

THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN NIGER STATE

MOHAMMED Mustapha Alhaji

*Department of Continuing Education and Community Development, Faculty of Education and
Arts, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger State.*

+2340737862842 (mustaphamohammed474@gmail.com)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of vocational education in the management of conflict in higher institutions in Niger State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and convenient sample techniques was adopted, 635 participants responded to the instrument. Data collecting instrument was a structured questionnaire which was distributed online.. It contained six (6) items. The reliability coefficient index is 0.97 using Cronbach Alpha. Data analysis was done with simple frequency distribution, percentages, mean statistics and t-test to test the hypothesis and answer the research question. The findings indicated that vocational education reduces the social conflict in higher institutions in Niger State. It has encourage job creation, improved standard of living and modified the behavioural attitude of people. The null hypothesis were tested using t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis were not rejected because there was no significant differences found in the mean responses of respondents on the variables of the study.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Management, Vocational Education, Higher institutions

Introduction

Conflict connotes clash of interest, values, actions, views, or directions. It refers to some form of frictions, disagreements, or discords arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group. Generally, there are diverse interests and contrary views behind a conflict, which are revealed when people look at a problem from their viewpoint alone. Conflict is an outcome of organizational intricacies, interaction and disagreement (De Bono, 1985).

Higher institutions are confronted with countless pushes and pulls from internal and external sources which influence the kind and quality of conflict that emerged. The educational community experience countless conflict situation without alternative methods. The conflict situation can contribute to hostile environment. Dispute over faculty, performance, multimillion

naira grants, intellectual property, freedom of information, affirmative action, training, confrontations, to name a few, contribute to a complex conflict landscape. Conflict is an inevitable friction in any organization. Efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society, but the prevailing situations in Nigeria constitutes a reversal of this reality. Conflict in tertiary institutions is inevitable because, people have divergent views, ideologies and cultures. Social conflict occurs when two or more actors oppose each other in social interaction, reciprocally exerting social power in an effort to attain scarce or incompatible goals and prevent the opponent from attaining them. It is a social relationship wherein the action is oriented intentionally for carrying out the actor's own will against the resistance of other party or parties.

Social conflict is not limited to hostile or antagonistic opposition; it is not wholly a clash of coercive powers as often is implied, but of any opposing social powers. Social conflict is usually recognized through violence and physical behaviour. Yet it's more than just fighting, and killing one another. At times it can deal with it throw a simple town in a conversation. It is acknowledged by someone's power.

In 1984, many tertiary institutions rioted over the proposed introduction of tuition and the scrapping of catering services. This led to the closure of many universities for months. During the military era, the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) also generated crises in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria. For instance, In May 2014, the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) was shut down after a violent demonstration by students over a hike in tuition.

Such conflicts, in recent times, have come to be recognized as one of the most visible perennial problems of significance when compared with other social vices like cultism, examination malpractices, drug abuse and so on leading to indefinite closure of schools and other attendant problems (Aluede, Jimoh, Agwinede and Omoregie, 2005). The importance of education in sociological point of view cannot be undermined. There are many social problems like unemployment, juvenile delinquency, adult and adolescent crime, unstable and unsatisfactory home have been attributed to lack of vocational education. Conflict exists at every level of our academic world. Conflict can be negative and can cause deep rifts in the framework of the

institutions. It can be used as a tool to take the institution and people in it from stagnation to a new level of effectiveness. What makes the difference is conflict management (Holton, 1998).

Literature Review

Vocational Education:

Vocational education is as old as man. In traditional societies, there are many institutional provision developed for passing knowledge or skills in specific trade from one generation to another. Therefore, vocational education is defined by different authors in different ways. Okoro (1999) defined vocational education as all those experiences whereby an individual learns to carry on successfully, any useful occupation. These experiences may be organized and institutionalized or organized and haphazard. Simply, vocational education may be looked at as a series of controlled and organized experiences arranged to prepare a person for socially useful employment. The statement explains that all education is vocational as far as the individual may serve happily on the job and prepares for satisfactory living. According to Thompson (2002), vocational education aims at the development of human abilities in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding so efficiently in carrying on the activities in the vocational pursuits of his choice. This statement gives more emphasis on knowledge and skills which an individual aim at.

Winer (2000) in his contribution opined that vocational education is designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. It is an integral part of the total education programme and contributes towards the development of the good citizens by development their physical, social, civic, cultural and economical competencies. Wenrich (1974) sees vocational education as the education that prepare youths adult for employment in a specific occupation or family of occupation by providing competencies needed for such employment. Vocational education prepared youths for employment in industries, commerce and other enterprise by exposing those qualified for it.

The term vocational education is general and includes every form of education that aims to the acquirement of qualifications related to a certain profession, art or employment or that provides

the necessary training and the appropriate skills as well as technical knowledge, so that students are able to exercise a profession, art or activity, independently of their age and their training level, even if the training programme include contains elements of general education (Kotsikis, 2007). Vocational training is generally defined as the part of vocational education that provides the specialized professional knowledge and skills, which attribute professional adequacy to the trainee and are the focus of every vocational training programme. Vocational training can be seen as an activity or a set of activities designed in order to transmit theoretical knowledge and also professional skills that are required for certain types of jobs (Kotsikis, 2007). Vocational education is a kind of education that prepare youths and adult for self reliant, employment, physical, social and economic independent in the society. Vocational education may be full-time or part-time and it is certificate oriented. It refers to all aspects of the education process involving the acquisition or practical skills with which to start a life of work to earn a living.

Roles of Vocational Education

Vocational education has many prospects; it can be used as a catalyst for employment opportunities thus, it is a panacea for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Vocational education provides relevant training to individuals to be self-supporting and independent through one's own labour, thereby contributing economically and socially to the development of such communities. With the current imbalance in educational system and resultant effects of mass unemployment of school leavers, the National Policy on Education (2014) envisages that vocational education would bail us out of the critical problems that the country is facing. Vocational education provides adults with respect, dignity, values in the community in which they live in, because they are self-reliant.

Concept of Conflict

Conflict can be viewed at the individual, group or organizational levels. The term could also be used interchangeably to means crisis. In relation to students in higher institutions. Therefore, the conflict and or crisis generated is often referred to as unrest. However, when the situation is out of control, it may become violent conflict, which is an unlawful use of threat or force that results in the manifestation of despairs and desperation. Unrest has been used by some scholars to denote fight, demonstration, riots, agitation, crisis and protest. It is a state of discontent which creates anxiety and uneasy situation. Hornby (2006) defined unrest as "a state of disturbance in

which people are angry or dissatisfied and are likely to protest or fight". Obianyo (2003) succinctly puts it that unrest goes hand in hand with conflict.

Conflict is defined as disagreement between individuals. It can vary from a mild disagreement to win-or-lose, emotion-laden, confrontation (Kirchoff and Adams, 1982). The word conflict is generally viewed as a disagreement or clash between two or more people or between two or more choices. Conflict is the interaction of independent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals Folger, Poole and Stuntman, (2001). This definition suggests that conflict arises from the pursuit of divergent interest, view point, goals, and aspiration by individuals and, or groups. These perceived differences often result in tension, usually reflected in arguments that sometimes result in quarrels, brutal or fights.

With the above expression, it is conceivable that when conflict occurs, three elements are involved- people, problem, and process. People, because there can be no conflict without human forces, neither can there be conflict without a problem. The process is seen to be the way parties express their grievances and the manner or approach through which the problem is addressed.

Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory it instigates invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity and sets us at noting and contriving. Conflict is a *sine qua non* of reflection and ingenuity John Dewey.

In the view of Imobigbe (1997), conflict is a condition of disharmony or hostility within an interaction process which is usually the direct result of clash of interests by the parties involved. Wilmost and Hockett (1998) assert that conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resource, and interference from others in achieving their goals. Etadon (2008) stated that conflict can also be described as a situation in which persons or groups disagree over means and ends as they try to establish their view in preference to others. Conflict could, therefore, occur in a society anytime and over any issue.

Conflict is usually viewed as negative and bad, it is also considered normal and common in place. Glosson, Meeks, and Smock, (1997) and Otite, (2001), shared similar views that conflict is natural and normal, thus not bad. This opinion may only be true if and when conflicts occur for the right reasons and are appropriately addressed or managed. Such conflicts are said to be

positive. They serve as a means of identifying the imperfections of a system or relationship and device solutions to solve existing problems. They foster personal development, increase self-awareness and enhance psychological maturity and fun (Fisher et al, 2000).

Concept of Conflict Management

Conflict management is the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence. Rather than advocating methods for removing conflict, it addresses the more realistic question of managing conflict: how to deal with it in a constructive way, how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process, how to design a practical, achievable, cooperative system for the constructive management of difference. Conflict management is viewed as a part of a larger process of ensuring the man lives in peace and in an orderly way, conflict is channel towards positive effects in every human community. In the view of Fisher et al, (2001) bringing about peace in a conflict situation is a process, which involves different stages, the best and most crucial of which is conflict transformation.

This view of the comprehensiveness and institutionalization involved in conflict management is further stressed by Zartman (1989), when he wrote that "conflict management refers to the elimination, neutralization of conflict from erupting into crises or to cool a crisis in eruption".

Conflict management is another way of controlling conflict before or during and after it has occurred. According to Onigu, Otite and Albert (1999), " It is more elaborate and wider in conception and application, when necessitate; it is of a long-term arrangement involving institutionalized provision and regulative procedures for dealing with conflict whenever they occur". Properly managed conflict increase organizational learning by increasing the number questions asked and encourages people to challenge the status quo (Marsnik, 1995). Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing or promoting the positive aspects or outcome of conflict with the goal of improving learning in an organization (Rahim, 2002).

"Conflict management" is defined by the American management Association (AMA) " as recognizing the potential value of conflict for deriving change and innovation. This means knowing when to confront, and when to avoid a conflict and understanding the issues around

which conflict resolve". It means looking for those win/win solutions and seeking agreement on a solution while eliminating commitment to making it work effectively in points.

Conflict management promotes intervention to achieve political settlements, mostly by those who have the power to exercise pressure on the conflicting parties in order to induce them to settle. According to Bloomfield and Reilly (1998): On the other hand, Bodtker and Jameson, (2001) state the following ways of managing conflicts:

Identify- the conflict elements, emotion behaviour and contradiction.

Transformation- changing the orientation of the conflict and making the different parties aware of the elements.

Solution- changing the elements allows transformation of the conflict direct, which leads to the solution becoming apparent. Therefore, Conflict management: This aims to limit and avoid future violence by promoting positive behavioural changes in the parties involved.

Methodology

Research Design: The study adopted the descriptive research survey design.

Participants: The study population include all students in higher institution in Niger State and convenient sample techniques was used, 635 participants responded to the instrument. In line with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling size determination table, a sample size of three hundred and four (384) over population size of one million (1,000,000). Research Advisors (2006) a sample size of three hundred and four to a margin of error population size of three hundred million.

Data Collection instrument: Data collecting instrument was a structured questionnaire which was distributed online, Questionnaire on the Role of Vocational Education in the Management of Conflict (QRVEMC). The questionnaire was formatted on four (4) point Likert's type rating scale: ranging from Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). It contained six (6) items. The reliability coefficient index is 0.97 using Cronbach Alpha.

Method of Data Analysis: Data analysis was done with simple frequency distribution, percentages, mean statistics and t-test to test the hypothesis and answer the research question respectively. The null hypothesis was tested using t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

The null hypothesis was not rejected because there was no significant differences found in the mean responses of respondents on the variables of the study.

Results and Discussion

This study presents the results of the data obtained and analyzed in line with the research question and hypothesis generated in the study.

Analysis of Research Question

Research Question

What is the role of vocational education in the reduction of social conflict in higher institutions in Niger State? This research question was answered in table 1 below.

Table 1: Role of vocational education to the reduction of social conflict among the personnel in higher institutions.

Description. N= 635		Student		Lecturer		
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Dec.
1	Vocational education programme encourage job creation.	3.35	50.69	3.20	14.00	Agr
2	Vocational education provides training to individuals to be self-supporting and independent through one's own labour.	3.33	50.88	3.22	13.42	Agr
3	Vocational education improves standard of living of the people.	3.23	54.52	3.10	14.00	Agr
4	Vocational education reduced the number of crimes (murder, arm robbery, theft, and rape).	3.24	47.60	3.32	12.58	Agr
5	Vocational education modify the behavioural attitude of the people.	3.39	52.37	3.35	12.52	Agr
6	Vocational education reduced the number of social vices (prostitution, cultism,	3.16	58.67	3.06	15.96	Agr

examination malpractice,
and thuggery.

Overall Mean: 3.28 52.4 3.20 13.74 Agr
5

Grand Mean: 3.24 33.09 Agr

Table 1 shows opinion of the respondents on the role of vocational education in the reduction of social conflict. Item one sought to determine how vocational education programmes encouraged job creation. 1625 responses with the mean of 3.34 and 48.08 as standard deviation were recorded for agree, against 262 responses with the mean of 1.77 and 18.25 for Disagree. Item 2 was used to determine how vocational education provided training to individuals to be self-support in and independent through one's own labour. Responses for this item showed that 1610 responses with the mean of 3.33 and 49.29 standard deviation were recorded for Agree, while 243 responses with the mean of 1.61 and 15.18 were recorded for Disagree. Item 3 sought the opinion of respondents on the role vocational education in improving the standard of living of the people. Responses showed that 1670 with the mean of 3.23 and 53.03 were recorded for Agree, while 203 with the mean of 1.72 and 14.98 standard deviation was for Disagree. Item 4 was used to determine the role of vocational education in reducing the number of crimes such as murder, arm robbery, theft, and rape. 1294 responses with the mean of 3.24 and 45.82 standard deviation were recorded for Agree against 379 with the mean of 1.61 and 18.93 standard deviation for Disagree. Item 5 was used to determine the relevance of vocational education in modifying the behavioural and attitudes of the people. 1726 responses with the mean of 3.40 and 15.63 standard deviation were recorded for Agree against 188 responses with the mean of 1.50 and 15.63 standard deviation for Disagree. Item 6 was used to determine the relevance of vocational education in reducing the number of social vices such as prostitution, cultism, examination malpractice, and thuggery. 1741 responses with the mean of 3.20 and 57.00 standard deviation were recorded for Agree against 140 with the mean of 1.70 and 11.74 standard deviation were recorded for Disagree. The overall mean for Students was 3.28, and 52.45 standard deviation while the mean for Lecturers 3.20 and 13.74 standard deviation. The Grand mean for the responses to the research question was 3.24 and 33.09 standard deviation. Therefore, this implied that vocational education was relevant in the reduction of social conflict in higher institutions in Niger State.

Test of Hypothesis

A null hypothesis was raised to guide the study. This is aimed at proffering solutions towards the objective and answer question raised in the study. However, in this research work if the t-calculated value was equal or greater than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis will be rejected. But then, if the t-critical value was greater than the t-calculated value, null hypothesis will be not rejected.

H: There is no significant difference between the means scores of Students and lecturers on the role of vocational education in the reduction of social conflict in higher institutions.

Table. 2

Variables	Mean	S.D	n ¹	Df.	Std errors	t- cal.	t-cri
Students	3.28	52.45	598				
			n ²	633	3.11	0.025	1.96
Lecturers	3.20	13.74	37				

Table2 revealed that respondents to this hypothesis were 635 with 633 degree of freedom. The mean responses for students was 3.28 while lecturers had 3.20 on the other hand. t-calculated was 0.025 while t-critical was 1.96. The result revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of the students and lecturers. This was because the t-calculated was less than the t-critical. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated the role of vocational education in the management of conflict among personnel in higher institution in Niger state. The study concluded that vocational education reduced social conflicts in higher institutions in Niger State, in terms of cultism, fighting, thuggery, examination malpractices, theft, rape. It has encouraged job creation, improved standard of living and modify the behavioural attitudes of people. There was no significant difference between the mean responses of students and lecturers on the role of vocational

education in the reduction of social conflict in higher institution. The research work recommended among other things that Government and appropriate authorities can enhanced the development of higher institutions in Niger State through effective conflict management.

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