

Conflict and Crisis Management for National Security: The Role of Educational Managers in Rivers State

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Abstract

The paper x-rayed the role of Educational Managers in the management of crisis and conflict for national security in Nigeria. The paper identified conflict as a tension state which attempts to frustrate managers from actualizing school goals which is caused by internal and external factors. The paper further submitted that security has posed many challenges to all sectors of Nigeria. The paper identified compromise, withdrawal, arbitration amongst others as some of the strategies of educational managers for conflict and crisis management. Finally, the paper recommended that government and all stakeholders should organize seminars for school administrators on conflict and crisis management.

Keywords: Crisis, Conflict, National Security, Educational Managers

1. Introduction

All organizations, whether small or large, complex or simple, experience conflicts. These conflicts give rise to security challenges which threaten the corporate existence of such societies or organizations. Naturally, administrators wish to avoid conflicts especially when they appear to be disruptive. As a response, many administrators prefer to ignore or suppress such conflicts when they occur.

Since the work of management in all organizations or societies is the coordination of human and material resources towards the achievement of group goals, suppression and ignorance may not be the best approach to conflict management. Generally, education has been acknowledged as an instrument par excellence for overall national development. Conflict and insecurity management cannot be exempted from the work of management. No wonder, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) reinstated the policy thrust of Nigerian philosophy on Education as it affects security when it stated that the policy will be centered on.

- a) ensuring that Nigerians live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principle of freedom, equality and unity.
- b) Promotion of Inter African solidarity and world peace through education. These lofty objectives cannot be achieved when there is conflict and insecurity.

The National Policy on education recognizes the role of management in the articulation of and actualization of societal values and aspirations and submitted that: *School systems and consequently their management and day to day administration shall grow out of the life and social ethos of the community which they serve. (FRN, 2004:55).*

This implies that educational management must respond to societal problems and values. Such societal values and problems include security, hunger, economic development, diseases and other societal challenges.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 Conflict

Conflict could be described as a tension state which attempts to prevent or frustrate another person from achieving a desired goal. Ogonor (2004) describes conflict as “the process where a party deliberately makes an effort to block the efforts of another person and thereby frustrates the latter in his attempt to attain his goals or further his interest”. However, Daft (2003) takes a more radical approach when he submitted that conflict is an antagonistic process or interaction in which one party attempts to hinder the intentions and efforts of the other party. These definitions show that conflicts are deliberate attempts of human beings to frustrate the efforts of an individual, group, state or nation. Ogonor (2013) aptly concluded that conflicts are caused by internal and external factors which may have their origin and root from management policy and style. These policies may include differences in perception, politics, immature behaviour by management staff and employee, undue concentration of power, administrator’s style, nepotism and inappropriate management of organizational resources.

Supplementing the above, Abraham (2008) identified poverty, unemployment, indolence, hedonism, structure of state economy, judicial system, moral decadence, suppression of protests, general lack of welfare, manpower needs, logistics and communication needs, corruption and lack of skills among others as some of the causes of conflicts in all organizations and societies. These submissions were further supported by Ikpefan and Sholarin (2008) who simply stated that “the root causes of crises most times can be traced to skewed land distribution, environmental degradation and unequal political representation. Within the school system these

inbalances express themselves as lack of discipline, examination malpractice and sorting to achieve unearned grades, truancy, drop out and growth of cult related activities. The new rising waves in cult related activities in Nigerian secondary and tertiary institutions have brought so much apprehension to teachers and lecturers to the extent that assessment and award of grades have been compromised. Infact, teachers and lecturers have been cowed into awarding undeserving grades to suspected or established cult members as a way of avoiding attack. Abari, Mohammed and Gbenu (2008:163) observed that “the impact of cultism on the life in the Nigerian Universities is so serious that citizens have been forced to cry out against the nefarious acts in virtually all tiers of the school system”. This type of situation constitutes conflict which is a threat to national security. In agreement with this Abari et al (2008) submitted that the formation of National Association of Seadogs (pirates confraternity) in 1953 at the University of Ibadan was to achieve social emancipation and protection of social order.

Unfortunately the cults have become a threat to civil peace hence educational managers must make concerted efforts towards its management to avoid national insecurity.

2.2 **National Security:**

Security is an important aspect of the corporate existence, health and happiness of an individual or nation. Every individual or nation aspire to have security (Nwogu and Nnorom 2013). The importance attached to security is also revealed in Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs. The theory identified security as one of the basic needs of man. security can be described as any positive measure taken to keep an individual, state, organization, country, or resources safe from danger. It is a protection against physical, psychological, emotional, socio-economic or even cultural harm. Atoyebi (2003) states that national security is the absence of threats to the core values and the prevention of public disorder. This disorder affects the individual and hence the society. When the individual is threatened, the society witnesses insecurity which embraces the act of and fear of all tendencies towards the corporate existence of the nation.

Abraham (2008) further observed that this insecurity exists in two dimensions – the individual and the state. It exists in the individual when the core values of life such as job security, social security, political, religious and cultural lives among others are negatively influenced. On the other hand, security exists in the state when there is protection of the territorial integrity against external and internal aggression. This implies that national security include the preservation, protection and guarantee of lives, property, health and national sovereignty of the individual and society.

2.3 **Conflict and security in Nigeria: Any threat?**

The Nigerian society has witnessed a great number of conflicts which has increased the level of insecurity in the land. This situation has given a lot of concern to all stakeholders of the Nigerian society. As a response to this monstrous situation, different organizations – the church, Associations, military and paramilitary formations, ethnic groups and educational institutions of all levels have resorted to different strategies. Patrick (2007) as cited by Onasoga-Molake (2008) observed that at the roots of the crises is resource mismanagement, corruption, and lack of transparency on the part of the Nigerian state operators and their business partners – the transnational corporations (TNCS). Education, the world over serves as an instrument for solving societal problems and development. Unfortunately, as Ogonor (2013) observed:

the features of the educational system today and the state of the national security suggest that there are dysfunctions either/or in the policy, implementation and outcomes of the educational system and consequently it is unable to deliver its mandate.

(P.1)

This state of affairs negate the objectives of the national policy on education which stipulated that:

Education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution.

(FRN, 2004:8)

Okowa (2011:75) aptly supports the above when he stated that “education is central to human existence and development. It is through education that values are transmitted across generations. Education enables society to create and domesticate knowledge”. This implies that any society that fails to harness the benefits of education endangers its future and therefore faces security challenges.

The neglect of the education system as an avenue for creating the new man in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria justifies the increase of insecurity in Nigeria.

Akaruese (2011) succinctly observed that:

It is important to note that crises in any Nigerian University hardly attract attention and apprehension from the general public not until such takes the dimension of cessation of lectures and the usual accompanying return of students to their respective homes. When such occurs, particularly disruptions that are national in character, the reactions from the different

stakeholders are usually massive, diversified and determined; and in all most all cases, governments are usually adjudged culpable and always held responsible for precipitating crises in Universities... .

(P. 93)

The above statement is a fact because there is no justification for the Nigerian government to allow the doors of Universities to be closed for more than six months as a result of the insincerity of government towards the implementation of agreement signed with Academic Staff Union of Universities (Asuu) since 2009.

In most cases, when the universities are closed down, students more than ever become willing tools for various conflicts and crises which impact negatively on the security of the nation. The same is also true of the nations primary and secondary schools, there are obvious harsh environmental teaching and learning conditions all over the country. Nwogu, (2006) while lamenting on the deplorable state of infrastructure in Nigerian schools stated:

Most of the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are ugly sights to passers-by. In most of these schools, there are de-roofed buildings, broken – down vehicles, typewriters, chairs and tables, doors and windows, walls, duplicating machines and photo copying machines without replacement etc. some students learn under mango trees as classrooms while many of the pupils and students seat on the floor to write.... The roofs are leaking while the walls are deeply cracked showing signs that without divine intervention, a repeat of “sakwe” episode in Port Harcourt is near.

(p. 131)

The sakwe incident in Port Harcourt refers to the collapse of a private school storey building which led to the untimely death of over two hundred pupils, these hard and deplorable environmental conditions create and build solid foundations for students indiscipline which culminate into crisis, conflict and insecurity which express themselves in forms of violence, mindless killing, terrorism, corruption, arson, hatred, unpatriotism, kidnapping, pipeline vandalization, bombings and religious intolerance.

Omoni (2013) warned that any society that fails to guarantee and maintain a steady means of livelihood is laying a foundation for insecurity which manifests itself in violence, war, rape, robbery, youth restiveness, terrorism, wanton destruction of lives and property, examination malpractice, stealing, abduction, prostitution and thurgery.

To further strengthen the state of conflict and crises in Nigeria Osaigbovo (2013) highlighted the views of Ihedike (2004) who gave a catalogue of conflicts and crises in Nigeria between 1999 and 2002 as shown below:

S/N	LOCATION	DATE	GROUPS INVOLVED
1	Ogun (Imosan)	Nov. 9, 1999	Hausa/Fulani Moslems vs Oro cult members.
2	Delta	Nov. 11, 1999	Itsekiri vs Urhobo
3	Lagos	Nov. 27, 1999	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas.
4	Kwara	Dec. 19, 1999	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas
5	Oyo	Feb. 21, 2000	Hausa/Fulani vs others
6	Kaduna	Feb. 21, 2000	Hausa/Fulani vs others
7	Abia	Feb. 28, 2000	Reprisal violence on Hausa/Fulani moslems
8	Rivers	Mar.18, 2000	Eleme vs Okirika
9	Borno (Dambe)	Mar. 28, 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
10	Oyo (Saki)	April. 24, 2000	Hausa/Fulani vs Christians
11	Onitsha	May 2000	Hausa/Fulani vs Igbos.
12	Oyo (Saki)	May 6, 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
13	Abia (Aba)	May 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Igbo
14	Kaduna	May. 20, 2000	Hausa/Fulani vs Igbos.
15	Ogun (Sagamu)	July 18, 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas.
16	Kano	July 12, 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas
17	Lagos	Oct. 15, 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas
18	Oyo (Ibadan)	Oct. 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas.
19	Lagos (Alaba rag)	Oct. 16, 2000	Hausa/Fulani vs Igbos.
20	Lagos	Oct. 17 2000	Hausa/Fulani vs Odua Peoples Congress.
21	Kwara	Oct. 17 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas.
22	Niger (Minna)	Oct. 2000	Nupe vs Hausa/Fulani moslems
23	Lagos	Nov. 25, 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas.
24	Katsina	April 7, 2000	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Katafs.
25	Kaduna (Zango Kataf)	April 24, 2000	Ikulu vs Bajju

26	Bauchi (Tafawa Balewa)	June 18, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
27	Gombe	June 18, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
28	Nassarawa	June 29, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
29	Jigawa	July, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
30	Binium Gwari	August 7, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
31	Jos	Sept. 7, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
32	Taraba	Sept. 8, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
33	Zamfara (Gusau)	Oct. 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs others.
34	Delta	Oct. 10, 2001	Itsekiri vs Urhobo
35	Kano	Oct. 12, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Christians.
36	Benue	Oct. 12, 2001	Jakun vs Tiv
37	Osun (Osogbo)	Nov. 29, 2001	Yoruba fundamentalist vs Cristians.
38	Jos	Dec. 29, 2001	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Birom/Anaguta/Irigwe
39	Delta	Jan. 2002	Itsekiri vs Urhobo
40	Lagos	Feb. 2, 2002	Hausa/Fulani moslems vs Yorubas.

Source: Osaigbovo. J.A. (2013). Conflict and Crisis Management for National Security in Nigeria. Paper presented at the 2013 Annual Conference of the institute of education, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. (P 5-7).

For education to respond to the needs of the society educational managers must apply strategies towards the management of conflicts. Education is the only instrument for managing security challenges in Nigeria. This is because security challenges start from schools in the form of bullying, exposure to violent films, poor parental and rearing practices, peer group influence, unpopular and harsh school rules and regulations amongst others. These challenges have gradually escalated to incidence of armed robbery, unemployment oil bunkering, kidnapping, militancy, ethnic and religious crises and Boko Haram insurgencies in various parts of Northern Nigeria.

3. The Role of Educational Managers

Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in all organizations because its function is based on adjustments and compromises among the various members of the organization. Often times it comes as a result of change or frustration which produces aggression and antagonism, societies, the world over acknowledge the role of education in transformation and development. This implies that societal problems are to be solved through educational programmes. At the head of these educational institutions are the educational managers, they include vice chancellors, provosts, rectors, principals, headmasters and other principal officers in the managerial process. The functions of such leaders include planning, coordination, direction, communication, motivation, decision-making, staffing curriculum monitoring and implementation among others.

In view of these varying roles and the complex nature of organizational members – (academic and non-academic staff, students and limited resources), the educational manager should play the following roles in the management of crisis and conflict for national security.

4. Identification of Conflict Areas:

One of the greatest roles of the educational manager is the identification of conflict and crisis issues. Early identification of conflict and crisis areas within our educational institution will lead to the prevention of crisis before they become magnified. This is necessary because conflicts and crisis have remote and immediate causes. When they are detected at their early stages, they can be prevented.

Involvement of students in entrepreneurial skills: Educational managers can manage conflict in schools and society by ensuring that entrepreneurial education is properly implemented and that students are involved in the acquisition of skills, this will reduce conflicts and crisis and insecurity because the students as well as graduates will be productive and also economically secured.

Provision of Counselling Services: the provision of guidance and counseling services will help in the actualization of the goals of the national policy on Education which focuses on the inculcation of:

- (a) Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual
- (b) Faith in man's ability to make national decisions
- (c) Moral and spiritual principle in inter – personal and human relations,
- (d) Shared responsibility for the common good of society; promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children and
- (e) Acquisition of competences necessary for self – reliance. (FRN 2004)

In order to achieve these, the educational manager must coordinate and supervise the teaching – learning process and also have well equipped guidance and counseling centres.

Team building: Team work help individuals who have complementary skills and are committed to a common purpose and goals to work in synergy and be mutually accountable, Armstrong (2009) submitted that in order to achieve this, leaders must realize that:

- (a) The group exists to achieve a common purpose and hence ensure that the purpose is achieved.
- (b) The objectives must be held together
- (c) Individuals have their own needs which need to be satisfied.

Educational managers must therefore take necessary steps to harmonize these needs and any neglect can lead to conflicts.

Provision of Facilities: One of the problems of, and causes of crisis and conflicts in the schools and society is the absence or lack of facilities. Educational managers should ensure that facilities are provided.

Arbitration, Negotiation and Dialogue: Educational managers should employ arbitration, negotiation and dialogue in dealing and handling conflict and crisis situations in institutions of learning. Opukri and Etekpe (2008) posited that one of the strategies for peace building includes accommodation, compromise reconciliation, impartiality, moderation and separation.

Legislations: Educational managers must enact appropriate legislations that will prevent conflict and crisis in Nigeria schools. During the 70s and 80s, it was a crime to involve oneself in hot arguments and fights in Nigerian schools.

Those who were caught in such crimes were rusticated from schools. It served as deterrent to others.

Good Leadership: Educational managers must exhibit appropriate leadership qualities which will serve as examples for students to emulate.

5. Conclusion

Nigeria has witnessed a harvest of conflicts which created a lot of security challenges. The educational institutions are not left out hence our institutions of learning have become centres of crises. Since the students are the future leaders, the result of these conflicts have added to the number of security challenges in the country. In order to curb this ugly trend, Educational Managers must apply pragmatic approaches towards the management of conflicts and security challenges in Nigeria

6. Recommendations

Based on the above the following recommendations are made;

- The government should provide seminars and conferences for Educational Managers on conflict management strategies.
- Educational Managers should ensure that Entrepreneurship education is introduced and made functional in all institutions for skills acquisition.
- The government should provide employment for graduates of our educational system
- There should be public enlightenment programmes on the evils of conflict and insecurity.
- Government should exert the political will and punish offenders no matter how highly placed.

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