Categories of Workplace Conflicts in Aided Secondary Schools in Bukonzo County, Kasese District

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to establish the categories of workplace conflicts on teachers' performance in the government –aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County, Kasese District. A non-experimental descriptive survey design was adopted which used interviews and structured self-administered questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 178 participants. The head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies were sampled using purposive sampling and the teachers were sampled using stratified random sampling. This sample comprised of 11 head teachers, 11 deputy head teachers, 11 directors of studies and 145 teachers. The schools were sampled using census sampling. The findings of the study revealed that workplace conflicts are prevalent in the government –aided secondary schools and the categories of workplace conflicts are relationship conflict, task conflict, structural conflict and goal conflict. Workplace conflicts are prevalent in the government –aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County Kasese District. The categories of workplace conflicts are relationship conflict, task conflict, structural conflict and goal conflict and are largely attributed to narrow communication by school administration, poorly spelt tasks, under looking mandate of school committees by school administration and overlooking departmental goals.

Keywords: categories, workplace, hazards, conflicts, secondary schools, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, quite a number of studies have been undertaken in Asia and the USA all indicating that conflict is a general phenomenon of school life and as a result institutional heads often spend valuable time trying to solve problems that arise as a result of workplace conflicts or disagreement among members. This reduces time for constructive planning and promotion of creative initiatives and solutions. This large part of conflict in workplace disrupts school activities and constructive contribution to the school progress [1]. Schools in Uganda have witnessed an increasing frequency in strikes against school administration either by the students or teachers for the last decade Tumwesige [2]. Some of these strikes have resulted into destruction of property and injuries of school administrators. The strikes have been attributed to undisciplined students or disgruntled teachers Tumwesige [2]. The term conflict carries a variety of definitions, depending on the usage and the context of its usage. Chandan [3] defines conflict as a disagreement between two or more individuals, groups, with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its view or objectives over others. He contends that conflict being an outcome of behavior; it is an integral part of human life. In the context of this study, workplace conflicts are conflicts that take place in the workplace and could be between teachers themselves and teachers and school administration. Burns [4] espouses conflict as a disagreement, misunderstanding, or clash between two or more organizational members or groups arising from the fact that they must share scarce resources or work activities. In secondary schools, because of the scarcity of resources, given that members target different goals, teachers and administration are bound to conflict over

allocation of the scarce resources. This consequently affects teachers' performance in terms of executing their duties. The study was done to determine the categories of workplace conflicts in the government-aided secondary schools in Bukonzo county, Kasese District.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study used a non-experimental descriptive survey design which is a scientific method used for observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way. This enabled the researcher to obtain information regarding the subjects studied at the time of the study. Kothari (2003) observes that the use of descriptive research design is a process of data collection in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the respondents to be studied. Surveys allow for an anonymous look inside the thought processes of large numbers of people simultaneously, allowing for an opportunity to describe what is not outwardly observable [5]. Moreover descriptive survey describes the characteristics of respondents, phenomena, opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of the persons of interest to the researcher. It was based on a case study of government-aided secondary schools.

Study population

The target population for this study was head teachers, deputy head teachers, directors of studies and the teachers in the eleven government- aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County, Kasese District. The target population was chosen because it would provide adequate and relevant information concerning the study topic. Besides, there have been a number of workplace conflicts reported in the government - aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County Kasese District and no study has been undertaken to establish the categories, causes and effect of workplace conflicts on the teachers' performance.

Sampling techniques

The stratified proportionate random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select the teachers. It was preferred because it involves dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups, thus, males and females and then taking a random sample in each subgroup hence adequate representation of each subgroup. The sample was selected in such a way as to ensure that the male and female teachers in the population are represented in the sample in proportion to the number in the population and they have equal chance to be included. Purposive sampling was used for the head teachers, deputies, the first deputy head teacher in schools with two deputy head teachers and the directors of studies. The head teachers, deputy head teachers and directors of studies were purposively selected because of their positions in the school and they were in a suitable position to provide appropriate information to the study.

Sample size

All the 11 government-aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County, Kasese District were selected by census method. According to Mugenda and Mugenda [6], 30% of the target population will be an ideal sample. By the time of study, the 11 government - aided secondary schools had 403 teachers. Accordingly, 201 would be an ideal sample. Data was collected from 178 respondents, which included 145 teachers, 11 head teachers, and 11 deputy head teachers, and 11 directors of studies.

Research instruments

The instruments used included questionnaires and interview guides which enabled the researcher to solicit for information from the respondents.

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Questionnaires

A self-administered questionnaire with closed and open ended questions was designed and used to collect data from the deputy head teachers, directors of studies and the teachers. This is because it helped the researcher to get information from various sources at the same time and it was convenient to the subjects as they filled it at their convenience. It also catered for anonymity from the deputy head teachers, directors of studies and the teachers since they filled it independently, appendix vii-ix.

Interview guide

Leedy [7] defines an interview as a two-person face to face conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information. The researcher carried out interviews with the head teachers to get in-depth information about the problem of the study which the questionnaires would not elicit. The interview guide constituted of the bio-data section and open ended questions with specific topic areas but the exact wording of the question was left to the interviewer. The face to face interaction helped the researcher to delve deeper into the issues and clarify any doubts that arose. Also it helped the researcher to get intimate feelings and opinions of the head teachers about the study.

Data collection methods

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods as the study intended to find substantial information or evidence on the categories, causes of workplace conflicts and their effect on the teachers' performance.

Procedure

A covering letter was obtained from the Dean, Faculty of Science, Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) introducing the researcher to the secondary schools' management. Permission from Kasese District Education office was acquired and head teachers of secondary schools were contacted. The questionnaires were given out by the researcher, filled and collected for coding and analyzing. Face to face interviews were conducted for the head teachers in their offices or any other place convenient to them.

Data analysis and presentation

Charles and Mertler [8] affirm that data analysis helps to describe the data clearly; to identify what is typical and atypical among the data; to bring to light differences, relationships and other patterns existent in the data through interpretation; and ultimately to answer research questions and test hypotheses. It is from such analysis that the researcher and other users of the study can make sense of the data. Quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the respondents of the study, was processed and analyzed so as to test the research hypothesis and answer the research questions, and ultimately achieve the study objectives. After manual scrutiny of all the returned questionnaires to ascertain that they were filled, the quantitative data was entered in the computer, using the SPSS packages. Data was then analyzed starting with the primary analysis, which involved use of descriptive statistics, mainly frequencies and percentages where appropriate. Chi-square test was used to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. According to Sarantakos [9], Chi-square is a general test, designed to evaluate whether the difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies under a set of theoretical assumption is statistically significant. Basically, it provides information about whether the collected data are close to the value considered to be typical and generally expected and whether two variables are related to each other. The formula for the Chi-square is:

$$x^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{}$$

$$f_e$$

where,

x^2 = Chi – Square

Σ = Sum

f_o = Frequency observed

f_e = Frequency expected

Qualitative data responses from interviews were recorded, typed out directly on computer. At coding stage the respondents' statements were copied verbatim. After coding the data was sorted into categories according to the emerging ideas. This was followed by identification of themes, interconnections or differences, generalizations and analyzed using thematic content analysis, conclusions were then made. Data collected was validated and then coded. Presentation was done using tables for easy communication.

Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that confidentiality of the information obtained was observed and to be used not for any other purpose other than for the study. The researcher sought for informed consent from the respondents, respected all respondents and did not reveal their identities. They did not put names on the instrument. Clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) was obtained.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	115	68.5%
Female	53	31.5%

Age (years)	Frequency	Percent
23-29	29	17.3%
30-39	75	44.6%
40-49	54	32.1%
50-Above	10	6.0%

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
PhD	0	0.0%
Master's degree	10	6.0%
Bachelor's degree	100	59.5%
Diploma	58	34.5%

School Type	Frequency	Percent
Mixed	148	88.1%
Single sex	20	11.9%

Teachers' Experience (years)	Frequency	Percent
1-5	29	17.3%
6-10	47	28.0%
11-15	37	22.0%
16-20	34	20.2%
21-25	12	7.10%
26-30	9	5.40%

Number of Years in the Current School	Frequency	Percent
1-5	77	45.8%
6-10	57	34.0%
11-15	22	13.0%
16-20	9	5.40%
21-25	2	1.20%
26-30	1	0.60%

Table 2: Teachers' responses about the Categories of workplace conflicts

Response	No Response		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Relationship conflict												
Under looking teachers' values by the school administration results conflict between teachers and administration.	1	0.7	10	6.8	11	7.5	14	9.6	80	54.8	30	20.5
Unequal treatment of teachers by the school administration causes misunderstanding between teachers and school administration	1	0.7	12	8.2	15	10.3	11	7.5	71	48.6	36	24.7
There is limited collaboration between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	5	3.4	12	8.2	41	28.1	79	54.1	9	6.2
Narrow communication by administration results into conflicts among teachers and administration	1	0.7	6	4.1	21	14.4	12	8.2	68	46.6	38	26.0
Task conflict												
Poorly spelt tasks results into conflicts between teachers and administration	2	1.4	8	5.5	23	15.8	17	11.6	70	47.9	26	17.8

Unsuitably distributed tasks by administration causes conflicts between teachers and administration	2	1.4	4	2.7	17	11.6	20	13.7	77	52.7	26	17.8
Inappropriate job design results into conflict between teachers and administration	7	4.8	6	4.1	27	18.5	23	15.8	69	47.3	14	9.6

Structural conflict

Disregard of policies by administration results into conflicts between teachers and administration.	3	2.1	8	5.5	27	18.5	19	13.0	59	40.4	30	20.5
Under looking mandate of the school committees results into conflict between teachers and administration	3	2.1	6	4.1	18	12.3	21	14.4	63	43.2	35	24.0
Lack of delegation by administration causes conflict between teachers and school administration	3	2.1	10	6.8	16	11.0	40	27.4	52	35.6	25	17.1
Poorly defined roles by administration causes conflict between teachers and administration	2	1.4	4	2.7	17	11.6	20	13.7	77	52.7	26	17.8

Goal conflict

Inappropriately identified goals causes conflict between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	9	6.2	22	15.1	31	21.2	68	46.6	16	11.0

	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Underestimating individual goals by the administration results into misunderstanding between teachers and administration	0	0.0	14	9.6	25	17.1	25	17.1	60	41.1	22	15.1
Over looking departmental goals causes conflict between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	3	2.1	20	13.7	26	17.8	58	39.7	39	26.7

Table 3: Deputy Head teachers' responses about the Categories of workplace conflicts

Response	No Response		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Relationship conflict												
Under looking teachers' values by the school administration causes poor relationship between teachers and administration.	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	18.2	0	0.0	7	63.6	3	27.2
Unequal treatment of teachers by the school administration causes poor relationship among teachers and school administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	18.2	0	0.0	6	54.5	3	27.3
There is inadequate teamwork in curricular activities among teachers in yours school	0	0.0	1	9.1	1	9.1	0	0.0	8	72.7	1	9.1

There is insufficient teamwork in social activities among teachers	0	0.0	1	9.1	1	9.1	1	9.1	7	63.6	1	9.1
Lack of communication by management causes misunderstanding among teachers and administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	5	45.5	5	45.5

Task conflict

Poorly defined tasks results into conflicts among teachers as well as administrators	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	2	18.2	4	36.4	4	36.4
Un equal distribution of tasks causes conflicts among teachers and administration	0	0.0	1	9.1	1	9.1	1	9.1	7	63.6	1	9.1
Lack of proper job description results into conflicts among teachers and administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	6	54.5	4	36.4

Structural conflict

Failure to observe established policies results into conflicts between teachers and administration.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	27..3	4	36.4	4	36.4
Failure to respect the mandate of the staff committees results into conflict between teachers and administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	4	36.4	6	54.5
Failure to appropriately delegate results into conflicts between	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	6	54.5	4	36.4

teachers and school administration											
Poorly spelt out roles results into conflicts among teachers and administration	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	1	9.1	5	45.5	4	36.4

Goal conflict

Lack of clearly spelt goals causes conflict among teachers and school administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	2	18.2	7	63.6	1	9.1
Disrespect of individual goals by the administration results into conflict between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	1	9.1	9	81.8	0	0.0
Under looking departmental goals by administration results into conflict between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	2	18.2	4	36.4	4	36.4

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Table 4: Directors of Studies' responses about the Categories of workplace conflicts

Response	No Response		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Relationship conflict												
Disrespect to teachers' values by the school administration causes conflict between teachers and administration.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	54.5	5	45.5
Preferential treatment among teachers by the school administration results into conflict between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	1	9	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	45.5	5	45.5
Lack of collaboration among teachers and school administration causes conflict between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	18.2	2	18.2	7	63.6
Inadequate communication by administration is a source of conflict between teachers and administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	27.3	8	72.7
Task conflict												
Un clear tasks by administration is a cause of conflict between teachers and administration	0	0.0	1	9.1	2	18.2	1	9.1	6	54.5	1	9.1

Un equal allocation of tasks by administration causes conflicts between teachers and administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	18.2	1	9.1	5	45.5	3	27.3
Improper job design by administration is a source of conflict between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	3	27.2	00	0.0	4	36.4	4	36.4	0	0.0

Structural conflict

Disregard to school policies by school administration results into conflicts between teachers and administration.	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	3	27.3	6	54.5	2	18.2
Disregarding the mandate of the school committees by administration causes conflict among teachers and administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	72.7	3	27.3
Breakdown of delegation by administration results into conflicts between teachers and school administration	0	0.0	3	27.3	1	9.1	1	9.1	6	54.5	0	0.0
Ambiguous roles by administration causes conflict amid administration and teachers	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	18.2	2	18.2	6	54.5	1	9.1

Goal conflict

Unclear goals by administration result into conflict among teachers and school administration	0	0.0	1	9.1	2	18.2	1	9.1	5	45.5	2	18.2

Undermining individual goals by administration results into conflict among teachers and administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	36.4	1	9.1	6	54.5	0	0.0
Overlooking departmental goals by administration results into conflict among teachers and school administration	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	5	45.5	5	45.5

DISCUSSION

According to the findings about the categories of workplace conflicts that were prevailing in the government –aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County Kasese District, it was revealed that indeed all the categories of workplace conflicts that were investigated prevail in the government –aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County Kasese District. These categories are relationship conflict, task conflict, structural conflict and goal conflict. All the items used to measure the occurrence of the categories of workplace conflicts reveal the prevalence of these conflicts, though in varying degrees. These items include; under looking teachers values, inadequate team work, unequal treatment of teachers, lack of communication, unequal distribution of tasks, poorly defined tasks, lack of proper job description, failure to respect mandate of staff committees, disrespect to school policies, lack of clearly spelt goals, disrespect to individual goals, under looking departmental goals, which rated highly on the likert scale as the respondents unanimously agreed with the fact that they cause workplace conflicts. These findings of the study are in agreement with the study of Kipyego [10], where majority of the respondents indicated prevalence of structural, relationship and task conflicts. In view of the afore mentioned explanation, the researcher upholds the teachers' position and the reasons advanced because where there is unequal treatment and inadequate communication, tension between individuals in the school is bound to arise which will breed poor relationships among individuals or groups [11-21]. Thus on the whole, relationship conflict was more prevalent among the teachers in the government –aided secondary schools. However, relationship conflict does not seem to be the only category that was occurring among the teachers. This is reflected in the responses to the individual items that were assessing its prevalence as there is no item that received 100% agreement. Moreover, the other categories investigated, responses also indicated their prevalence in varying degrees, and this implies that relationship conflict was not the only category of workplace conflict prevalent in the government –aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County Kasese District. The researcher aligns to the notion postulated by the teachers because of the fact that a school is composed of numerous activities which require involvement of all the stakeholders at different levels which may result into poor relations among members as they execute them.

CONCLUSION

Workplace conflicts are prevalent in the government –aided secondary schools in Bukonzo County Kasese District. The categories of workplace conflicts are relationship conflict, task conflict, structural conflict and goal conflict and

are largely attributed to narrow communication by school administration, poorly spelt tasks, under looking mandate of school committees by school administration and overlooking departmental goals.

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