



Keywords

Conflict,
Educational System,
University,
Nigeria

Received: June 16, 2015

Revised: June 25, 2015

Accepted: June 26, 2015

Dynamics of Conflict in Nigerian Educational System: Evidence from Nigerian Universities

Aina Simeon Abiodun¹, Awolusi Olawumi Dele²,
Odunlami Samuel Abimbola³

¹Department of Business Administration and Management, South-western University Nigeria, Okun-Owa, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria

²Department of Business Administration, Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State, Nigeria

³Department of Business Administration, Southwestern University Nigeria, Okun-Owa, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria

Email address

ainasimeon@yahoo.com (A. S. Abiodun), awosco44@yahoo.com (A. O. Dele),

bimbosam2001@yahoo.ca (O. S. Abimbola)

Citation

Aina Simeon Abiodun, Awolusi Olawumi Dele, Odunlami Samuel Abimbola. Dynamics of Conflict in Nigerian Educational System: Evidence from Nigerian Universities. *International Journal of Energy Policy and Management*. Vol. 1, No. 2, 2015, pp. 33-42.

Abstract

Conflict is any form of disagreement between two or more parties. Conflict occurs in the Nigerian school system from time to time. The problem of education funding has been over the years a subject of great concern to all stakeholders in the education sector. The magnitude of this problem has consistently led to strikes by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), NASU, and other bodies coordinating the grievances of the workers. Poor management of conflicts has led to low productivity among staff, closing down of schools, dismissal of staff and students found guilty, and delay in promotion of staff which has hampered the smooth and effective administration of educational institutions in Nigeria. The objective of the study is to investigate the causes of conflict in Nigerian universities. The study used scholarly journals on conflicts in Nigerian universities. All Nigerian universities have experienced one form of conflict or the other. From the exploratory literature, the study discovered that causes of conflict in Nigerian universities include competition for scarce resources, perceived goal incompatibility, drives for autonomy and academic freedom, management style of universities, difference in values and lifestyles, politics and national issues, and communication barrier. The study conclude that conflict cannot be eliminated in Nigerian universities but if properly managed under a good university administration it will result in the peace and progress of Nigerian universities.

1. Introduction

In enhancing national development, organizations have several roles to play. In pursuance of these roles, conflict tends to set in. Conflict is a state of disharmony that could be brought about by differences of impulses, desires or tendencies (Canavan and Monahan, 2001; Desivilya, 1998; Rayeski and Bryant, 1994). It is a form of disagreement between two or more parties (Ibukun, 1997; Gay, 1996). It could mean strife, controversy, discord of action, antagonism of interest (Abdu-Raheem, 2004; Hunts, 1992). Owens (1995) was of the view that conflict occurs whenever incompatible activities occur. It could result from an argument with a co-worker (Adeyemi, 2009; Ibukun, 1997). Thus, in the Nigerian school system, conflict occurs from time to time.

It is the art of coming into collision, clash or be in opposition with one another. It is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feels that their needs or desires are likely to be denied (Sessa, 1996; Canavan and Monahan, 2001 as cited in Adeyemi, 2009).

Conflict is a recurring decimal in all human relationships, be it in the family, institution or organization. The school, like any other modern institution is not without potential negative features, incompatible behaviours and conflicts which might be counter-productive and give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness or dysfunctional consequences in the achievement of goals and objectives (Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem, and Odigwe, 2013).

Given that conflict is inevitable in any organization and the school is not an exception, the crucial question is, how to react to, respond to and manage conflicts so that positive changes will be realized and negative effects minimized. Poor management of conflict in school administration may result in deficiencies in the performance of the school both in terms of discipline and academic proficiency (Uchendu et al, 2013; Jennsen., Van., and Veenstra, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is an attendant feature of human interaction and cannot be eliminated; however, its proper management and transformation are essential for peace and progress in human society (Ndum and Stella-Maris, 2013; Rayeski and Bryant, 1994). It has been observed that Nigerian universities has for decades been faced with so many crisis ranging from conflict between academic staff and university administrators, students versus academic staff, students versus university authorities, non-academic staff versus university administrators. The conflicts have given rise to distrust and hostility among professionals and academics, thus, contributing in hampering smooth, effective and efficient administration in the universities. It also appeared that despite this situation, stakeholders in education seemed to develop non-challant attitude towards these conflicts. If this role conflict is not checked it can be descriptive and negative as people involved will often see one another as enemies. This is unwholesome for the University community and Nigeria educational system as a whole (Ndum and Stella-Maris, 2013; Sessa, 1996).

The success of any organization is not only determined by the quality of personnel available, but how well these human resources are harnessed and coordinated towards realizing the goal of the organization. Among the problems that militate against effective personnel management in the Nigerian school system include inadequate financing, lack of relevant training and induction, disagreement on policy matters, poor condition of service, lack of trust, ambiguity in policy interactions, dictation from the political class, and violent trade unionism (Owojori and Asaolu, 2010).

The incessant strikes by academic staff union of universities (ASUU), NASU, and senior staff association of Nigerian universities (SSANU) due to non-fulfillment of one

need or the other by the management and proprietors of such universities which have disrupted the school calendar and academic excellence are fast paving way for mediocrity and academic backwardness. There is hardly a full academic session that student and staff crises will not result in loss of studies, delayed graduation for students and economic waste for students, parents and the country as a whole (Oyetakin, Alabi, and Kayode, 2012).

The problem of education funding has been over the years a subject of great concern to all stakeholders in the sector. The magnitude of this problem has consistently led to strikes by Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), NASU, and other bodies coordinating the grievances of the workers (Oyeniran, 2013).

Experience has shown that the intrigue within the university system is fallout of the politics of external environment. The appointment of the vice chancellor in most Nigerian universities appears a major source of conflict, due to the habit of imposing vice chancellors on the university system by the government. According to Idumange (2002) some vice chancellors get appointed for political expediency and the overzealous ones among them set goals that are utopian while few of them render the university system hot beds of politics (Ibiam, 2014). Ayandele (2001) cited in Ibiam (2014) described what is left of the Nigeria's universities as the laughing-stock of the world universities today which include among others; the romance of professors with the political ruling elites, internal siege laid on the system by staff unions, the role of the vocal minority in university governance and loss of grip over students.

This paper investigated the causes of conflict in Nigerian universities. For this purpose, this paper is structured into five sections: first section focuses on the general introduction; second section focuses on the review of literature; the third section focuses on the methodology; the fourth section focuses on the data analysis, results, and discussion; while the last section presents the conclusion and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Conflicts are inevitable part of organizational life since the goals of different stakeholders such as managers and staffs are often incompatible. Conflict is an unpleasant fact in any organization as long as people compete for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security. Organizational conflict can be regarded as a dispute that occurs when interests, goals or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible with each other (Tjosvold., Dann. and Wong, 1992). This results into a situation whereby they frustrate each other in an attempt to achieve their objectives. Conflict arises in groups because of the scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. People who value independence tend to resist the need for interdependence and, to some extent, conformity within a group. People who seek power

therefore struggle with others for position or status within the group (Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez, and Ajemunigbohun, 2010).

Conflict is a part of organizational life and may occur between individuals, between the individual and the group, and between groups. While conflict is generally perceived as dysfunctional, it can also be beneficial because it may cause an issue to be presented in different perspectives. Conflict has both positive and negative effects. It can be positive when it encourages creativity, new looks at old conditions, the clarification of points of view, and the development of human capabilities to handle interpersonal differences. Conflict can be negative when it creates resistance to change, establishes turmoil in organization or interpersonal relations, fosters distrust, builds a feeling of defeat, or widens the chasm of misunderstanding (Hotepo et al, 2010).

Conflict refers to all kinds of antagonistic interactions. Mitchell (1991) defines it as a situation in which two or more parties have incompatible objectives and in which their perceptions and behaviour are commensurate with that incompatibility. Consequently, there are several dimensions of conflict, firstly there is the dimension of antagonistic-psychological relations, secondly, the antagonistic behaviour only, thirdly, the antecedents, affective, cognitive and behavioural conditions (Mack, 1965). From the foregoing it may be easier to summarise the dimensions into; conflict situation (the basic incompatibility), conflict attitudes (range of psychological factors) and finally conflict behaviour (set of related behaviour) (Mitchell, 1991; Mack, 1965; Maier, 2010)

2.2. Types of Conflict

Conflict is a clear indication that something is wrong with the organization and that sound principles are not being applied in managing the activities of the organizations. Types of conflicts include: Intrapersonal conflict, Interpersonal conflicts, Real conflict, and Artificial conflict (Agbonna, 2009; Alabi 2002)

2.2.1. Intrapersonal Conflict

This occurs within the person. Examples of such conflicts are conflicts that emerge over the use of equipments in the school, choice of topic for research projects, choice of spouse, moral questions, low self-esteem, and poor financial status (Onyebuchi, 2009).

2.2.2. Interpersonal Conflicts

Interpersonal conflicts are conflicts between two or more people. It can result when values, beliefs and attitude do not fit together, for example, conflict between the principal of a school and the members of staff over the criteria for promotion of students at the end of a session (Onyebuchi, 2009).

2.2.3. Real Conflict

Real conflict occurs when goals or behaviours are incompatible because of struggle for power and resources (Onyebuchi, 2009).

2.2.4. Artificial Conflict

Artificial conflict is a type of conflict whereby an individual member in an organization believes he can gain respect within the group by lowering the credibility of another individual of the same group (Burgon, Heston, and McCroskey, 1994 as cited in Onyebuchi, 2009).

Sources of conflicts include differences in personality traits, differences in background, differences in values, poor communication skills, differences in perceptions, differing view, points, emotions, and attitudes. Ezenwa (1998), indicated that other sources of conflict in school include: non-involvement of teachers in decision making process, lateness to duty, formation of cliques by staff, poor discharge of duties and poor academic background of school administrators (Onyebuchi, 2009).

2.3. Causes of Conflict in Nigerian Universities

As in many developing countries, Nigerian higher institutions witness series of organizational conflicts. Many of the conflicts lead to anarchy on campuses; some disorganize timing of school activities, destruct life and properties and in most cases, render school environments completely insecure for serious academic activities. In addition to these, many known school conflicts have resulted in protracted disharmony in school staff interpersonal relationship, increased indiscipline among students, disarmed school authorities, clogged channel of progressive communication and rendered institutions of learning ungovernable (Agbonna, 2009; Alabi 2002; Oguntuase 1999; Olugbile, 2005 as cited in Fatile and Adejuwon, 2011). Potentials for conflicts are multifarious within the university system. Some of these are enumerated below: Competition for scarce resources, Perceived goal incompatibility, Drives for autonomy and academic freedom, Management style of universities, Difference in values and lifestyles, Politics and national issues, and Communication barrier (Agbonna, 2009; Alabi 2002)

2.4. Competition for Scarce Resources

Research, teaching, student amenities, staff pay and other welfare services all have their claims on the limited resources at the disposal of the university. Hence, there is deprivation (relative or absolute) of the needs of all the groups within the system. The consequences of inadequate provision of financial resources to the university system are the decay of structures and the decline in services and functions. According to Sanda (1992) as cited in Alabi (2002), there is direct connection between deprivation which leads to frustration, and aggression. The conflicts which result from the frustrated are often directed against the defined aggressors or perpetrators of the undesirable state of affairs. Gross mismanagement of available resources could also result in conflicts. These conflicts could take the form of strikes, demonstration, boycott of lectures and violent riots (Alabi, 2002).

2.5. Perceived Goal Incompatibility

The potential for conflict is likely to be high where groups or individuals perceive and interpret the same phenomenon differently. In the university system, attention needs to be focused on the critical point of contact between the teacher and the learner. The psychology of learning suggests that students will not learn well unless they are actively involved in the process, and so accept responsibility for their learning activities. So, if students do really feel that they are learning, much else will be forgiven. If not, they need to be listened to; otherwise, as posited by Geoffery (1977), they are going to find some other way to attract attention to themselves (Alabi, 2002).

2.6. Drives for Autonomy and Academic Freedom

Autonomy drives are those when one group either seeks to exercise control over some activity that another party regards as its own domain or seeks to insulate itself from such control (Idowu, 1985 as cited in Alabi, 2002).

Academic freedom, according to Sanda (1992), connotes freedom to organize the university, design and teach courses, associate with others, project, imbibe, exchange and hold ideas without any fear of harassment or victimization, and challenge established orthodoxies without any fear of contradiction, all in the pursuit of truth.

However, events such as outright ban of university staff and students' associations, fear of premature retirement, or rationalization of programmes as a result of government overregulation all result in decreasing autonomy, decline in morale, goal displacement and ultimately, conflicts (Alabi, 2002).

2.7. Management Style of Universities

Though a university is an academic enterprise, a lot of academic effectiveness rests on administrative support machinery. Hence, the management competencies of university managers determine to a large extent, the severity of conflicts within the university, irrespective of the origin of the conflict (internal or external). Managers who have tendencies to authoritarianism and dogmatism are particularly conflict-prone. Equally prone to conflicts, according to Miner (1973), are those with low self-esteem and a disposition to distrust and suspicion (Alabi, 2002).

In university administration, eight spheres are identified for the goal of quality education to be attained (Sanda, 1991). These spheres are finances, students, academic programme, committee system, personnel, welfare, reward system and physical facilities. Any significant lapse (s) in any of these areas might lead to a revolt. Role ambiguity/role dissatisfaction, conflicts occur when the role prescriptions are vague and uncertain. This is usually characterized by loose-lying power where various groups and individuals seek to grasp the power. Also, employees dissatisfied with their roles as defined by the organization are likely to be involved in conflicts. For instance, the non-academic staffs are the

relatively low-income group who might find it difficult to get direct financial and psychological rewards from working harder or better (since the productivity of the university workers is not easily quantified, as in other enterprises). The major manifestations of conflicts caused by dissatisfaction are failure or refusal to work, either temporarily or permanently, resulting in absenteeism or separation (Alabi, 2002).

2.8. Difference in Values and Lifestyles

Probably because of the concentration of young adolescents, possibly experiencing freedom and independence for the first time, the university campuses are filled with and threatened by, noise, aggressive styles of dress, sexual behaviours, aesthetics and secret peer associations (e.g. cultism). The older members - academic and administrators - impose rules and regulations. The young may answer back by demanding for, and claiming, their democratic rights, culminating in minor conflicts or even ghastly skirmishes between the students and the university authority (Alabi, 2002).

2.9. Politics and National Issues

In addition to conflicts arising from situations intrinsic to the university, some arise due to political objectives outside the university. Political control of education in terms of financial and administrative policies brings about conflicts between the university and the government. The Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Education and National Universities Commission (NUC), controls the structure, curriculum, budget and calendar of the universities. Also through the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), all admissions to the universities are controlled and manipulated (Quota system). A new dimension to this control is the appointment of sole administrators (Military and Civilian) to run the universities (Major General Mamman Kotangora (rtd) for Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and Professor Gomwalk for University of Nigeria, Nsukka, from 1995 (Alabi, 2002).

Moreover, national issues, especially with political undertones, do bring about conflict. For instance, the issue of annulled June 12, 1993 Presidential elections brought about violent demonstrations of university students against the state, resulting to deaths, destruction and frequent disruptions of academic calendar. Furthermore, in a society filled with frustrating potentials, such as underdevelopment, and inflation due to price hike in petroleum products, government action or inaction can compel the people to direct their aggressions at agencies of the state, at the slightest sign of provocation (Alabi, 2002).

2.10. Communication Barrier

Poor communication, communication overload, total absence of information or feedback mechanism, poor perception pernicious, ambiguity in communication and ignorance can degenerate into either conflict or crises. Thus,

the basic problem of interpersonal communication could played up and lead to conflict. Communication conflict usually arises from misunderstanding in the communication process – transmission of messages and meaning from one person to another. This is usually due to lack of well-defined communication network in a school organization. Inadequate systems of communication on educational institution policies, changes in working practices and the introduction of new policies affecting the lives of staff lead to disputes, feelings of insecurity, confusion and resentment among staff. Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) as cited in (Mukoro, 2013) identified communication gap between management and workers as the leading cause of conflict in the universities. Also, Adegun (2002) identified communication lapses as a problem to administrative effectiveness in Nigerian institutions of learning. This suggests that communication gap between management and staff might cause conflict and adversely affect administrative effectiveness in the universities (Mukoro, 2013).

3. Methodology

The study used scholarly journals and articles to investigate the causes of conflict in Nigerian universities.

4. Discussion of Findings

All Nigerian universities have experienced one form of conflict or the other. Causes of conflict in Nigerian universities include competition for scarce resources, perceived goal incompatibility, drives for autonomy and academic freedom, management style of universities, difference in values and lifestyles, politics and national issues, and communication barrier.

Conflict has led to low productivity among staff, closing down of schools, dismissal of staff and students found guilty, and delay in promotion of staff which has hampered the smooth and effective administration of educational institutions in Nigeria. However, provision of basic amenities, payment of staff salary as at when due, promotion of staff as at when due, setting up of committees to resolve conflicts, dialogue between staff, students, and school administrators, involvement of staff and students to participate in decision making concerning the effective and efficient administration of schools will help to resolve conflict in the Nigerian universities.

4.1. Conflict Management in Nigerian Universities

Efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society, but the prevailing situations in Nigeria constitute a reversal of this reality. Many Nigerian schools - higher or lower levels of school have been experiencing organizational conflicts and insecurity that in most cases hinder them from achieving the purpose for which they were established (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2011).

The unwholesome disharmony in Nigerian tertiary institutions can be reduced drastically by adopting and implementing the following strategies:

1. Proper funding of the university system
2. Principles of democratic governance
3. Better condition of service for staffers
4. Conducive teaching-learning environment
5. Better information channel
6. Dialogue between school authority and students
7. Investment in training and development of university staff

4.2. Proper Funding of the University System

Nigerian universities need to be adequately funded as the gross underfunding of the system has been rendering the university incapacitated. Funds should be made available to the universities as and when due so that the university managers can give prompt attention to the needs of the university staffers. While this is done, trade union disputes will be minimised. In addition, universities should also seek alternative sources of revenue generation to augment whatever the government allocates to them. Besides the issue of proper funding is the principle of accountability and transparency. There is the need for accountability and transparency on the part of the university administrators. Unions will always complain when they are ‘kept in the dark’ as regards how fund allocated to the university system is being spent. There is the need for an effective monitoring of the fund allocated to the sector. Mgbekem (2004) suggested that a reliable accounting system should be established in each Nigerian university in order to guarantee accountability, honesty and transparency (Ekundayo, 2012).

4.3. Principles of Democratic Governance

There is the need for the university administrators to embrace the spirit of democratic governance in their day-to-day administration. Democratic governance presupposes that: (i) the major unions in the school system should be carried along in the scheme of administration. This will help erase prejudice; (ii) there is the need to enhance existing avenues for regular consultations and dialogue between the unions and the university administrators. This will also help in preventing conflicts; (iii) rigidity on the part of university administrators during negotiation should be eschewed; (iv) arbitrariness and high-handedness be eschewed by the administrators. It is imperative for the university administrators to show high level of maturity and understanding in dealing with staff unions whenever they make demands (Ekundayo, 2012).

4.4. Better Condition of Service for Staffers

Several literature has reviewed that prominent among the demands of the trade unions in the universities are better funding and better conditions of service for university workers. It is no understatement to say that lecturers in the nation’s universities are not well-remunerated compared to

their counterparts in other parts of the world. In order to attract best brains to the university system the personal emoluments of university staff needs to be reviewed upwardly. The university teacher, more than anybody else, needs a very peaceful, comfortable and conducive working environment to attain a healthy and efficient mind as the beacon of enlightenment (Ekundayo, 2012).

4.5. Conducive Teaching-Learning Environment

Another way to redress the wrangling between the trade unions in the universities and the university administrators is to improve the teaching-learning environment. Dilapidated structures, obsolete laboratory and workshop equipment have converged to make teaching of poor quality. A massive overhaul of the infrastructure in the university system therefore becomes imperative. Bandele (2011) suggested that the quality of infrastructure in form of buildings, furniture, equipment, among others, must be assured in order to meet minimum standards (Ekundayo, 2012).

4.6. Better Information Channel

Information is very essential for organisational effectiveness. It is needed to avoid blocking of communication flow that may lead to difference in perceptions. Alibi (1999) submitted that effective Management Information System (MIS) is essential to provide requisite information which minimises delays and ensures maximum utilisation of resources (Ekundayo, 2012).

4.7. Dialogue Between School Authority and Students

Another effective way of curbing students' crisis is calling students for dialogue. A study carried out by Adeyemi, Ekundayo, and Alonge (2010) as cited in Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) revealed that maintaining a very cordial relationship between the school authorities and the students as well as involving students in decision making process have been the most effective strategies of curbing students' crisis. Also, Aluede (2001) as cited in Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) recommended, among other things, greater involvement of students in decision-making processes as a way of reducing campus unrest. In order to stamp out crisis from schools, Ladipo (1997) posited that there should be effective leadership among school authorities (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2011).

4.8. Investment in Training and Development of University Staff

Education managers should put in place workers' education programmes. The school administrators must increase the tempo of education, re-training and development of employees as education is a great tool of reviving thinking and ideas. More training and development will make employees to be sound in their imaginative and creative thought. Education in a way helps in finding out new and

better ways of doing things and how to apply them in the day to day duties of workers. In an effort of the management to minimize conflict in the school system, it must encourage and plan the education and re-training of employees for them to be creative and innovative. This is because creative and innovative workers will help managers introduce new ideas and sound ways of putting ideas into practice, rather than disrupting of organizational progress. This is probably why Deji-Folutile (2010) remarked that government should embark on a deliberate education of staff in area of ethnicity, nepotism and discipline in order to create an enabling environment for academic work to thrive (Mukoro, 2013).

4.9. Role of Staff Unions in Conflict Management in Nigerian Universities

Three prominent unions are recognized within the universities in Nigeria. They are the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), and Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU). The major objective of these unions is to protect the welfare of their members (Arikewuyo, 2014).

On ASUU, for instance, Iyayi (2002) says the union is a trade union, which like other trade unions is a "combination of workers or employers, whether temporary or permanent, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and conditions of the employment of workers" (Arikewuyo, 2014).

ASUU was formed in 1978, a successor to the Nigerian Association of University Teachers formed in 1965 and covering academic staff in the University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Ife and University of Lagos. ASUU was formed at the beginning of decline in the oil boom, when the country faced the consequences of failure of its rulers to use the oil wealth to generate production and a welfare system. Military dictatorship had deeply eroded the basic freedoms in the society; academic freedom and university autonomy were casualties of this military dictatorship. The funding of education of universities grew poorer. As a result, ASUU's orientation became radical, more concerned with broad national issues, and stood firmly against the oppressive, undemocratic policies of the governments of the country (Aidelunughene, 2014).

In 2007, ASUU went on strike for three months. In May 2008, ASUU held two one-week warning strikes to press for a range of demands including improved salary scheme and reinstatement of the 49 lecturers who were dismissed in University of Ilorin. In June 2009, ASUU ordered its members in federal and state universities nationwide to proceed on an indefinite strike over agreements it reached with the union about two and a half years earlier. After about three months of strike, ASUU and other staff unions signed a memorandum with the government in October 2009. On the 1st of July, 2013, ASUU commenced another strike because the Federal Government breached the 2009 agreements. ASUU strikes would be misunderstood if seen, only, from the point of view of salary increase by university lecturers. No, this current strike is far from this. It is about the restoration

of proper universities in Nigeria. ASUU believes that the Nigerian government should undertake to provide effective and efficient governance that is synonymous to measurable improvement in the quality of life of the people; increased life expectancy. The FGN should undertake to run proper universities and create enforceable code of conducts for university teachers. Of course, ASUU has the welfare of the generality of Nigerian's in all of her negotiations with government (Aidelunuoghene, 2014). This prolonged national strike by members of the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU), generated a lot of concerns among stakeholders in the education sector. In fact, there was unbridled anxiety, anger, uneasiness and frustration among university students, parents, clergies, traditional rulers, business men and women, civil society groups, civil servants and politicians who were enraged at what perceived as ASUU insensitivity towards the plights of students and parents despite Federal Government offer. Unfortunately, as Government remains relentless in brainwashing the minds of the public with highly orchestrated and opulent political propaganda and other form using public media. Most Nigerians never cared hoot to hear from the side of ASUU to get balanced, accurate and fair position of the issue. Noting that most people never bothered to know was that Government reneged on an agreement that it freely entered with the academic staff union in 2009 and equally repudiated the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of January 2012, which was initiated at the instance of Government. Maintaining its position and unwillingness to implement the provisions of the agreement, Government impressed it upon the public that some of the provisions in the agreement were not implementable whereas, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) maintained that Government should show integrity by implementing the 2009 agreement and the MOU of 2012 as the only way out of the impasse (Ineji, Basse-Dike, and Brown, 2014). Iyayi (2002) outlined the principles that guide ASUU as a union as follows: Integrity, transparency and accountability; Professionalism, objectivity and hardwork, Courage, sacrifice and total commitment, Internal democracy, teamwork and group solidarity, as well as Patriotism, anti-imperialism and working class solidarity.

In carrying out these principles, ASUU has been at loggerheads with both the government and university authorities. At the level of government, the union has always based its agitation on three major issues. These are: 1. funding of the system; 2. University autonomy; and 3. Conditions of service

The issue of funding has been a source of crisis in the Nigeria education system. Various organizations, parents, labour unions, etc., have at various fora pointed the attention of government to the poor funding of the system. ASUU, for instance, has gone on strike for several times, namely, in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2001, and 2003 to press home its demand for increased funding for the system. The contentious issue between the government and ASUU is that of conditions of service of academics. This area covers such areas as salary and allowances, retirement and pension,

appointment, discipline and promotion of staff, etc (Arikewuyo, 2014; Sanda and Awolusi, 2014;).

The Non-Academic Union of Allied and Education Institutions (NASU) is the association that represents the junior non-teaching staff in Nigerian universities. The union came into existence in 1977 as one of the house unions, and in 1978 it was strengthened by decree No. 22 (Davison, 1977; Asikhia and Awolusi, 2013). It was formally recognised as one of the 42 registered unions affiliated to Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). NASU serves a dual purpose. First, the union affords its members a feeling of job security, pursuing cases of unfair dismissal. Second, it provides a forum for members to satisfy psychological needs of belonging, leadership, esteem, etc (Adeniji and Adekunjo, 2010; Bens, 1999).

The principal objectives of the union are the regulation of relations between workers and the Governing Councils of the university. The Governing Councils and workers or their unions work towards eliminating exploitation in the workplace, as well as providing benefits to members. In the history of NASU, the union has fought a number of battles that have contributed to the welfare of their members. Osang (2002) says that in December 1992, when Prof Babatunde Fafunwa was Education Minister, the federal government approved a separate University salary table that favoured members of the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), when NASU heard of the disparity in the salary table, they embarked on a 42-day nationwide strike to demonstrate their disapproval of the action of the federal government, favoured the academic staff over the non-teaching staff, who are a majority of the workforce. Osang states further that in 1999, NASU presented a memorandum to the federal government to press home their demand for improved terms and conditions of services that will correct the problem created by the National Minimum Wages of General Abubakar on Elongated University Salary Scale (EUSS) in favour of the civil service salary table. The EUSS was restyled as the Harmonised Tertiary Institutions Salary Structure (HATISS) (Adeniji and Adekunjo, 2010; Bens, 1997).

When President Olusegun Obasanjo assumed the mantle of leadership in Nigeria, the minimum wage was negotiated with the trade unions under the umbrella of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). Individual workers are in a weak bargaining position with their employers when negotiating issue that affect them, but the union played dominant role of strengthening the position of workers in relation to employers. The unions at the university negotiate for the welfare of their members and serve as a platform for social interaction and education among members, by organising seminars, lectures, conference, and workshops. In addition, unions operate special loan plans to assist members in getting financial aid for emergency domestic needs. Moreover, NASU has also improved working conditions and raised the dignity of members through schemes such as the welfare system that the union operates by deducting a percentage from members' salaries. The scheme assists members after retirement before.

Some unions operate cooperative shops where essential commodities are sold at regulated prices. Some operate thrifts and credit societies where members can obtain loans with minimal interest and a convenient means of repaying (Adeniji and Adekunjo, 2010; Amason, 1996).

Other staff unions within the university system have often focused more on welfare and salary of members, rather than on the issues of funding and autonomy. Till date, only ASUU is perhaps the only union that has signed comprehensive agreements with governments on the vexed issues of funding, autonomy and conditions of services (Arikewuyo, 2014; Aghenta, 2001; Akinyemi, 2002).

Onyeonoru and Bankole (2001) as cited in Arikewuyo (2014) observed that much of the conflicts involving the government and non-academic staff unions emanate from the collective agreements reached between the government and ASUU, which the unions often regard as exclusionary. These have led to the popular parity conflicts in the universities that sometimes involve physical assaults (Arikewuyo, 2014; Adeyemi, 1998; Adeyemi, 2004).

4.10. Role of the Governing Council in Conflict Management in Nigerian Universities

The governing council is the governing authority of each University and has the custody, control and disposition of all property and finances of the University. The governing council plays the following roles in promoting peace in Nigerian universities:

1. Participates in the making, amendment or revocation of university statutes;
2. Governs, manages and regulates the finances, accounts, investments, property, business of the university and for that purpose appoints bankers and solicitors to audit the accounts of the university;
3. Determines in consultation with the senate all university fees;
4. Establishes after considering the recommendations of senate faculties, institutes, departments and prescribes their organizations, constitution and functions;
5. Authorizes after considering the recommendation of the senate the establishments for both academic and administrative staff and with the approval of the senate suspend, or abolish any academic post;
6. Regulates the salaries and determines the conditions of service of staff;
7. Exercises powers of removal from office and other disciplinary control on staff;
8. Institutes in consultation with the senate, fellowship, scholarship, prizes and other endowments;
9. Promotes and makes provision for research;
10. Supervises and controls the residence and discipline of students and makes arrangements for their health and general welfare; and
11. Provides for the welfare of all staff and their spouses, children and dependants including payment of pensions and other retirement benefits (Shu'ara, 2010; Adebayo,

2001; Adepaju, 1998).

5. Conclusion

Causes of conflict in Nigerian universities include competition for scarce resources, perceived goal incompatibility, drives for autonomy and academic freedom, management style of universities, difference in values and lifestyles, politics and national issues, and communication barrier. Conflict cannot be eliminated in Nigerian universities but if properly managed under a good university administration it will result in the peace and progress of Nigerian universities. Therefore, managers of Nigerian universities need the following for effective dispensation of his/her duties: Information, Skills, Values and Analytical mind. The interaction of these four factors would greatly help all stakeholders in carrying out their duties. Peace ensues when conflicts are adequately and promptly resolved and an environment of peace will bring about growth and development in Nigerian universities.

References

- [1] Abdu-Raheem BO (2004). "Conflict management by principals in Ekiti State public secondary schools" Unpublished M. Ed Thesis, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria 73-85.
- [2] Adebayo FA (2001). "School climate and students' academic performance in secondary schools" Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ado Ekiti, Ado Ekiti, 45-87.
- [3] Adepaju TL (1998) Fundamentals of School Administration, Planning and Supervision in Nigeria. Ibadan, Alafas Nigerian Company; 12-29; 51-76.
- [4] Adeyemi TO (1998). "Schools and teacher variable associated with the performance of students in the senior secondary certificate examinations in Ondo State Nigeria" Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hull, Kingston-Upon-Hull, United Kingdom 30-38: 262.
- [5] Adeyemi TO (2004). Educational administration, an introduction, Ado-Ekiti, Greenline Publishers 164 - 170.
- [6] Aghenta JA (2001). "Educational planning. A turning point in education and development in Nigeria" Inaugural Lecture Series 58, University of Benin, Benin-City; 2-16.
- [7] Akinyemi BL (2002). "Management of students' crises in higher institutions in Ekiti State" Unpublished M.Ed Thesis, University of Ado-Ekiti 58-83.
- [8] Amason AC (1996). "Distinguishing the effects of functional and dysfunctional conflict on strategic decision-making: Resolving a paradox for top management teams" Acad. Manage. J. 39(1): 23-148.
- [9] Adeniji, M.A. and Adekunjo, O.A. (2010). The Role and Impact of Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) in Two Nigerian Universities. *Library Philosophy and Practice*.
- [10] Adepaju, T.L. and Sofowora, A.O. (2012). Management of Conflict and Aggressive Behaviour by Administrators of Institutions of Higher Learning: The Case of Southwestern, Nigeria. *Review of Higher Education in Africa*, 4: 85-117.

- [11] Adeyemi, T.O. (2009). Principals' Management of Conflicts in Public Secondary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria: A Critical Survey. *Education Research and Review*, 4 (9): 418-426.
- [12] Aidelunuoghene, O.S. (2014). ASUU Industrial Actions: Between ASUU and Government Is It An Issue of Rightness? *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5 (6): 7-17.
- [13] Alabi, T.O. (2002). Conflicts in Nigerian Universities: Causes and Management. Retrieved from www.unilorin.edu.ng/.../education/.../CONFLICTS%20IN%20NIGERIA.
- [14] Arikewuyo, M.O. (2014). University Management and Staff Unions in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges. *SA-Educ Journal*, 3 (1): 15-22.
- [15] Asikhia, O. and Awolusi, O.D. (2013), "Conceptual Model of Conflict Resolution for Personal Assistants of Nigerian National Assembly Members", *European Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 5, No. 23, pp.45-52
- [16] Ayodele, J.B. and Adewumi, J.O. (2007). The Incidence and Management of Conflicts in Secular and Non-Secular Tertiary Institutions in South West, Nigeria. *Educational Research and Review*, 2 (5): 96-102.
- [17] Bens I (1997). "Facilitating conflict" in M. Goldman (Ed.), *Facilitating with ease! Sarasota, FL: Participative Dynamics* 83-108.
- [18] Bens I (1999). "Keeping your teams out of trouble". *J. Qual. Participation* 22(4): 45-47.
- [19] Canavan N, Monahan L (2001). Conflict Issues, MIE Centre for Education Services Capozzoli TK (1995) "Conflict resolution: A key ingredient in successful teams" *Supervision* 56(12): 3-5.
- [20] Desivilya HS (1998). "Using conflict in organizations". *Int. J. Conflict Manage.* 9(4): 369-376.
- [21] Ekundayo, H.T. (2012). Towards Strengthening the Relationship between Trade Unions and University Management in Nigeria. *African Research Review*, 6 (2): 266-273.
- [22] Fatile, J.O. and Adejuwon, K.D. (2011). Conflict and Conflict Management in Tertiary Institutions: The Case of Nigerian Universities. *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7 (1): 274-289.
- [23] Gay, L.R. (1996). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application* Fifth Edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, A Simon and Schuster Company 139-305.
- [24] Hotepo, O.M., Asokere, A.S.S., Abdul-Azeez, I.A., and Ajemunigbohun, S.S.A. (2010). Empirical Study of the Effect of Conflict on Organizational Performance in Nigeria. *Business and Economics Journal*, 15 (1): 1-8.
- [25] Hunts RS (1992). *Managing people at work*. London, McGraw Hill.
- [26] Ibukun WO (1997). *Educational Management: Theory and Practice* Ado-Ekiti, Bamigboye and Co., Press, Nigeria Ltd
- [27] Ibiyam, N. (2014). Quality Management of University Education in Nigeria: An Appraisal. *African Research Review*, 8 (3): 201-213.
- [28] Jennsen O, Van De Vliert E, Veenstra C (1999). "How task and person conflict shape the role of positive interdependence in management teams". *J. Manage.* 25(2): 117-141.
- [29] Rayeski E, Bryant JD (1994). "Team resolution process: A guideline for teams to manage conflict, performance and discipline" in M. Beyerlein and M. Bullock (Eds.). *The International Conference on Work Teams Proceedings: Anniversary Collection. The Best of 1990-1994* Denton: University of North Texas, Center for the Study of Work Teams 217.
- [30] Sanda, M. and Awolusi, O.D. (2014), "The effects of management use of motivation on workers' job commitment: an empirical investigation of tertiary institutions in South-western, Nigeria", *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research*, Vol. 8, No. 6, pp.581-597
- [31] Sessa VI (1996). "Using perspective taking to manage conflict and affect in teams". *J. Appl. Behav. Sci.* 32(1): 101-115.
- [32] Tjosvold D, Dann V, Wong C (1992). "Managing conflict between departments to serve customers: Human Relations 45(10): 1035-1054.
- [33] Mack, R.W.(1965). "The components of social conflict", *Social Problems*, 12(4): 388-397.
- [34] Maier, N.R.F. (2010). *Problem solving and creativity in individuals and groups*. Belmont: Brooks/Cole.
- [35] Mitchell, C.R.(1991) *The structure of international conflict*. London: Macmillan
- [36] Mukoro, A.S. (2013). Conflict Management and Resolution Strategies for Enhanced Personnel Productivity and Sustainable Administration in Higher Institutions in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 6 (4): 365-371.
- [37] Ndum, V.E. and Stella-Maris, O. (2013). Conflict Management in the Nigerian University System. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. 3 (8): 17-24.
- [38] Olaleye, F.O. and Arogundade, B.B. (2013). Conflict Management Strategies of University Administrators in South West, Nigeria. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2 (6): 96-104.
- [39] Onyebuchi, I.C. (2009). Conflict Management Strategies Used in Primary Schools in Anambra State. An M.ED Thesis done at Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka, Anambra State. Retrieved from www.naulibrary.org/dglibrary/admin/book_directory/.../10028.pdf
- [40] Owojori, A.A. and Asaolu, T.O. (2010). Critical Evaluation of Personnel Management Problems in the Nigerian School System. *International Journal of Education*, 2 (1): 1-11.
- [41] Oyeniran, O. (2013). ASUU Strike: Causes and Implication of Education Worker's Strike. Retrieved from www.omojuwa.com/.../asuu-strike-causes-and-implication-of-education-workers
- [42] Oyetakin, A.I., Alabi, F.O., and Kayode, J.S. (2012). Funding Patterns and Staff Conflicts in South West, Nigeria Public Universities. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2 (4): 245-250.

- [43] Shu'ara, J. (2010). Governance of Federal Universities in Nigeria- General Responsibilities of the Governing Council. *Being text of a Paper delivered at the Retreat for the Governing Council of the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta at the Lagos State Resource Centre, Akodo – Lekki, Epe Road on the 13th of May 2010.*
- [44] Uchendu, C.C., Anijaobi-Idem, F.N., and Odigwe, F.N. (2013). Conflict Management and Organizational Performance in Secondary Schools in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria. *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology and Educational Studies*, 2 (2): 67-71.