

# Challenges Encountered by School Administrators Towards Conflict Management in Promoting Good Governance in Secondary Schools – A Case of Mkinga District

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to investigate the challenges encountered by school administrators towards conflict management in promoting good governance in secondary schools. Using Mkinga district council as a case study. Specific objective of the study were to: To discuss the managerial challenges faced by school administrators on conflict Management in Secondary School. The study adopted a case study design because its offer an opportunity to learn from experiences and influence the practice of theories, also it's valuable data sources for researchers in view of the complexity and diversity of educational settings and purposes. The study obtained data from the sample size of 49 respondents, the study is mixed including both Qualitative and Quantitative in nature, constituting 04 heads of school one from each school; 24 teachers, 06 teachers from each school; 04 ward education officers (WEOs), 01 from each ward, 01 District secondary education officer (DSEO) and 16 students, 04 students from each school. The study used purposive, stratified and simple random sampling procedures to obtain the respondents. In this study, school administrators such as heads of school (HoS), ward education officer (WEO), District secondary education officer (DSEO) were purposely selected due to their virtue of power. On other hand simple random sampling technique was used to select students and teachers. Data collection was done through questionnaires, and interviews in which some structured questions was prepared as guiding questions for students and others were unstructured depending with the situation when extracting the information from students was used, also both open-ended and closed ended questionnaires was used to collect information from heads of school (HoS), teachers and ward education officers (WEOs). The result of the data analysis was presented using frequency tables, bar graphs, pie charts and percentages.

**Keywords:** school administrators, conflict management, good governance.

## 1. Introduction

Conflict is part and parcel of any organization/institution which arises in different circumstances existing at a working place. Likewise in education organizations conflicts are seems to be arise in different perceptive when teachers and other staffs interacting together in full filling their roles according to instructions provided from the administrative part. Hence, this study aims to investigate the challenges encountered by school

school administrators toward conflict management in promoting good governance in secondary schools.

The concept of conflict has been defined differently by different scholars. Fadipe (2000) defines conflict as a form of disagreement in an establishment between two individuals or groups who have cause to interact formally or informally. Gardiner and Simmons (1992) defined conflict as any divergence of interests, objectives or priorities between individuals, groups, or organizations or nonconformity to requirements of a task, activity or process. On the same light, Plankett (1989) regarded conflict as a disagreement between two or more organizational members or group arising from the fact that they must share scarce resources or work activities due to different status, goals, values or perceptions.

Fisher, (1997) points out that, from developed countries like United States of America, conflicts in private and public sectors have been a common phenomenon; managers and employers are working hard to find out measures to overcome the existing conflicts through conflict management. In studying conflict management in public institutions, he also found that the possible sources of conflicts in many public institutions in the United States of America (USA) include poor communication, competition for scarce resources and incompatible goals. On the other hand, Plunkett & Attner (1989) state that conflict emanates from shared resources, differences in goals, difference in perceptions and value disagreement in the role of requirements nature of work activities and individual approaches. Other sources of conflict in American education as stated by Gray & Stark (1984) include limited resources, interdependent work activities, differentiation of activities, communication problems, difference in perception and the environment of the school or organization.

Research explained that there are several scenarios of conflict which have happened in some countries in Africa. Some of them have been documented by different studies. For example, Ramani and Zhimin (2010) documented that there were conflicts in Kenyan public secondary schools. They argue that these conflicts arose when the school administrations failed to sufficiently provide the necessary resources for effective

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learning such as food and learning aids. Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) conducted the study on conflicts in secondary schools in Osun state of Nigeria. The study revealed that administration of secondary schools in the state was hampered by high rate of conflicts. Furthermore, Oboegbulem et al (2013) conducted the study on conflict resolution strategies in non-government schools in Benue state Nigeria. In this study, they suggested some strategies for resolving conflicts including agreeing on the procedure taken for conflict resolution, encouraging parties to work together, taking staff and students' comments and suggestions and involvement of school disciplinary committee and public complaint commission among others.

In Tanzania as one of the developing countries, when examining conflicts in schools, they mentioned the following sources of conflicts: language, religion, limited resources, poor leadership, personal differences and embezzlement of resources. (Bones & Louw, 2008).

Babyegeya (2002) defines conflict as a breakdown of communication among members of the organization. He adds that the more closely people are expected to work together, the more the possibility of conflict to rise. In that case conflict management is perceived as part of school administration problem and has become part and parcel of Tanzania secondary schools and educational institutions. The nature and types of conflicts that occur in secondary school administration vary from one school to another. In that way conflict may have either a positive or negative effect on school performance, depending on the nature of the conflict or how it is managed (Armstrong, 2009). Burton (1969) suggested strategies for conflict management which included deterrence strategies of avoiding escalating conflict while maintaining control without giving way. Baregu (2004) suggests that those involved in conflict management, whatever its level and nature, need to be skilled in three general areas, namely: conflict prevention, crisis management (bringing an end to violence or extreme tension) and mediation.

## 2. General objective

The main objective of this study was to assess the challenges encountered by school administrators towards conflict management in promoting good governance in secondary schools.

## 3. Methodology and Research Design

This study was conducted at Mkinga District Council in Tanga region in Tanzania. The study adopted a case study design, also employed both Qualitative and Quantitative approaches in gathering information during the entire study. The study obtained data from the sample size of 49 respondents constituting 04 heads of school, one from each school; 24 teachers, 06 teachers from each school; 04 ward education officers (WEO) 01 from each ward: 01 District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) and 16 students, 04 students from each school. The study use purposive and simple random sampling procedures to obtain the respondents. Data were collected by interview field and Questionnaire, the data

collected were analyzed using computer-based Microsoft Office program called Excel Spread Sheet and Software Package for Social Science (SPSS).

The study adopted a case study design, because its offer an opportunity to learn from experiences and influence the practice of theories, also it's valuable data sources for researchers in view of the complexity and diversity of educational settings and purposes for evaluating responses of school administrators, teachers and students, identifying sources of managing conflicts and achieve time bound resolutions and conclusions respectively. This is because the nature of the study intended to generate knowledge by examining challenges encountered by school administrators and teachers towards conflicts management in promoting good governance in secondary school. A case of Mkinga district in Tanga region. This design is selected because it used to collect both Qualitative and Quantitative data. According to Cohen et al (2007), case study design enables the researcher to gather data at a particular point of time with the intention of describing the nature of the existing conditions. As a matter of fact, the findings used in this design enabled researcher to answer the key questions of this study.

## 4. Challenges Encountered by School Administrators on Conflicts Management in Secondary Schools

This objective sought to assess challenges faced by school administrators in applying strategies for managing conflicts, the question for grasping information was directed to all secondary school heads, teachers and students as well as DSEO and WEOs.

### A. Lack of Cooperation

Lack of cooperation cited by large number of respondents as the main challenges encountered by school administrators on conflict management where by 43(87.8) respondents argued on the issue.

Dareh (2002) argued that, conflict can lead to the end of communication and personal animosity among members within the organization. In this case, the results of conflict bring about negative effects to the running of the organization. In this case, school administrator had a lot to speak about, where by most of them had already experienced conflicts at their stations. One school administrator from station z said:

*Sometimes teacher-teacher conflict can lead to failure in working together as a team as when the two or group of teachers are engaging in conflict which results in failure to work together cooperatively.*

However, the discussion went on and some teachers had provided different opinions on this issue with vivid examples as per given questionnaires and guiding interview questions. A teacher from station x had this to say;

*Other teachers are engaging in conflicts with school administration which lead to failure in working corporately with school administrators and other teachers who are in not in conflicts with school administration.*

Therefore, this issue had been discussed by different teachers and school administrators on the same issues of the concerns.

### B. In Adequate Skills and Knowledge on Solving Conflicts

In the discussion on this matter, most of the teachers had to say as well as school administrators. Most of the school administrators in the education system rise to these positions without any prior management training. Some get these positions because of their long-service in the system, while others assume them because of their flowery curriculum vitae or having excelled in the interview (Bramson, 2004). This, therefore, suggests that SMT (school management team) should know the sources of conflict and strategies that can be used in reducing conflict in the workplace. A teacher from school x had this to say:

*Some heads of school they are not eligible on their positions as administrators who are responsible on solving all the raised conflicts into schools rather than being the source of initiating conflicts.*

Some respondents indicated that they went for in-service training before assuming the managerial post. They complained that, they were not adequately trained in managing conflict and hence they faced so many managerial problems.

Thus, with this issue a researcher found that, most of teachers had a lot to comment on their head teacher's ways which are used in conflicts management and finally brought to them a number of challenges on dealing with those conflicts.

### C. Raising of Enmity Among Staff

According to Garegae-Garekwe (1999), school administrators have not developed sensitivity to potential conflicts both inside and outside the school. As a result, conflict that occurs in schools takes them by surprise and this leads to confusion and frustration. Educational managers assuming the responsibility without prior and adequate training cause a problem. This is in line with Msila (2011) who states that the head of schools faced different challenges in managing conflicts in schools such as enmity. The school administrators are faced with many challenges with an attempt to resolve conflict in their schools. Some of them, if not all, have not been trained in conflict management (Garegae-Garekwe, 1999). School administrator from station x had this to say:

*Some of our teachers are not good enough in handling conflicts because we are not provided enough seminars and on job training on management skills and knowledge rather than using our common skills and knowledge and some guidelines from the ministry of education and our bosses directions which sometimes cause failure to some teachers in solving rises conflicts due to lack of enough experience.*

Legotlo et al. (2003) and Van Deventer and Kruger (2003) argued that the changes in the organizations external environment can cause a major area of conflict. These could be changes in the education system that can either be a situation of political changes and teacher-learner ratio at some schools.

The respondents said conflict was neither good nor bad depending on how it was handled. They stated that if it was properly handled, it could improve the running and productivity of the institution. They further indicated that if mishandled, it could cause dissatisfaction among staff members and thus could disrupt the running of the school. Also, some respondents

indicated that they went for in-service training before assuming the managerial post. They complained that, they were not adequately trained in managing conflict and hence they were facing so many managerial problems.

### D. Work Discouragement

This occurs when one attempts to improve its status while another group views this as a threat to its place in the hierarchy (Legotlo et al., 2003). According to Van Deventer and Kruger (2003), a person's perception of unjust treatment, such as the implementation of personnel policies and practices or in reward and punishment systems can lead to tension and conflict.

From the respondents' views on this issue analyzed some of the circumstances which are obvious happened in their working stations and others are to be discouraging the working spirit for most of the teachers following the arises matters on their teaching career. A teacher had this to say:

*Sometimes school administrators can lower down teachers' morality and expectations on their teaching career. This is just because the division of work seemed too friend in with benefit oriented. You may find some of teachers are always subjected to different post and special activities because of their close relationship with some administrators, this discourages other teachers from performing on their best and just leave the work for those we are in advantage of enjoying the national cake on themselves.*

From the analyzed data by a researcher, work discouragement involves real differences in role or responsibilities among individuals who are interdependent in a work environment (Fisher, 2000). Daresh (2002) described it as the misalignment between the requirements of doing the job and the person selected to do the job. The conflict of role expectations occurs when different people including the person filling the post or the role disagrees on how that role should be performed (Legotlo et al., 2003). The emotional extent is quite huge since human beings are involved and, in most cases, it is easy to personal the issue.

## 5. Summary of the Major findings

The main aim of the study was to examine the Challenges encountered by School Administrators towards Conflict Management in promoting Good Governance in Secondary Schools. In addition, it was aimed at looking at the effects of those conflicts in the respective secondary schools. This was done due to various strikes, teachers turnover and boycott experienced in various secondary schools. In order to achieve the objectives, efforts were made to seek possible answers of the questions as set by the researcher. A case study of four secondary schools within four wards of Bwiti, Daluni, Maramba and Mapatano at Mkinga District in Tanga Region were taken. Sample of 49 respondents out of 1,157 population was used, different respondents such as WEOs, DEOs, HoS, teachers and students were used to get the data whereby the result as per specific objective on Managerial challenges encountered by school Administrators on conflict Management indicated that, many of the respondents (87.8%) had mentioned lack of cooperation as one of the Challenges faced by School

Administrators on conflict Management which carried the high rate of responses, while (71,4%) respondents mentioned Inadequate skills and knowledge on solving conflicts as the other Challenge, also (59.1%) respondents commented on Raising of enmity among staff, and (38.8%) of respondents commented on work discouragement has been a challenge in their respective secondary schools, this proves that the problem exists.

## 6. Conclusion

The study focused in secondary schools leaving other levels of education. Since education is so wide, this study can be used national wise by its findings, results and conclusion. The study was limited to a small area; therefore, it requires large area for further study. School administrators have been adversely affected by lack of knowledge and skills on conflict management. As a result heads of school tended to manage conflict by trial and error approach because they had no specific procedures and methods of managing conflict.

The findings also revealed that school administrators always encounter conflicts in different aspects of their daily operations. In the other side, the heads of secondary schools solve those conflicts, some by collaborating and others by compromising. Since the context of managing conflict at secondary schools is a very divergent phenomenon, the findings indicated that a number of heads of secondary school use only experiences which is not productive strategy in settling conflict, otherwise the researcher came up with the facts that conflicts exist in most Mkinga government secondary schools.

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