the other hand, rarely explore the use of dialogue as a resolution strategy. The issue of conflict resolution has reached the point where effective use of relevant strategies are explored and employed.

A number of authors have suggested different ways of resolving conflicts. Dzurgba (2006) opined that conflicts could be settled through dialogue and also could be persuaded to peace without further problems. Miller (2003) saw mediation as the intervention of a third party. The objective is to help parties to a conflict within an environment of controlled communities to reach solution to their problems.

Umstot (1987, p. 16) listed four strategies that could be used to manage or resolve conflicts as: “avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating”. Umstot (1987) contended that when choosing a CRS, the first decision is whether to confront or avoid the conflict or not. According to him, there are times when conflict arises and one would want to put off acting upon it even though it is a problem.

A visit to non-government secondary schools in the study area reveals the existence of conflict. Ugwu (1994a; 1994b) stated that schools are centres of indiscipline, homes of secret cults, and avenue for the evolution, and perpetuation of all types of crimes.

Abanyam (2001) stated that the boards of governors as the governing or managing agents for the states

school board in all non-government secondary schools are responsible for the overall welfare of the school. Capital projects initiated by the PTA (parents/teacher's association) shall be referred to the board of governors for view before implementation. Similarly, any levy imposed on the platform of the PTA shall be referred to the board of governors for their views and approvals. However, it has been observed that some principals and proprietors prefer to work with the PTA rather than the board of governors because of fund generation. Again, because the board of governors is constituted as monitoring agent, some principals prefer to keep them out of the school system (by not inviting the board members to meeting even after the instruction by the chairman of the boards of governors), so that they may not question financial transactions. Conflicts arise when the board of governors insists on performing their statutory functions.

Currently, in most of the community and private schools in Benue State, the PTA without clearance from the boards of governors execute capital project, such as building school halls, new classroom block. Yet, many of these projects executed by the PTA are hardly completed by the PTA because of confusion (Nwachukwu, 1987). This situation leads to conflict, as the board of governors tends to question the authorization of such uncompleted projects going on in the school. Several conflicts in non-government secondary schools in the state have been reported to TSB (Teachers' Service Board) for intervention and necessary action. The public are, therefore, worried about the sources of conflict, which has resulted in inefficient functioning of the educational organs charged with secondary school administration in non-government secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria (Nwachukwu, 1987).

Statement of the Problem

The handover of non-government secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria, to their original owners in 1984, was because government had inadequate resources to finance education handedly. With the increasing enrolment in schools, it was difficult for the government alone to provide classroom, residential accommodation for teachers, and other amenities needed in the school (Ukeje, 1986). The government, therefore, invited genuine individuals and organizations in the management of education. However, the interaction among the school owners and various organs of education in the interpretation, implementation/execution of educational policies seems to create doubt in people's minds as to whether they are living up to expectations.

However, there has been tremendous amount of researches directed towards the causes of conflict in secondary school system, such researchers include Okolo (2000), Abanyam (2001), Denga (1995), and Onubogu (1985). Nevertheless, most of existing literature and research tend to focus on the effects of these causes on principals effectiveness and students' performance, but little is known on the sources of conflict and its effects on the administration and management of non-government secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The existing strategies, such as the school disciplinary committees and the presence of board of governors, are no longer sufficient to resolve these conflicts, therefore, there is the need to find ways of resolving conflicts among principals, teachers, proprietors, and students in these non-government secondary schools in the state.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate CRS to be used in resolving conflicts in non-government secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

In specific terms, the study attempts to:

- (1) Investigate the sources of conflict between principals and teachers;
- (2) Investigate the sources of conflict between principals and proprietors;

(3) Find out CRSs that can be adopted in resolving conflicts in non-government secondary schools in Benue State.

With the knowledge of the findings, the principals will be able to identify sources of conflicts and ensure that such conflicts are effectively resolved through intensive motivational techniques, open door administration, and participatory governance. The findings will help school management to employ CRSs in resolving conflicts. This is because principals and teachers are employed to promote academic excellence and this can only be achieved in the atmosphere of peace and orderliness.

The study will enable the proprietors of schools to ensure that they have effective disciplinary committees and functional board of governors in all their schools. This will enhance effective dispensation of justice, which will be of interest to the school and the community. The board of governors will follow the regulations on their functions and meetings very strictly. This will help them serve as a proper link between the school and the community for visible development.

The findings will be of great benefit to students, teachers, principals, and proprietors. For instance, situation of a labour unrest will be avoided or minimized in the state. Under such situation, teachers will be adequately motivated due to the recommendation of the appropriate reward as to elicit their social commitment in their job while the students will also benefit academically. Finally, CRSs mapped out for the study will serve as a working guide for resolving conflict within and outside the school organization.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- (1) What are the sources of conflict between principals and teachers?
- (2) What are the sources of conflict between principals and proprietors?
- (3) What CRSs can be adopted in non-government secondary schools in Benue State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses which guided the study were formulated and tested at significance level of 0.05:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on sources of conflict in non-government secondary schools;

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and proprietors on sources of conflict;

Ho3: There is no significant difference among the mean ratings of principals, teachers, proprietors, and students on CRSs.

Study Area and Methodology

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Benue State of Nigeria. Benue State is made up of 23 local government areas with three zones, namely, Zone A, Zone B, and Zone C which comprised the mission, the community, and the proprietary schools. The choice of these schools is that they have similar problems in terms of social amenities, infrastructural developments, and ownership.

The study employed a descriptive survey, using questionnaire and focus group discussion guide for

principals, teachers, and proprietors in examining the sources of conflict and CRSs.

Methodology

The population comprised 3,336 respondents made up of 200 principals, 200 proprietors, 1,136 senior teachers, and 1,800 SS3 (senior secondary school) students.

Sample and sampling procedure. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing the respondents involved in the study. Fifteen percent of the population of the principals, proprietors, teachers, and students were randomly drawn. This gave a total of 500 respondents, which included 30 principals, 30 proprietors, 170 senior teachers, and 270 SS3 students.

Instrument for data collection (questionnaire). The major instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed from the literature review related to conflict. Focus group discussion guide was used for collecting information from students. The questionnaire consists of 32 items built into three clusters. Clusters one and two consist of eight items that on sources of conflict between principals and teachers and sources of conflict between principals and proprietors respectively. Cluster three consists of 16 items on CRSs. The questionnaire response modes were structured on a four-point scale of: “SA (Strongly agree)”, “A (Agree)”, “D (Disagree)”, and “SD (Strongly disagree)”, with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

The instrument was face-validated by two experts in educational administration and planning and in measurement and evaluation, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. These experts were requested to examine each of the items of the questionnaire and make comments on their suitability, with a view of correcting any mistake. Their comments, suggestions, and corrections were used to modify the instrument. Focus group discussion guide was used in addition to the questionnaire to elicit responses from students on the sources of conflict and strategies for conflict resolution. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the researchers administered the questionnaire to the respondents comprising principals, proprietors, teachers, and students. The completed questionnaire was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha. The essence was to establish the internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.828, 0.773, and 0.864 was established for the three clusters, respectively.

Method of data analysis. The researchers used mean value in answering the research questions. The mean value response score at 3.5–4.0 was considered “SA”, 2.5–3.49, “A”, 1.5–2.49, “D”, while 0.05–1.49 is “SD”. *T*-test statistic was used to test Ho 1 and Ho 2 while a one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used to test Ho 3.

Results

Research Question 1

Question 1: What are the sources of conflict between principals and teachers in non-government secondary schools?

The data on Table 1 show the responses of the respondents based on the eight items. From Table 1, it can be observed that the principals had mean rating of 2.40, 1.87, 2.66, 2.74, 2.31, 2.47, 2.22, and 1.87 for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, respectively. A look at Table 1 shows that principals agreed that items 3 and 4 were sources of conflict, while they disagreed in items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8. In other words, they were not sources of conflict. With a mean rating of 2.65, 2.22, 2.57, 2.49, 2.49, 2.79, 2.38, and 2.34 for teachers, it is observed that

items 1, 3, and 6 were rated high as sources of conflict while they disagree in items 2, 7, and 8.

In the case of proprietors and students, the proprietors had very low mean rating on items 1, 2, 5, and 8 while students had low mean rating on items 3 and 8.

Table 1

Mean Rating on the Perceived Sources of Conflict by Principals, Teachers, Proprietors, and Students

S/N	Source of conflict	Principal		Teacher		Proprietor		Student	
		X	Dec.	X	Dec.	X	Dec.	X	Dec.
1	Constant misunderstanding between principals and teachers	2.40	A	2.65	A	2.12	D	2.67	A
2	Personality clashes among the teachers of different department	1.87	D	2.22	D	2.16	D	2.60	A
3	Lack of adequate consideration on areas of specialization in assignment of duties	2.66	A	2.57	A	2.72	A	2.38	D
4	Deviation from organizational objectives by some teachers	2.74	A	2.49	D	2.40	D	2.60	A
5	Poor communication network between principals and teachers	2.31	A	2.49	D	2.36	D	2.41	D
6	Favouritism in school organization	2.47	D	2.79	A	2.52	A	2.73	A
7	Principals' inability to maintain unity among staff and students	2.22	D	2.38	D	2.44	D	2.42	D
8	Principals do not show concern in staff welfare	1.87	D	2.34	D	2.16	D	2.08	D
Overall mean		2.31	D	2.49	D	2.36	D	2.48	D

Research Question 2

Question 2: What are the sources of conflict between principals and proprietors in non-government secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 2

Mean Rating on Source of Conflict Between Principals and Proprietors

S/N	Source of conflict between principals and proprietors	Principal		Teacher		Proprietor		Student	
		X	Dec.	X	Dec.	X	Dec.	X	Dec.
9	Poor accountability on the use of school finance by the school principal	2.17	D	2.71	A	2.48	D	2.88	A
10	Lack of adequate knowledge of role of proprietors in accordance with education edict guidelines	2.73	A	2.74	A	3.28	A	2.58	A
11	Imposition of illegal levies in cash or materials by the principals without authorization	2.24	D	2.47	D	2.48	D	2.60	A
12	Unnecessary interference with the administration of the school by proprietors	2.67	A	2.78	A	2.74	A	2.43	D
13	Top-down issuance of orders by principals without due regard to the principals and school proprietor's instruction	1.91	D	2.29	D	2.36	D	2.53	A
14	Poor communication network between principals and school proprietor	2.22	D	2.57	D	2.28	D	2.35	D
15	Differences in individual's perception of the organizational roles	2.36	D	2.45	D	2.40	D	2.58	A
16	Proprietors' poor attitude to staff welfare	2.93	A	3.05	A	3.08	A	2.50	A
Grand mean		2.40	D	2.63	A	2.96	A	2.55	A

Table 2 shows the responses of the principals, teachers, proprietors, students, and prefects. Based on the data, it can be observed that items 10, 12, and 16 were rated by principals as sources of conflict while items 11, 13, and 15 were viewed as not sources of conflict. The proprietors rated items 10, 12, and 16 as sources of conflict while items 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16 were sources of conflict for students.

Research Question 3

Question 3: What CRSs can be adopted in non-government secondary schools in Benue State?

The data in Table 3 show responses of the respondents used in the study. Based on the study, the

principals had a mean rating of 2.96, 3.36, 3.56, 3.18, 3.16, 2.82, 2.96, 3.22, 3.00, 2.98, 3.18, 3.49, 3.44, 2.47, 3.27, and 2.07 for items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32, respectively. From these items, it can be observed that items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 31 statements were rated by the principals as CRSs. Items 30 and 32 statements were viewed by principals as not CRSs.

Table 3

Mean Rating on the Perceived CRSs by Principals, Teachers, Proprietors, and Students

S/N	CRSs by principals, proprietors, and students	Principal		Teacher		Proprietor		Student	
		X	Dec.	X	Dec.	X	Dec.	X	Dec.
17	Parties in conflict should agree on the procedure taken for the resolution of identified conflict	2.96	A	3.12	A	3.24	A	3.12	A
18	Attempt should be made to gather information on the sources of conflict	3.36	A	3.24	A	3.16	A	3.24	A
19	Encouraging parties to work together to find mutually accepted solution to problems (collaborated approach)	3.56	A	3.32	A	3.36	A	3.29	A
20	Taking into consideration staff and students' comments and suggestion (open door policy)	3.18	A	3.19	A	3.44	A	3.23	A
21	Establishing communication network among groups to reduce tension	3.16	A	3.25	A	3.12	A	3.14	A
22	Promoting negotiation among powerful sub-group leaders	2.82	A	2.92	A	3.36	A	2.88	A
23	Adopting roundtable conference strategy	2.96	A	3.09	A	3.44	A	3.06	A
24	Providing an excellent reward programme where people are paid fairly and equitably with bonuses for outstanding performance	3.22	A	3.05	A	3.40	A	3.11	A
25	Persuading the conflicting groups to change their sub-goals to meet the larger objectives	3.00	A	2.98	A	3.08	A	3.01	A
26	Consulting the conflicting groups on individual basis	2.98	A	2.74	A	3.04	A	2.81	A
27	Building of mutual understanding among groups in conflicts	3.18	A	3.14	A	3.16	A	3.10	A
28	Involvement of school disciplinary committee in the resolution of conflict	3.49	A	3.11	A	3.44	A	3.16	A
29	Involvement of school board of governors in the resolution of conflict	3.44	A	3.12	A	3.32	A	3.14	A
30	Involvement of the public complaint commission on the resolution of conflict	2.47	D	2.39	D	2.48	D	2.55	A
31	Applying dialogue for resolving conflicts	3.27	A	3.11	A	3.40	A	3.14	A
32	Inviting the law enforcement agency	2.07	D	2.10	D	3.36	A	2.22	D
Grand mean		3.06	A	2.99	A	3.11	A	3.01	A

Note. Overall mean = 3.01.

Table 3 indicates that the teachers had a mean rating of 3.12, 3.24, 3.32, 3.19, 3.25, 2.92, 3.09, 3.05, 2.98, 2.74, 3.14, 3.11, 3.12, 2.39, 3.11, and 2.10 for items 17–32 respectively. From these, it can be observed that items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 31 statements were rated by the teachers as CRSs. While items 30 and 32 statements were viewed by the teachers as not constituting resolution strategies.

The data in Table 3 show that proprietors had a mean rating of 3.24, 3.16, 3.36, 3.44, 3.12, 2.36, 3.44, 3.40, 3.08, 3.04, 3.16, 3.44, 3.32, 2.48, 3.40, and 3.36 for items 17–32 respectively. From these, it can be observed that statements of items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 31 were rated by the proprietors as CRSs. Items 22, 30, and 32 statements were viewed by proprietors as not constituting CRSs. The data show that students had a mean rating of 3.12, 3.24, 3.29, 3.23, 3.14, 2.88, 3.06, 3.11, 3.01, 2.81, 3.10, 3.16, 3.14, 2.55, 3.14, and 2.22 for items 17–32 respectively. From these, it can be observed that items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, and 31 statements were rated by the students as CRSs. Item 32 was viewed by the students as not a constituting CRS. In other words, item 32 is not a major CRS to adopt.

Hypothesis 1

Ho₁: There is no significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on sources of conflict in non-government secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 4 shows that items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 are not significant at 0.05 level. Their calculated t -values are 1.53, 0.21, 0.96, 0.97, 1.91, and 0.83, respectively. Items 2 and 8 are significant at 0.05 level with the calculated t -value of 0.02 and 0.01, respectively. The overall t -value is 1.68 with the significant values of 0.09, which is above 0.05 level. This shows that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on their perceived sources of conflict. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Table 4

T-test Analysis of Responses of Principals and Teachers

S/N	Item	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	SD	Dec.
1	Financial matters	-1.53	241	0.13	0.89	N/S
2	Personality clashes between the staff of different departments	-2.28	241	0.02	0.84	S
3	There is no consideration of areas of specialization in assignment of duties	-0.21	241	0.84	1.05	N/S
4	Insubordination by the staff to principals	-0.96	241	0.34	0.93	N/S
5	Poor communication network, i.e., between principals and staff	-0.97	241	0.34	1.20	N/S
6	"Favouritism" by the principals	-1.91	241	0.06	0.94	N/S
7	Principals' inability to maintain unity among staff and students	-0.83	241	0.41	1.16	N/S
8	Poor attitude to staff welfare	-2.69	241	0.01	1.06	S

Notes. Overall t -value = 1.68; Significant value = 0.09; the mean difference is significant at 0.05 level; S = Significant; N/S= Not significant.

Hypothesis 2

Ho₂: There is no significant ($p < 0.05$) difference between the mean ratings of principals and proprietors on sources of conflict in Benue State.

Table 5

T-test Analysis of Responses of Principals and Proprietors

S/N	Item	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	SD	Dec.
9	Poor accountability on the use of school finance by the school principals	-1.02	68	0.31	1.11	N/S
10	Lack of adequate knowledge of the role expectation of proprietors in accordance with education edict guidelines	-2.19	68	0.03	1.20	S
11	Imposition of illegal levies in cash or materials by the principal without authorization	-0.77	68	0.45	1.19	N/S
12	Unnecessary interference with the administration of the school proprietors	-0.18	68	0.86	1.22	N/S
13	Issuance of orders by principals without due regard to the school owners	-1.69	68	0.10	1.10	N/S
14	Lack of effective communication between principals and school owners	-0.19	68	0.85	1.20	N/S
15	Difference in individuals perception of the organization votes	-0.19	68	0.85	0.93	N/S
16	The non-challant attitude of some school owners towards the welfare of staff	-0.53	68	0.60	1.00	N/S

Notes. Overall value = -1.21; S = Significant; N/S= Not significant.

Table 5 indicates that items 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 16 are not significant at 0.05 level. For the items above, their calculated t -values are -1.02, -0.77, -0.18, -1.69, -0.19, and -0.53, respectively. But item 10 with calculated t -value of -2.19 is significant at 0.05 level. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and proprietors on their perceived sources of conflict. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. The overall t -value of -1.21 with the significant level of 0.23 is above 0.05 level.

Table 6

Summary of ANOVA on Mean Rating on Resolution of Conflict by Principals, Teachers, Proprietors, and Students

S/N	CRSs	Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Dec.
17	Parties in conflict should agree on the procedure taken for the resolution of identified conflict	Between groups	5.013	4	1.253	1.578	0.179	N/S
		Within group	382.065	481	0.794			
		Total	387.078	485				
18	Attempt should be made to gather information on the source of conflict	Between groups	2.513	4	0.628	0.818	0.514	N/S
		Within group	369.349	481	0.768			
		Total	371.862	485				
19	Encouraging parties to work together to find mutually acceptable solution to problems (collaboration approach)	Between groups	8.350	4	2.088	2.931	0.021	S
		Within group	342.574	481	0.712			
		Total	350.924	485				
20	Taking into consideration staff and students comments and suggestion (open door policy)	Between groups	5.163	4	1.291	1.638	0.163	N/S
		Within group	379.026	481	0.788			
		Total	384.189	485				
21	Establishing communication network among groups to reduce tension	Between groups	5.641	4	1.410	1.944	0.102	N/S
		Within group	348.845	481	0.725			
		Total	354.486	485				
22	Promoting negotiation among powerful group leaders	Between groups	8.641	4	2.160	2.735	0.028	S
		Within group	379.986	481	0.790			
		Total	388.628	485				
23	Suggesting perceived remedy for resolving conflict	Between groups	4.870	4	1.218	1.805	0.127	N/S
		Within group	324.399	481	0.674			
		Total	329.270	485				
24	Providing an excellent reward programme where people are paid fairly and equitably with bonuses for outstanding performance	Between groups	3.698	4	0.925	0.990	0.412	N/S
		Within group	449.077	481	0.934			
		Total	452.776	485				
25	Persuading the conflicting groups to change their sub-goals to meet the larger objectives	Between groups	0.740	4	0.185	0.220	0.927	N/S
		Within group	404.1549	481	0.840			
		Total	404.899	485				
26	Consulting the conflicting groups on individual basis	Between groups	3.657	4	0.914	0.999	0.408	N/S
		Within group	440.304	481	0.915			
		Total	443.961	485				
27	Building of mutual understanding among groups in conflict	Between groups	3.035	4	0.759	0.953	0.433	N/S
		Within group	383.025	481	0.796			
		Total	386.060	485				
28	Involvement of school disciplinary committee in the resolution of conflict	Between groups	8.035	4	2.009	2.759	0.027	S
		Within group	350.124	481	0.728			
		Total	358.158	485				
29	Involvement of school board of governors in resolution of conflict	Between groups	16.565	4	4.141	5.327	0.000	S
		Within group	373.921	481	0.777			
		Total	390.486	485				
30	Involvement of the public complaint commission on the resolution conflict	Between groups	11.637	4	2.909	3.051	0.017	S
		Within group	458.577	481	0.953			
		Total	470.214	485				
31	Applying dialogue for resolving conflict	Between groups	7.121	4	1.780	1.903	0.109	N/S
		Within group	449.916	481	0.935			
		Total	457.037	485				
32	Inviting the law enforcement agency	Between groups	12.051	4	3.013	2.585	0.036	S
		Within group	560.502	481	1.165			
		Total	572.553	485				
Overall total		Between groups	1.528	4	0.382	1.395	0.235	S
		Within group	131.742	481	0.274			
		Total	133.270	485				

Notes. Any computed significant level above 0.05 is not significant; Any significant level below 0.05 is significant; S = Significant; N/S= Not significant.

Hypothesis 3

Ho₃: There is no significant difference ($p < 0.05$) among the mean ratings of principals, teachers, proprietors, and students on the perceived CRSs adopted in non-government secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 6 shows that items 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 31 have calculated F -values that are significant at 0.179, 0.514, 0.163, 0.102, 0.127, 0.412, 0.927, 0.408, 0.433, and 0.109 but not significant at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean responses of the principals, teachers, proprietors, and students on perceived CRSs in non-government secondary schools in Benue State is accepted. The data also revealed that in items 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 32, there are significant differences in the mean ratings of the four categories of respondents on encouraging parties to work together to find mutually acceptable solution to problems, promoting negotiation among powerful sub-group leaders, involvement of school disciplinary committee in the resolution of conflict, involvement of school board of governors in the resolution of conflict, involvement of the public complaint commission on the resolution of conflict, and inviting the law enforcement agencies.

The calculated t -values for items 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 31 show that there are no significant differences in the mean rating of principals, teachers, proprietors, and students on parties in conflict agreeing on the procedure taken for the resolution of identified conflict, gathering information on the sources of conflict, taking note of staff's and students' comments and suggestions, establishment of communication network among group to reduce tension, among others.

The calculated F -values for the above items are 1.578, 0.818, 1.638, 1.944, 1.805, 0.990, 0.220, 0.999, 0.953, and 1.903 respectively while the F -value of 2.931, 2.735, 2.759, 5.327, 3.051, and 2.585 are significant at 0.021, 0.028, 0.027, 0.000, 0.017, and 0.036 and also at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean rating of principals, teachers, proprietors, and students of non-government secondary school, Benue State is rejected. This, however, means that there are significant differences in the mean responses of the four categories of respondents on items 19, 22, 28, 29, 30, and 32.

Discussion

The respondents from all non-government secondary schools in the area of study agreed that constant misunderstanding between principals and teachers on financial matters, and lack of adequate consideration of areas of specialization in assignment of duties, in-subordination by the staff and favoritism in school organization constitute sources of conflict. There was no significant difference in the mean responses of principals and teachers on constant misunderstanding, favoritism, poor accountability, and lack of adequate knowledge of role expectations of proprietors in accordance with education edict guidelines as constituting sources of conflict. The above finding is consistent with that of Umstot (1987) who observed communication barriers, role conflict, conflict over resources, and individual perception as sources of conflict.

Principals, teachers, proprietors, and students are of the opinion that poor accountability on the use of school finance by the school principal, imposition of illegal levies in cash or materials, issuance of orders by principals without due regard to the proprietor's instruction, poor communication network between principals and school proprietors and proprietors' poor attitude to staff welfare are sources of conflict in non-government secondary schools. There was no significant difference in the opinion of principals and proprietors on the above sources of conflict between principals and proprietors.

Any organization characterized by conflict is bound to fall short of goal expectation and goal attainment.

This type of situation could give concern to the society to which the school belongs. According to Burton (1990), conflict within organizations can result from many forces, such as interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, and violation of laid down rules. Abanyam (2001) opined that conflict destroys stability and endangers organizational structure. The researchers are of the opinion that conflicts create negative impact that militates against goal achievement.

In the opinion of principals, teachers, proprietors, and students, strategies for resolving conflicts include: agreeing on the procedure taken for the resolution of conflicts, encouraging parties to work together, taking staff and students' comments and suggestions/open door policy, use of suggestion box in the school, promoting negotiation among powerful sub-group leaders, involvement of school disciplinary committee and public complaint commission in the dissolution of conflict, and application of dialogue between the conflicting parties. This strategy is in line with Miller (2003) who posited that negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and should be applied in conflict resolution.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings of the study: The major sources of conflict in non-government secondary schools are:

- (1) Constant misunderstanding between principals and teachers on financial matters;
- (2) Lack of adequate consideration of areas of specialization in assignment of duties;
- (3) Deviation from organization objectives by some staff;
- (4) Poor accountability on the use of school finance by the school principal;
- (5) Lack of adequate knowledge of role expectations of proprietors in accordance with education edict guidelines;
- (6) Unnecessary interference with the administration of the school by proprietors;
- (7) Imposition of levies in cash or materials by the school principal without authorization;
- (8) Poor communication network between staff and students, among others.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend as follows:

- (1) Government should ensure that every non-government secondary schools and all other secondary schools in the state should have effective disciplinary committee, functional board of governors and cordial school community relations. This will enhance effective dispensation of justice for the interest of the school and the community;
- (2) Government should ensure that the regulations on the functions and meeting of the board of governors of secondary schools are strictly adhered to;
- (3) There should be effective and regular orientation programme for the staff and students, on improving techniques of administration as this will help them improve their performance;
- (4) Proprietors of schools and principals should avoid arbitrary increase of school fees and other levies to avoid unnecessary demonstration by students;
- (5) Principals should engage themselves in intensive motivational techniques, open door administration, and participatory governance to drastically reduce conflict in schools;
- (6) Government and principals should establish effective communication network among the educational

organs. This is to ensure that all the educational organs are consulted before major decisions and actions concerning secondary school administration in the state are taken.

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