Unizik Journal of Educational Management and Policy (UJOEMP), Vol. 6, No. 5, December, 2024.
----------ISSN: 2276-7630. https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/ujoemp ----------

COMPARING PRINCIPALS' CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THROUGH THE LENS OF ARBITRATION AND DIALOGUE IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
This study comparatively analyzed crisis management strategies of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were tested. The study adopted causal comparative research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of this study comprises all the 561 principals; 263 principals in the public secondary schools and 298 principals in the private secondary schools. The entire population of 561 principals in both public and private secondary schools in Anambra State was used for this study as the sample size. The researcher considered the size manageable; therefore, there was no sampling technique for the study. Data for this study was collected using validated structured questionnaire titled "Crisis Management Strategies" (QPCMS). Cronbach Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and reliability co-efficient of 0.83 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test of independence was used to test the research questions at 0.05 alpha level. The findings among others revealed that principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State agreed on arbitration and dialogue as effective crisis management strategies. Accordingly it was recommended amongst others that school administration in Anambra State should try to find out the root cause of conflicts in public secondary schools and involve all the education stakeholders in the school in order to enhance discipline for effective conflict management strategies to be put in place.

Keywords: Principals' Crisis Management Strategies, Arbitration, Dialogue, Public and Private Schools

Introduction

Crisis is an unavoidable aspect of any organization's life cycle. It manifests in various forms and is a natural consequence of the complex interactions within any human organization. Secondary schools, as organizations, are particularly prone to crises due to their dynamic environments involving multiple stakeholders like students, staff, and the community. Crisis within schools often stems from incompatible goals, values, or desires among staff, students, or external bodies. Conflicts over resources, authority, or differing beliefs can escalate, creating a breakdown in communication or relationships. If not properly managed, these crises can destabilize the learning environment, affecting academic performance and overall school stability.

Crisis in private schools differs in nature from crisis in public schools. In private school, crisis can start from wrong placement of an individual on responsibility positions. This is because such placement is not always based on merit. School owners in most cases choose who they want to hold

certain positions for them on trust. Crisis can also come from variations in salary levels of teachers Proprietors or owners of school in most cases determine salaries of teachers based on relationships and have often led complaints that eventually result in crisis. In public schools, crisis always result from poor or unfair reward system. This can be caused by certain sentiments based on nativism or perceived personality conflict between the school head and the affected teachers.

It is important to note that crisis irrespective of their dimension have consequences on students, teachers and relevant educational stakeholders in secondary schools. Brendan (2015) gave the following as some of the consequences of crisis on education; longer-term disruption of attendance of teachers and students; lowering of the quality of teachers; reduction in staff recruitment, leading to teacher shortages; persistent demonization and distraction of teachers and students by fear or trauma thereby reducing the quality of education provision and students' ability to learn. Given the attendant consequences of crises on the attainment of educational objectives, principals both in public and private secondary schools have their job cut out to adopt strategies mitigate the crises.

Crisis management strategies are very important to any school because it is through these strategies that negative effects resulting from crisis can be minimized or controlled. There exist several strategies that could be used to resolve crisis in schools. This study will focus on two crises management strategies namely: arbitration and dialogue.

Arbitration crisis management strategy is used in a situation where a neutral party helps parties in crisis to discuss their difficult issues which allow disputants to ventilate anger and frustration in a free, open and therapeutic fashion (Oboegbulem and Onwurah, 2011). It can also be seen as a process in which a third party, neutral in the matter, after reviewing evidence and listening to arguments from both sides, issues a decision to settle the case. According to Cahn and Abigail (2017), arbitration crisis management is a process where a neutral third party who has been chosen by the disputing parties listens to them and makes a decision on the crisising matter with no room for appeal. It is, therefore, considered the most powerful type of third-party intervention as the third party's decision cannot be appealed. The Arbitrator gives the decision after listening to both parties who are allowed not only to adduce oral evidence but present documentary evidence where necessary (Pitchforth, 2014).

Another important crisis management strategy to consider is dialogue crisis management strategy. It is a process where parties in crisis are brought together (face-to face) to express their views on the subject matter. The crisis parties share their feelings and fears, are open to listen to the other parties' needs, willing to be changed by what they hear, and are open to consider contrary ideas (Oboegbulem and Onwurah, 2011). In dialogue, each party makes serious effort to take the others' concerns into consideration, even when disagreement persists. No participant gives up his or her identity, but each recognizes enough of the others' valid human claims that he or she would act differently towards the other. The goal of dialogue is to develop joint approaches to crisis resolution, as well as improve relationships, understanding, and trust between individuals or parties in crisis (Saunders, 2018). The application of these strategies may differ depending on the school type. This is because public and private schools deferring peculiarities.

For instance, Public schools depend mainly on local, state, and federal funds and private schools usually gain support mainly from tuition, with some funds coming from other sources such as religious organizations, endowments, grants, and charitable donations. Onwunwa and Obiukwu (2019) discuss how school reform aims to improve school effectiveness by reorganizing and managing schools. Public and private schools are organized differently, particularly in terms of school and class sizes. Public schools tend to have larger class sizes due to funding limitations and government control, often leading to overcrowded classrooms. Private schools, however, are generally smaller, allowing for more personalized attention and better teacher-to-student ratios. This difference in organization impacts the management style, student engagement, and overall effectiveness of educational delivery in both settings. Accordingly, this study compared crisis management strategies of secondary school principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The rationale for the establishment of private secondary schools among others was to reduce tension, crises and burden of admission and accommodate more students who otherwise would have been unable to secure a place in public schools as a result of the limited carrying capacity of public

schools. The efforts to eliminate crises in public schools by granting approvals to individuals to establish private secondary schools notwithstanding, crises still persist in both private and public schools alike. There are still evidence of bickering and quarrels among principals and the teachers and students on one hand in public secondary schools and proprietors and the school manager and teachers and sometimes with the students in private secondary schools on the other hand. There is urgent need to stamp this situation out of our secondary school system if the national objectives of secondary education are to be realized. It is against this backdrop that this study was conceived. .

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to comparatively analyze crisis management strategies of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. In specific terms the study seeks to compare the principals'

1. Arbitration strategy for crisis management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Dialogue strategy for crisis management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the arbitration strategies for crisis management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the dialogue strategies for crisis management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on arbitration crisis management strategy.
2. There is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on dialogue crisis management strategy

Method

The study adopted causal comparative design. The population of this study comprises all the 561 principals (263 Public and 298 private school Principals). This is derived from both public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. The entire population of 561 principals was used for this study. The researcher considered the size manageable; therefore, there was no sampling technique for the study.Data for this study was collected using structured questionnaires. To ascertain the face validity of the instrument for the study, three experts validated the instrument. In testing the reliability, Cronbach alpha was used and the overall reliability co-efficient value of 0.83 was obtained. The instrument was administered to the respondents in their schools by the researcher with the help of five research assistants who are teachers. Out of 561 copies of questionnaire distributed for data collection, 504 copies were retrieved; this means that 90% retrieval rate. After sorting, 254 copies were from principals of public secondary schools while 250 copies were from principals in private secondary schools. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the closeness or the disparity or gap in the respondents' mean ratings. Decisions on the research questions will be based on the cluster mean score relative to the real limits of numbers below:

Responses		**Rating Scale**	**Real Limits of Number**
Strongly Agree	(SA)	4	3.50 – 4.00
Agree	(A)	3	2.50 – 3.49
Disagree	(D)	2	1.50 – 2.49
Strongly Agree	(SD)	1	1.00 – 1.49

The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test of independence. Where the p-value is equal to or greater than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypotheses is not be rejected. On the other hand, when the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p<0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1
Respondents' Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on the arbitration crisis management strategy in public and private in secondary schools in Anambra State

S/N	As a principal, I:	Resp.	N	X	SD	Remarks
1	use interaction between parties to settle disputes amongst staff	PuS	254	2.60	0.95	Agree
		PrS	250	3.15	0.98	Agree
2	try to bring a third party to take responsibility to solve the problem	PuS	254	2.27	1.11	Disagree
		PrS	250	2.75	1.23	Agree
3	constantly seeks others opinion while solving crisis above his/her power or knowledge	PuS	254	2.93	1.01	Agree
		PrS	250	3.27	1.15	Agree
4	encourage teachers in crisis to participate in the process of seeking opinions of higher authorities before spiking at each other	PuS	254	2.16	1.07	Disagree
		PrS	250	2.32	1.08	Disagree
5	explore issues with conflicting teachers to find solution that meet conflicting parties' needs	PuS	254	3.47	1.02	Agree
		PrS	250	3.40	1.19	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**PuS**	254	**2.68**		**Agree**
		PrS	250	**2.98**		**Agree**

Keys: Resp = Respondents; X = Arithmetic Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; PuS = Public schools; PrS = Private schools

Data presented in Table 1 reveals the item by item analysis of the arbitration crisis management strategy in public and private in secondary schools in Anambra State. The analysis revealed that items 1, 3 and 5 with their respective mean scores of 2.60, 2.93 and 3.47 were rated agreed by principals in public secondary schools while items 1, 2, 3 and 5 with their respective mean scores of 3.15, 2.75, 3.27 and 3.40 were rated agreed by principals in private secondary schools. On the other hand, items 2 and 4 with mean scores 2.27 and 2.16 were rated disagreed by principals in public secondary schools while item 4 with mean score 2.32. The cluster means of 2.68 and 2.98 summarized that principals in public and private secondary schools agreed on arbitration crisis management strategy. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.95 – 1.11 and 0.98 – 1.23 shows that principals do not vary too much in their ratings on arbitration crisis management strategy in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State

Research Question 2

What are the dialogue crisis management strategy in public and private in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2
Respondents' Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on the arbitration crisis management strategy in public and private in secondary schools in Anambra State

S/N	As a principal, I:	Resp.	N	X	SD	Remarks
6	bring teachers in crisis face-to-face to express their views	PuS	254	2.31	1.06	Agree
		PrS	250	2.56	1.13	Agree
7	give room for teachers in crisis to share feelings during the dialogue process	PuS	254	2.84	1.02	Agree
		PrS	250	3.20	1.01	Agree
8	encourage both parties in crisis to listen to others' views concerning the matter	PuS	254	2.73	1.05	Agree
		PrS	250	3.00	1.09	Agree
9	discuss crisis related matters during staff meetings	PuS	254	2.85	0.99	Agree
		PrS	250	3.14	1.03	Agree
10	ensure that both parties in crisis apologize to each other after the dialogue process	PuS	254	2.55	1.00	Agree
		PrS	250	2.86	1.18	Agree
11	try to stress those things upon which both conflicting parties we both agree	PuS	254	2.73	1.03	Agree
		PrS	250	3.11	1.07	Agree

12	give up on some points in exchange for others	PuS	254	2.59	0.96	Agree
		PrS	250	2.99	1.17	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**PuS**	254	**2.66**		**Agree**
		PrS	250	**2.95**		**Agree**

Keys: Resp = respondents; X = arithmetic mean; SD = standard deviation; PuS = public schools; PrS = private schools

Data presented in Table 2 reveals the item by item analysis of the dialogue crisis management strategy in public and private in secondary schools in Anambra State. The analysis revealed that all the items 6 – 12 with their respective mean scores of 2.31, 2.84, 2.73, 2.85, 2.55, 2.73 and 2.59 were rated agreed by principals in public secondary schools while mean scores 2.56, 3.20, 3.00, 3.14, 2.86, 3.11 and 2.99 were rated agreed by principals in private secondary schools. The cluster means of 2.66 and 2.95 summarized that principals in public and private secondary schools agreed on dialogue crisis management strategy. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.96 – 1.05 and 1.01 – 1.18 shows that principals do not vary too much in their ratings on dialogue crisis management strategy in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on arbitration crisis management strategy

Table 3

t-Test Analysis on Significance Difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on arbitration crisis management strategy

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	α-value	Remark
Public	254	18.21	4.22					
				502	32.12	0.14	0.05	Not significant
Private	250	19.25	4.55					

Data presented in Table 3 reveals that at 502 degree of freedom, 0.05 alpha level and t-cal of 32.12; the p-value of 0.14 is greater than 0.05 (t= 32.12; df 502; p = 0.14 > 0.05). This means that the null hypothesis of no significant difference on arbitration crisis management strategy in public and private in secondary schools in Anambra State is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on arbitration crisis management strategy.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on dialogue crisis management strategy

Table 4

t-Test Analysis on Significance Difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on dialogue crisis management strategy

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	α-value	Remark
Public	254	18.57	5.21					
				502	11.76	0.07	0.05	Not significant
Private	250	20.86	4.99					

Data presented in Table 4 reveals that at 502 degree of freedom, 0.05 alpha level and t-cal of 11.76; the p-value of 0.07 is greater than 0.05 (t= 11.76; df 502; p = 0.07 > 0.05). This means that the null hypothesis of no significant difference on dialogue crisis management strategy in public and private in secondary schools in Anambra State is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on dialogue crisis management strategy.

Discussion

Arbitration as a strategy for crisis management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State

The finding in research question one revealed that principals in public and private secondary schools agreed on arbitration crisis management strategy. This means that principals in both public and private secondary schools use interaction between parties to settle disputes amongst staff; constantly seeks others opinion while solving crisis above his/he power or knowledge; and explore issues with conflicting teaches to find solution that meet conflicting parties' needs. These findings agreed with the finding of Abia and Ekpoattai (2014) that arbitration is widely accepted as a means of crisis resolution where even elders in the community play a major role in maintaining peace. This is why the findings of Inang (2016) also supported that there is a positively strong relationship between arbitration and teachers' job performance in primary schools. On the other hand, Adeyemi's (2019) findings opposed the present finding that crisis have not been effectively managed by principals of schools because of their inability to effectively utilize the arbitrary strategies for resolving crisis. One major difference in both findings could be varying opinions of respondents based on geographical location and passage of time as regards both studies.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on arbitration crisis management strategy. This means that principals in both public and private secondary schools did not influence their arbitration crisis management strategy.

Dialogue as a strategy for crisis management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State

The finding in research question two revealed that principals in public and private secondary schools agreed on dialogue crisis management strategy. This means that principals bring teachers in crisis face-to-face to express their views; they give room for teaches in crisis to share feelings during the dialogue process; encourage both parties in crisis to listen to others' views concerning the matter and discuss crisis related matters during staff meetings. This finding was in line with the finding of Yirik, Yoldorom and Cetinkaya (2015) that dialogue is an effective strategy for the management of crisis within an organization. That it plays an important role in the efficient operation of in-house systems. Developing good relationships among employees, between the employer, employees and the units can be enhanced through interactions and dialogue. That dialogue helps in taking precautions against possible crisis, finding proper solutions to strengthen the relationship among the staff, and providing the organization with high-quality service. The finding also corroborated with that of Arop and Bassey (2017) that there was a significant influence of administrators' use of dialogue and domination on secondary school students' rights to fair hearing, dignity of human person, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association except in the recognition and protection of students' rights to freedom of religion.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference in the ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on dialogue crisis management strategy. This means that principals in both public and private secondary schools did not influence their dialogue crisis management strategy. This finding however agreed with the finding of Arop and Bassey (2017) that opinions of school administrators in terms of school ownership differ significantly on dialogue management technique.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that both public and private secondary school principals unanimously agree on the importance of arbitration and dialogue as effective strategies for managing crises.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School administration in Anambra State should provide communication and participation framework in which teachers, non-teaching staff and students will have

opportunities and freedom to express their views, opinions and participate in any kind of administrative decision making.

2. School administration in Anambra State should try to find out the root cause of conflicts in public secondary schools and involve all the education stakeholders in the school in order to enhance discipline for effective conflict management strategies to be put in place.

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