IDENTIFICATION OF PERSONNEL CONFLICTS IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION/ISSUE

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Abstract
Management scientists agree that conflicts between employees (personnel) and the organization cannot be completely ruled out. Despite the best of management policies and practices, conflicts between personnel and the organization will definitely occur. Conflicts are a common feature that can be found at personnel, organization or social levels. In any organization, a total absence of conflicts would be unbelievable, borning and strong indication that such conflicts are being suppressed. This paper examines some of the characteristics of mature groups their willingness and ability to bring suppressed conflicts to the surface where the may handled with great opportunity of resolution. The papers agree that there is need to ensure that sources of conflicts in the local Government Administration are identified and necessary solution provided according to exigencies. Finally, Dialogue, unity of purpose and objectivity are very necessary if organizations are to arrest conflicts situation from degenerating to major crisis.

Keywords: Conflict, Organization, Personnel, Local Government Administration, Crisis, Solution.

INTRODUCTION:
In life situation, every individual, organization and society have one goal of the other that is desired to attain at any particular time. No matter the goodness of such goals, very often situation arises that tend to hinder the attainment of such goals. One of the factors that have been identified as being casual to the non-attainment of individual or organizational goals is conflict. Rising from the above, one may ask what is conflict? Conflict may be defined in various ways. For example, the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines conflict as “violent Collision, a struggle or content. Conflict can also mean to fight, contend, to clash, to be in opposition. From the foregoing, Flippo Edwine (2000) believes that conflicts is inherently negative.

Over the years, Scholars Knootz, Herdd et al (2002), industrial psychologists have done intensive study on conflict, its causes, nature and solutions. At this juncture, it may be necessary to look at another word that is very often used or regarded as synonymous with conflict. That Is “crisis”. Webster English Dictionary defines as “a turning point for better or worse”. Crises therefore can be described as decisive moment or crucial time in any situation or organization. Most of the time, we see that where the goals and objectives of the organization and the needs of the members (personnel) of the organization differ, conflicts result. Conflict, according to Luthans (1988), is the condition of incompatibility between values or goal … in other words; conflicts refer to a situation where the interests of the organization and those of its members (personnel) do not agree. It is therefore, the role of the Local Government Administrators to see that they can satisfy their own needs while they are at the same time contributing to the welfare of their employees (personnel).

Conflict on the other hand can be a fight, struggle, competition and to be in opposition arising from the view of this paper, one may see conflict as similar to crisis but nevertheless have a thing line differentiating them especially in nature. The two can be presented in an organizational setting.

Structure of Local Government Administration: From the perspective of this paper, one may also observe that the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for three-tier government i.e. Federal, State and Local Governments. The Local Government is the third-tier and the lowest in the hierarchy. Therefore, Local Government Administration may be defined directing co-operating the affairs of a people in a small geographical setting for the
purpose of development. Section seven of the 1999 constitution spelt out the functions of the Local Government while it left the state with the task of defining the structure and composition of the Local Government.

According to the Kogi State Local Government Law, the following structures have become clearly obvious at the third tier level; of government.

(i) The Executive represent by the Executive Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary to the Local Government and the supervising councilor, presently anchored on the Directors of Local Government (DLG) and other Head of Departments.

(ii) The Legislature-composed of the elected Councilors led by the Council leaders and other principal officer. This is a full blown democratic setting.

(iii) The bureaucrats comprise the Director of Local Government Administration and the Head of Service, Heads of Department and other staff performing their Bureaucratic functions.

**SOURCES OF CONFLICTS IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION**
Mullins, L.J. (200) states that conflicts may come as a result of the following factors:

(i) Failure to grant increment to an employee when he has served the mandatory period and has earned good report;

(ii) Lack of promotion;

(iii) Lack of training opportunities;

(iv) Slow process of conversion or upgrading after successful completion an approved course of study;

(v) Inappropriate designation of an officer at the time of appointment, promotion or conversation;

(vi) Late payment of salary;

(vii) Non-payment of salary;

(viii) Lack of properly defined job description or schedule of duties;

(ix) Non-payment of approved allowances and other claims to entitled officer;

(x) Lack of good office accommodation;

(xi) Insufficient working tools etc.

**LIKELY SYMPTOMS OF CONFLICT**
The following could be sumptuous of conflict in the Local Government Councilor its Administration.

1) Aggression- riot, haste, stealing of council’s property
2) Withdrawal, apathy, abuse of sick leave, alcohol or drug consumption while on duty.
3) Fixation- continues to try harder to overcome to barrier
4) Compromise
5) Refusal to obey rules and regulations

Conflict being a common daily experience, one is tempted to say it is natural that conflicts do occur. As long as man lives in an organized society, there will always be conflicts. This is because desires can never be fully met.

This paper is also an attempt to identify some of the sources and causes of conflict in Local Government Administration with a view to offering possible solutions.

**Conflict itself.** From the perspective of our earlier definition, conflict is a state of being in disagreement with a situation. If such antagonism is not checked, it may lead to fighting, quarrelling, wrong perception leading to mistrust. To others, conflict is an unhealthy condition that often obstruct progress in any organization unless it is properly handled or checked on time.

Two industrial psychologists E.J. McCornick and J. Yuffin (2001) in their book “Industrial Psychology” are of the view that conflict in some form and degree is part and parcel of every facet of human life. In the same vein, another author, Johnson (2009) belives that there is no society that is
totally free from conflicts. As such any conflict-free relationship may be sign that one really have no relationship at all rather than a good relationship situation. It can therefore be argued that conflict can take place at various levels of life. Such as among friends, colleagues, literates, youths, men, women etc.

Conflict may also exist at personal, interpersonal or between rival groups/dependents. Some industrial psychologists have advanced different opinions on conflicts in organization. For instance, Keller (2001) sees conflict from two angels namely Human Relations and the Realistic views.

The Human Relations: This group believes that it is possible to avoid conflict. Nwachukwu, C.C (1988) says that conflict occurs only because of abnormalities in astable and well-integrated organization which has disturbed the natural equilibrium.

Realistic view: Holds that conflict is natural in any human society. This school of thought feels that conflict is an integral part of any dynamic society system.

Various Levels of Conflict
Psychologists such as Kelly identified four levels of conflict.

a) Personal Conflict Level: This is based on aggression and frustration hypothesis.
b) Group Conflict Level: This can arise out of differential satisfaction of needs and distribution of regards to members who share disparity in value system.
c) Organizational Level: In this case, it exists between hierarchical levels and functions because of differences in goal evaluation and needs priorities.
d) Societal Conflict Level: Conflicts exists between ethnic groups and classes of interest.

Stages of Conflicts
Conflicts is a dynamic process. It can develop through certain stages which Pondly called “Conflict Episodes” Stages. They are grouped into four as follows:

(a) The Latent Conflict: These are the predisposing or antecedent conditions e.g. competition for scarce resources drives for autonomy and divergent of sub-unit goals.
(b) Perceived Conflict: When people become aware of it but no anxiety, stress door its feeling towards the opponent.
(c) Felt Conflict: When conflict is personalized and personalities get involved. This is harmful to the organization.
(d) Manifest Conflict: Conflict behaviour e.g. strike, sabotage, restrictive practice, work-to-rule, valiance, riot etc.

TYPES OF CONFLICTS
This is no hard and fast rule on types of conflicts. For the purpose of this paper, one may classify conflicts as follows:

(a) Inter-departmental Conflict: it occurs because of superiority among departments. The functions and activities of various departments most often are inter-woven and conflict atimes generates during these interactions. This type of conflict is known as Horizontal Conflict.

Also conflict may arise between two departments/divisions if one feels that the other is holding him to ramson e.g. Treasury and Works Department.

(b) Professional Conflict: This implies that in some organizations, if there is disparity there is an organgram which a chart in the career apex that stipulates the rank/level/position to which each certificate can reach.

For example an HND holder cannot be promoted above salary grade level 14. His counter parts with B.Sc. can be promoted to the Apex. If such a person with HND getting to such position, he will not work with anyone with B.Sc.

Conflict also exists remotely or at times openly between graduates and non-graduates; technical and non-technical staff, boss and subordinates.

(c) Individual, Group and Societal Conflict: Local Government Staff is predominantly dominated by the people of the area. Very often primordial sentiments are brought to force on issues.
Individuals on personal grounds clash with one another at times even in the residential areas and this may lead to conflicts that can affect the productivity of an organization. This type of conflict is harmful to an organization. This is because all efforts is geared towards gaining advantage over the other person or group.

(d) Labour/Management Conflict:
A union is any combination of workers or employees whether temporary or permanent for the purpose of regulating the terms and conditions or employment of workers. This implies that employers can also form trade union to negotiate with the labour. Salii A.O. (1995)
The relationship between the staff (NULGE) and Local Government is regulated by labour laws enacted by the Government. The aim of the law is to guarantee harmonious co-existence which makes for efficiency at work. Inspite of this, there is always conflict between Labour Union and Management because their objectives are often quite different and infact typically are at odds with each other.

CAUSES OF CONFLICTS
Usually, conflicts can arise as a result of many reasons. For example, in Labour/Management Conflicts. Some of these issues include number of working days per week, minimum wages for staff, annual leave with pay, sick leave with pay, allowances and benefits to staff, promotion duration and delay, pensionable jobs, provision of basic needs, ineffective transport services etc. Both Labour and Management have issues that cause conflicts between them.

From Labour perspective conflict can arise from the following areas.

(a) Insubordinate, lateness, disillusionment, loss of confidence in the management, inter-union conflicts, communication gap, unresolved demands by workers. On the side of Management, causes conflicts could be as below:
- Refusal to meet workers genuine demand;
- Poor human relation;
- In-fighting among management staff;
- Unfair treatment of workers;
- Refusal to implement agreed condition of service;
- Late or non-payment of salaries and allowances to workers;
- Poor transportation and canteen services etc.

A part from the above, there are other causes of conflicts which are likely to occur between Labour and Management but more prominent in other type of conflicts include:

a) Competition: This is caused due to scarce resources or management rewards. Whenever there is competition, there is conflict in the hierarchy of position, the top ranks usually occupied by few persons which are often taken from the lower rank which has more persons. All the staff in the lower rank wants to be elevated to the next higher. This generates competition between the lower rank staff/officers each trying to outdo or win the favour of the management hence conflicts.

b) Poor Communication: Communication is the life fluid of any organization. It is very crucial to the success of an organization. Any break down or distortion in communication usually generates serious conflict, which comes in the form of rigour or rumour mongering, perception distortion, loss confidence, suspicion, fear, anxiety and so on.

c) Department Envy and Comparism: Division of Labour is inevitable in any large or small organization. This is why people usually develop sense of pride and commitment in the Department they belong. This pride is often developed through envious comparism with the group one doesn’t belong. These feelings become potential sources of conflict and rivalry especially where one department facilities the services of the other.

d) Poor Motivational Factors: There can be conflict if a staff is not motivated because he is simply working as a must. In a book titled psychology of industrial conflict, Stranger R. explained that the phenomena of industrial conflict and its opposite, industrial co-operation arises out of the need of individual human being.

e) Wrong perception: This is related to the motivational origins of conflict as it plays vital role in causing conflict in an organization. Human behaviour is predicted more on the “perception” than on “objective” facts. For example, Local Government Workers may go on strikes because management has refused to pay salaries together with arrears owed. This action is borne out of
staff perception that Management does not want to pay salaries or not committed to their welfare.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
There are various ways of resolving conflicts when they arise. For example, the first step in the resolution of conflicts in their discovery and exposure. Then ways to resolve.

a) **Avoid-Win-Loss Situation:** Blake and Monton (2001) are of the opinion that there is need for concern for both the people and the result. That is, when resolving conflicts between two parties, or move, one should not put the parties in the position of competing for some organizational rewards or resources. Emphasis should be placed on amicably way of resolution rather than creating competitive environment.

b) **Grievance Method:** This encourages the submission of complaints by the parties concern to the body resolving for discussion. One believes that the use of this method presumes that the individual has the courage to submit such complaints. This is where labour unions are very essential in the settlement of conflicts.

c) **Direct Observation:** A good administration should know the behaviour of his subordinates, and when significant charges in their behaviour occur, he should verify the possible motive. For example, Absenteeism, lateness to work, request for transfers, resignation of appointment and general increase in disciplinary cases may show general dissatisfaction among workers of organization.

d) **Personal Counseling:** Some organizations engage trained psychologists to counsel the parties in conflicts. These counselors are usually staff of the Personnel Department. It however, takes time to build up confidence of the workers in the counselors who are often considered to be members of the Management in Staff capacity.

e) **Attempt To Achieve Consensus:** Invent a negotiating situation which brings the sub-parties into interaction with one another. During this interaction, the representatives try to reach a consensus on why the minority might be objecting to the decision. Isolated group representative will not abandon groups, position but sub-group will allow itself to be influenced by the other negotiating group. This in turn will have the strength to influence the rest of the group.

CONCLUSION
Conflict is an inherent common feature of any organized society. It is in some form and degree part and parcel of virtually every facet of human life. Thus, the Local Government is not expected to be free of it. It always call for adjustment among those affected. As much as possible, effort should be made to avoid and/or prevent any situation that leads to conflicts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
1. Monthly salaries and allowances of workers should be promptly addressed by the Management to avoid unnecessary conflicts because Staff and Management.

2. Staff who are due for promotion should always be promoted and implementation of same to be done as at when due.

3. Management to always respect the scheme of service when dealing with staff matters.

4. Workers should always learn how to work and live in harmony and avoid being over-ambitious.

5. Both Management and Workers should always prevent conflicts and other crisis situations.
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