

PERCEIVED TECHNIQUES IN MANAGING CONFLICT AND WORKERS' PRODUCTIVITY: FOCUS ON EDUCATIONAL SECTORS

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Abstract

This study investigated the techniques used in managing conflict and workers' productivity in the educational sector in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State. To achieve this purpose, two null hypotheses were formulated for the study. Literature review was carried out accordingly, and Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Two hundred and four (204) respondents were used for the study through multi-stage sampling. Questionnaires were the main instrument used for data collection. The data collected through the administration of the instrument were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis. The 0.05 level of significance was used for statistical testing of the hypotheses. It was found out that there was significant relationship between effective consultation and effective communication with workers' productivity during conflict. Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended that management of any institutions should consult with their staff before taking decisions, effective flow of communication should ultimately be encouraged to avoid internal rancor.



Introduction

In essence, meeting the productivity mandate involves impacting requisite skills, knowledge, and attitude, to enable workers to realize their potential and become discipline. Despite the effort of government to maintain educational standards in higher institutions, the goal is yet to be achieved and it is obvious that when skills are acquired and applied appropriately, policy makers and other beneficiaries have confidence in the outcome to solve problems. The expectation of every employer is to have a workforce of highly performing individuals so as to meet their organizational goals concerning productivity. The dependence of organizations on their employees' job performance levels is because of the fact that the net job performance of the employees decides the organization's productivity level

and its competitiveness with other organizations that specialize in rendering similar products and services. Some employees with the aim of attaining higher productivity end up saddling employees with some work in overloads in order to meet deadlines and this might have psychological and physical effects on the employees and this may result in something contrary to what the organizations want to achieve.

Conflict as the name implies is a state of discord by the actual or opposing power which arises from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and groups in the organization or social environment. This is so because change in the social environment, either as change in different ideologies, beliefs, principles or social status develop a sense of tussle and

disagreement between parties. Otite and Albert (1999) cited in Edoho (2015) submitted that the most quoted traditional definition of conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of opponents are eliminated by rivals. In this sense, perceived techniques in managing conflict may be seen as models, strategies that are applied in a way to settling problems in an institutions.

Workers' productivity in a layman terms, is the measure of quantity and quality of work done considering the cost of resources it took to do the work. It refers to the work-related activities expected of an employee and how well those activities are executed (Konings & Vanormelingen 2010). This researcher observed that workers' level of productivity has extending far downward due to ineffectiveness of workers', lack of readiness to work, inaccessibility, unwanted form of illness owing to depression that comes from work, family, society etc. others are, converting annual leave into money in order to meet with every day challenges, and using old methods to work for years without skills acquisition to suit the job. Indices that can help to assess the productivity of workers in an institutions are; effective flow of communication, consultation with staff over important issues, remuneration, motivation, focus, attendance, initiative, reliability, willingness to work, quality of work, level of knowledge and teamwork. According to Patra and Bartaki (2009), productivity could be attained using the following;

1. Leadership Commitment: A continuous improvement approach that requires commitment from top management to the lowest level workers.
2. Reward of people and the giving of positive reinforcement in order to drive success: Staff are the key factors that bring about change. So every establishment should be upright to reward staff at the right time.

3. Investment in in-service training: Process training development will help the staff to be highly and contemporarily equip to manage office challenges.

Effective Communication is the process of transmitting information or message from one person to another and from one location to another (Inyang, 2002). This implies that in any communication process, there must be understanding which shows the consequence of communication. Inyang, Oden and Esu (2003) define communication as the process by which a sender transmits a message through a medium to a receiver with mutual understanding. Communication is also essential as it binds every staff together starting from the top to the bottom rank and ensuring the right information reaches the right people on time. It influences thought, feelings and actions and align them to objectives. It acts as a vital link between all segments of the organizational framework.

The purpose of communication in any organization, be it written, verbal and non – verbal is to facilitate achievement of co-operate objectives.

Onuoha and Kayode (2000) in their definition of business communication noted that organizational communication involves information exchange that takes place in an organized business environment, the purposes is informing, inquiring, persuading or stimulating action or extending good will to people. Thus, business communication is carried out to achieve several objectives. These are;

- a) Transmission of orders and instructions.
- b) Facilitation of adequate reporting on how things are going on. This provides information required for decision making and control by management.
- c) Passage of information and advice from specialists to managers in – charge of operations.

- d) Appraisal of performance by individual employees; with this, management gathers information about problems, achievements and prospects of individuals employees on the job.

Organizational communication takes place in four distinct directions and flows downward, upward, horizontal and diagonal. The downward flow of information refers to the flow of communication from the superior to subordinate employees in an organization. This may be in the form of job instruction (how to perform a task). Upward flow refers to the flow of information from subordinate employees to the superior officer, this could be in the form of progress report on job performance. Horizontal, lateral or sideward communication is of the flow that takes place between people on the same level in the organizational hierarchy. This form promotes co-ordination and teamwork, allows for interaction among peers and provide social and emotional support for employees. Diagonal communication on the other hand occurs between people who are neither in the same department nor on the same hierarchical level. This form of communication facilitates efficiency (Inyang, 2003).

Effective Consultation is the process by which management discusses the development of systems, policies, practices and issues of mutual concern with employees or their representatives. It involves seeking acceptable solutions to problems through genuine exchange of views and information (Department of Mines and Petroleum, 2009). According to Dix and Oxenbridge (2003) consultation involves listening to employees engaging with their observations and suggestions and genuinely considering their views before reaching a final consideration. This implies employees or their representatives need sufficient time to engage their workforce as a whole, and to reflect and report on their observations. Consultation is not about reaching agreement at all costs, it is about consulting before one makes the final decision that he or she has the responsibility to make, as an administrator (Dix and Oxenbridge

2003). Consultation should not be mistaken, however, it does not remove the right of management. They must still make the final decision but views of employees must be sought and considered on issues that affect the employees. An important principle of consultation is reaching when an agreeable outcome on issues, or topics, that are satisfactory to all parties and persons, is reached and moves towards a safe and healthier work environment made. This consultation has objectives of bringing employers and employees or proposal at hand together who have vested interest on the issue. It aims at involving those affected by the proposal and promoting understanding between affected parties and ensuring that the broader views of those affected are taken into account when developing a proposal or working through an issue (Department of Mines & Petroleum, 2009).

Nicholas, Walters and Tasiran (2007) identified a set of preconditions necessary for effective worker consultation.

- 1) A strong legislative spirit.
- 2) An effective external inspection and control.
- 3) Demonstration of seniority of management commitment and sufficient capacity to adopt and support participative management.
- 4) A competent management of hazard and risk evaluation and control.
- 5) An effective autonomous worker representation at the workplace and external trade union support.

Nicholas, Walters and Tasiran (2007), Dix and Oxenbridge (2003) identified the following as core features or elements of effective consultation and information at work.

- i) The strong, demonstrable commitment to informing and consulting employees through management and employees representatives.
- ii) Issues addressed by information and consultation mechanisms must be central to the needs of the organization

- and relevant to needs of employees.
- iii) Information needs to be clear, timely and be provided on regular bases whenever the feedback is structured.
 - vi) Long – term effectiveness of information and particularly consultation arrangements must be secured through regular view of coverage scope, issues and processes.
 - v) Consultation with workers must encourage a more flexible working environment. (Pg 13-16) Employers must help to promote a supportive working environment among their staff and also develop flexible policies and practices (Department of Mines & Petroleum, 2009).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine the extent to which techniques used in managing conflict can influence workers' productivity in the educational sector. Specifically, the study seeks to determine;

- 1 the relationship between effective consultation and junior workers productivity.
- 2 the relationship between effective communication and junior workers productivity.

Research questions

- 1 what is the relationship between effective consultation and junior workers productivity?
- 2 is there any relationship between effective communication and junior workers productivity?

Statement of the hypotheses

- 1 there is no significant relationship between effective consultation and junior workers productivity.

- 2 there is no significant relationship between effective communication and junior workers productivity.

Research design

The design adopted in this study is ex-post - facto design. This method was preferred because there is no manipulation or control of independent variables since the manifestations had already occurred. (Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim, and Ekuri 2004).

Population of the study

The population of this study is made up of all the whole junior administrative staff of the 6 tertiary institutions in Cross River State. There are six tertiary institutions in Cross River State. These have administrative staff population of seven thousands eight hundred and sixteen staff (7,816).

Sampling techniques

Multi-stage sampling: This is a sampling techniques which afford the researcher the opportunity to intentionally include in sample element adjudged to satisfy certain pre-determine criteria based on the study purpose. (Idaka and Anagbogu,2012).

Sample

The sample for this study comprised two hundred and four (204) administrative staff. These were selected from an entire junior staff administrative enrolment of six thousand eight hundred and thirty seven (6,837). This was done using the multi-staged sampling techniques. This figure (6,837) represent 3% of the distribution as drawn from the three selected tertiary institutions only.

Presentation of results

In this section, each of the study hypothesis is re-stated in the null form. The result of data analysis carried out to test is then presented as below. Each hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis to determine the relationship between effective consultation and administrative staff productivity (N=204)

Variables	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value
Effective consultation	4473	1634	197125	0.36*
Administrative staff productivity	7005	2546		

*Significant at .05 level, critical $r = .138$, $df = 202$

The result in table 1 reveals the calculated r-value of 0.36 to be higher than the critical r-value of 0.138 at .05 level of significance with 202 degree of freedom. By this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore means that effective consultation has a significant relationship with administrative staff productivity.

Hypothesis two

The null hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis to determine the relationship between effective communication and administrative staff productivity (N=204)

Variables	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value
Effective communication	4294	1626	197092	0.39*
Administrative staff productivity	7005	2546		

*Significant at .05 level, critical $r = .138$, $df = 202$

The result in Table 2 reveals the calculated r-value of 0.36 to be higher than the critical r-value of 0.138 at .05 level of significance with 202 degree of freedom. By this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore means that effective communication has a significant relationship with administrative staff productivity.

Summary of the study

The thrust of this study was to investigate those techniques used in managing conflict and administrative staff productivity in educational sector of Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of this study the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between effective consultation and administrative staff productivity.

2. There is no significant relationship between effective communication and administrative staff productivity.

Conclusion

Based on results of the study the following conclusions were reached.

Findings of this study revealed that techniques used in managing conflict are significantly related to administrative staff productivity in the Southern Senatorial District in Cross River State, hence, there is need to improve on communication and consultation, as the basic techniques of managing conflict in the educational sector. The federal and state governments, education administrators, and the national universities commission should harmonize needs of individual workers with those of governments. The study has been able to reveal the need for administration and government to ensure conflict free institutions, conducive and acceptable conflict resolutions

strategies, to enable them put in their best and bring about higher worker productivity. Time wasted on conflict for weeks and sometimes months has cumulative effect on students over all achievement in colleges.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

- 1 Administration of different organization should avoid distortion of information on labour policies and programmes before having it disseminated to administrative staff, since that could cause the employer(s) and employees representatives to meet regularly on round table issues.
- 2 The administration should also ensure that there is free flow of communication between management and staff for a harmonious working relationship.
- 3 Workers should be motivated through granting of leave, study fellowship, payment of responsibility allowance and excess workload allowance.
- 4 It will be to the interest of the organization when workers are given privilege to in - service training which bring about new ideas, new techniques, new approaches and high productivity.
- 5 Workers participation in decision making should be seen as a responsibility of workers to contribute their own quota to the running of the organization in order to ensure workers retention and hospitality in the place of work.

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