Lecturer – Student Conflicts in Universities: A Pathological Interrogation

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the relationship that exists between lecturers and students a pathological interrogation. Findings have shown that conflict is normal, due to the rationality of human decision-making. Conflict most times indicated disjointedness in convergence, which is not in its self-harmful but part of a process to aid sound resolve and rational choices. The school environment, presents a formidable space for conflict to thrive due to the constant interface between the teacher and student, typically called classroom conflict. This study used the secondary sources of data collection, gaining insights from textbooks, journals, and online materials, effectively contextualizing conflict and conflict situation. The study proposed effective conflict resolution strategies, like collaborating, compromising, accommodating, understanding conflict and integration strategy.

Keywords: Conflict, Lecturer, Student, Integration, Conflict Resolution

INTRODUCTION

"Conflict is as old as humankind and a salient feature of the human society" (Ghaffar, 2000:335 and Folarin, 2018:1). "Men must fight even if they do not possess arms or when tools of violence are not within reach" (Morgenthau 1948 cited in Folarin, 2018:2). Nonetheless, Conflict between lecturers and students is not new in our society as it has become a common occurrence in recent time, and a factor that has become a manifestation of community problem and centre of tension, judging from the prevailing level of defects in a teacher-student relationship (Ghaffar, 2000, Etadon 2013). This defective relationship according to Dunn et al., (2002) arises as a result of the coercive actions of teachers, which has been mentioned by Ozgan (2015:147-149) to include, "misunderstanding, lack of communication and negative behavior, including conflict resolution strategies, such as violence, complaint, anger, and swearwords, used instead of constructive conflict solutions such as negotiation, problem solving discussion and mediation". Although, Ghaffar, (2000:213) noted that, "conflict might not be a problem except when poorly managed, but becomes a problem when it hampers productivity, lowers morale, causes more and continued conflict and leads to inappropriate behavior". Fact check shows that schools and classes where conflicts are frequent, absenteeism and indifference are prevalent together with widespread disrupting behaviors against the teaching and learning process, which create a negative class atmosphere (Ozgan, 2015).

It has being emphasized in pedagogical literature that a harmonious relationship between students and teachers is based on mutual respect, understanding, kindness and cooperation (Guiladiene and Kairiene, 2017), without which the school or individual classroom cannot function (Ozgan, 2016). According to the observation of Guiladiene and Kairiene, (2017) studies carried out between lecturers and student conflict are quite limited, necessitating the need for further studies on this area. Therefore, this study appraises the cause of lecturer- student's conflict in Nigerian universities, with a view to providing some remediation.

The study is streamlined into the following thematic areas; concept of conflict, type of conflict in the university and nature, causes of conflict between student and lecturer, table of causes of conflict between student and lecturer, theoretical consideration, pathological approach, conclusion and reference.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN CONFLICT

Generally, there is consensus among scholars that conflict itself is not evil; often times it arises from the process of seeking sustainable progress and satisfaction (Olarenwaju, 2013). The word "conflict" comes from the Latin word *conflictus,* which means collision or clash. Nevertheless, considerable disagreement exists over how to define conflict (T-Kit 2010:54). According to Etadon, (2013:335) Conflict can be viewed at the "individual, group or organizational levels". The term could also be used interchangeably to mean crisis. In relation to students in the university, conflict or crisis generated is often referred to as unrest. However, when the situation is out of control, it may become violent conflict, which is an unlawful use of threat or force that results in the manifestation of despair and desperation (Etadon, 2013).

Unrest has been used by some scholars to denote fight, demonstration, riots, agitation, crisis and protest. It is a state of discontent, which creates anxiety and uneasy situation. Hornby (2006) defined unrest as "a state of disturbance in which people are angry or dissatisfied and are likely to protest or fight". Obianyo (2003) explained that unrest goes hand in hand with crisis. Folarin (2018:4) views it from three perspectives, namely; @Incompatible goals, Political violence, and different perception". From the perspective of incompatible goal, conflict is an existing state of disagreement or hostility between two or more people. By this, it means, two or more parties do not have an accord and are as such on two different parallels on the same issue (Nicholson, 1992 cited in Folarin 2018). Conflict involves situations in which difference are expressed by independent people in the process, achieving their needs and goals, and it arises when a difference between two or more people necessitate change in at least one person in other for their engagement to continue and develop (Thomas, 1976 as cited in Ghaffar, 2000). Also, Barash and Webel, (2002) posit that conflict Implies opposing or diametrically opposed motives or pursuits. For instance, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were pursuing incompatible goals (capitalist democracy and socialism respectively) between 1945 and 1990, an era historically referred to as the Cold War.

According to Jeong, (2000 in Folarin 2018) in his Perspective of political violence he explained that, conflict is said to exist when two or more groups engage in a struggle over values and claims to status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals. Conflict also connotes different perceptions, which may not necessarily result in hostility. This way, conflict simply means "a different perception' or view to an issue or situation" (Folarin, 2018:3). Olarenwaju (2013:5) opined that conflict emanates because of misunderstanding, man's superiority complex, and failure to compromise and reconcile ideas, beliefs, cultures and interest, which could serve as a powerful tool to for progress if harnessed.

In a general context, conflict, unlike peace, is a state of inward (intra-personal) or outward (inter-personal) disorder and strife. It is an inevitable feature of nature. However, Folarin (2018), and Olarenwaju, (2013) has conceptualized conflict from two approaches, the objectivist and the subjectivist approach: the objectivist approach, suggests that conflict emanates from the social and political structure of the society; and the subjectivist approach, suggest that apparent differences and incompatibility of goals cause conflict.

In most literature, conflict is interchangeably used with other terms typically described as the synonyms of conflict. These are: contrast, disharmony, discord, struggle, contest, strife, antagonism, controversy, clash, rivalry, contest, contention, brawl, fisticuff, fight, battle, feud, combat and war. In

politics, it is not different; however, conflict technically means an existing state of disconnect between two or more parties on a prevailing issue (T-Kit 2010:54).

TYPES OF CONFLICTS IN THE UNIVERSITY

According to Etadon (2013), the university system is a microcosm of the larger society, faced with multi-dimensional conflicts, some of which are:

Student versus Administration Conflicts

"This type of conflict results from disagreement between the authorities in the university and the students on issues that directly affect their social and academic well-being. Conflicts in this category are due to stringent university rules and regulations, problems of academic curriculum, catering services, water and electricity supply, intra-campus transport system, student union politics, increase in fees etc. These types of conflicts, which are mainly intra-institutional, often take the form of demonstrations, such as protests and boycott of lectures. The demonstrations may be peaceful or violent. A common feature of such protests, however, is that they often began as peaceful demonstrations, but end up in violence, especially whenever they involve a clash with the police. The aspects of violence may include destruction of property within the institution, assault of target staff or officials involved in the disputes, disruption of traffic flow and harassment of certain members of the academic community" (Onyeonoru, 1996 cited in Etadon, (2013).

Aluede, Jimoh, Agwinede, and Omorogie, (2005) in their chronicles of the several incidences of students and administrators conflict in Nigerian universities, cited the example of the 1984 proposed introduction of tuition fees and the scrapping of catering service. They also cited management highhandedness, by the vice chancellor of Amadu Bello University, Zaria, in 1986, which lead to the shutdown of most universities and expulsion of dozens of students.

Student versus Government Conflicts

"This type of conflict is caused by socio-economic or educational policy issues of government that affect the welfare of students directly or indirectly, for instance the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), has consistently made the point that some students' crises are most times because of government educational policies. The union stated that, students' crises are the outcomes of the inevitable consequence of the educational policies of the government that tend to dash the aspirations of the under-privileged students for a better future" (Onyeonoru, 1996 cited in Etadon, 2013:335). Multiple scenarios' have corroborated the forgoing. Aluede et al. (2005), for instance, cited the removal of subsidy on petroleum product and the introduction of structural adjustment program (SAP) by the military government, which lead several universities to close down for a period as long as six months". "Including the death of many student as result of open shooting by police and the army. Another scenario cited, was the devaluation of Naira and mounting hardship in 1992 (Aluede et al., 2005).

Incidence of Campus Conflicts

"Campus conflicts involving university management and students in Nigeria results from disagreement between the authorities and the students. Some of the factors mainly responsible for such conflicts are campus accommodation, catering services, water and electricity supply, and academic curriculum issues. A review of some early students-administration conflicts is relevant. In 1957, students at the University College Ibadan, now University of Ibadan, protested the so-called curtailment of their liberty when the university authority decided to construct wire mesh burglary proofing round some male halls. Including the ban on the use of electrical appliances in rooms without the Warden's approval. In protest the students destroyed the chairs and tables in their rooms, which escalated further into mass protest and riot within the

campus" (Onyeonoru, 1996 cited in Etadon, 2013:336).

"There was also a crisis, in 1971 when the students of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University complained about the inadequate supply of drinks by the Cafeteria Manager at a Hall party in January 1971. This led the students to demand for the removal of the manager, which was rebuffed by the university authorities, leading to demonstration, that lasted for about a week. In the end, the Vice-Chancellor invited the police to the campus to quell the unrest, which lead to a violent clash between the students and the police officers. The crisis eventually resulted in the police shooting and killing a student named Kunle Adepeju. This was the very first shooting and killing of a university student in the history of Nigerian university" (Onyeonoru, 1996 cited in Etadon, 2013:335). Another example of these scenario are cult clashes in Ambrose Alli university Ekpoma 1998, leading to the death of many student" (Aluede et al., 2005:19).

PATHOLOGICAL ISSUES

These are compulsive, obsessive and irrational issues that leads to conflict between both parties, lecturer and student. For instance there are scenarios were some students and teachers get along right from the start, and other relationships take time to develop. Unfortunately, there are occasions when teachers and students have long-lasting relationship problems. Especially because of a broken bond between them or an unresolved conflict that keeps the two from connecting ("Student Teacher Conflict", n.d.).

However several causes of lecturer student's conflict have being suggested to include;

Insensitivity to Student Needs

"A lack of awareness on the part of the lecturer leads to poor lecturer-student relationships. Not all students respond the same way to lessons, and some require personalized educational practices. For example, a lecturer might assume that a student who never volunteers in class is apathetic or disengaged. In reality, the student might be a visual learner who does not respond well to lecture-style teaching" ("Student Teacher Conflict", n.d.)

Teacher Bullying

"Bullying by a teacher leads to poor relationships with students. Stuart Twemlow… a psychiatrist at the Menninger Clinic in Houston, conducted an anonymous survey of 116 teachers at seven elementary schools. Surprisingly, 45 percent of the teachers admitted to bullying a student. Twemlow… defines teacher bullying as "using power to punish, manipulate, or disparage a student beyond what would be a reasonable disciplinary procedure." When teachers bully their students, their behavior results in dysfunctional teacher-student relationships, were they do not feel that those teachers have their best interests in mind. Some students even withdraw completely" ("Student Teacher Conflict", n.d.).

Crossed Lines and Mixed Signals

"Teachers often send students mixed messages. Social networking, texting and online teacher-student interactions complicate classroom relationships. In some cases, teachers get too friendly with their students and cross lines of professionalism, even when sexual misconduct does not occur" ("Student Teacher Conflict", n.d.).

Troublesome Behavior

"A leading cause of dissension between teachers and students is rude, disrespectful or condescending behavior. Teachers are often to blame for these types of infractions, but students are guilty as well. Teachers

who interrupt students, blame them for classroom problems, ignore students' personal needs, criticize them in front of classmates and demonstrate apathy towards their student do them a great disservice. Similarly, students who show disrespect, badmouth teachers or ignore well-meaning guidance contribute to strained relationships" ("Student Teacher Conflict", n.d.).

Misunderstanding, Prejudice, Fixed Judgments

Ozgan (2016) using example of Nuri the teacher and kemal the student illustrates "that Kemal has poor marks and is sometimes late for the lesson. Nuri knows these characteristics of Kemal and has his fixed prejudice. There are also instances where lecturers award marks based on student past poor performance without diligently reading a student work to know if he has improved on his past performance, this has created serious conflict between lecturers and student, hence leading to querying of the propriety or other wise of marks awarded by some lecturers (Ozgan, 2016).

Lack of Communication

Effective communication between teachers and students has the potential to improve the learning experience and create a positive environment in the classroom. However, the relationship work on both ends. Many times, as revealed by Aparajeya, (2019) teachers fail to create engaging lessons and struggle to connect with their students on a one-to-one basis. Students on the other hand also have unaddressed language or speech difficulties which lead to poor communication.

Uninteresting Classroom Lessons

Classroom communication often suffers when students are bored or unenthusiastic about their schoolwork. Certainly also, it is impossible to entertain students all day, but Aparajeya (2019) suggested that, teachers should work hard to develop engaging lessons with interesting, relevant activities. Thought-provoking assignments, technology-enhanced lectures and creative task spur classroom communication and interaction. On the other hand, outdated and monotonous assignments create communication barriers, and students just want the class to be over.

Personality Differences

Aparajeya (2019), is of the view that communication between teachers and students might also be hampered from personality differences between the two. For example, many students feel uncomfortable connecting on a personal level with their teachers and avoid communicating with them. This personality dynamic can be frustrating for teachers who attempt to bond with each student, only to find their efforts unsuccessful. Students, who are outgoing and more vocal, often strive to be the teacher's pet. Personality differences lead to frustration, unhappiness and a lack of communication between students and teachers.

Peer Pressure

According to Aparajeya, (2019) this could probably be the least likely reason for student teacher conflict, but can create huge communication problems in the classroom when students respond to teachers by acting funny, or disengaged. Students might refuse to take their studies seriously in order to maintain their not-so-interested-in-school reputations.

Negative Teacher Student Relationship

According to Pushkarna, (2013) Student misbehavior is one of the most frequently cited problems occurring in schools. In fact, teachers consider controlling student behavior to be one of their greatest challenges and deficits in their training and skills. Disruptive classroom behavior is a major factor contributing to teacher

stress and discontent and significantly affects teachers' capacity to maintain a productive and orderly learning environment.

Table 1. Table of causes of conflict between lecturer and students

1	Insensitivity to Student Needs	A lack of awareness on the part of the instructor leads to poor teacher-student relationships.
2	Teacher Bullying	Bullying by a teacher leads to poor relationships with students.
3	Crossed Lines and Mixed Signals	Teachers often send students mixed messages. Social networking, texting and online teacher-student interactions complicate classroom relationships.
4	Misunderstanding, prejudice, fixed judgments	A leading cause of dissension between teachers and students is rude, disrespectful or condescending behavior.
5	Lack of communication	Effective communication between teachers and students has the potential to improve the learning experience and create a positive environment in the classroom.
6	Ongoing Negative Behaviour	Good behavior is a necessary condition for effective teaching and learning to take place.
7	Learning Rigidity	Feeling that student should pay sole attentions to a teacher's class without considering that student has other classes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We shall adopt the theory of constructive conflict by Mary Parker Follet based on the desire of this paper to see to the amicable resolution of student, lecturer conflict, which has grown in several noticeable dimensions, as exposed by the forgoing analysis. On these note, Wilmot and Hocker (2001:130) defined conflict resolution strategies (styles) as "patterned responses, or clusters of behaviour that people use in conflict". Conflict researchers classify conflict resolution strategies in different ways. Quite distinctively as a natural and inevitable part of life, that does not necessarily have to lead to venomous outcomes if approached with the right analytical and imaginative tools. A conflict between lecturers and student may present an opportunity for positive or constructive development. Among the three ways proposed by Follet… integration offers the best possible reward, as it tends to jettisons penalties' on all actors in conflict and provides for reciprocal relations.

In 1925, Mary Parker Follett, an American intellectual, social worker, management consultant and pioneer of organizational theory/behaviour, presented a paper titled "Constructive Conflict"– that conflict, as a natural and inevitable part of life, does not necessarily have to lead to deleterious outcomes. Rather, if approached with the right analytical and imaginative tools a conflict can present an opportunity for positive or constructive development. According to Ms Follett, there are three ways to respond to conflict– Dominance, Compromise and Integration.

Dominance means victory of one side over the other. This according to her works in the short term, but is unproductive in the end (to make her point Follett presciently alludes to the results of the World War 1 (WWI). Compromise means each party having to give up something for the sake of a meaningful reduction of friction. Compromise in her view often leaves parties unsatisfied – having given up something of value. Finally, integration, the option championed by Follett, means creatively incorporating the parties' fundamental desires/interests into the solution.

Integration in this context, means the creation of a novel solution that penalizes no one and that becomes the only sure base for progress toward an ideal democracy. According to Ms Follet if integration is to be achieved, various forms of coordination must be introduced as fundamental principles of organization, which are;

- Direct contact between the responsible people who have to carry out policies, rather than hierarchical control.
- Early contact between those responsible, so that policy may be created by them, rather than later meetings that can only try to resolve differences between policies already evolved by isolated groups.
- The reciprocal, relating of all factors in a situation, that is, equal attention to all the variables in the social system (Gitchandra, 2011).

CONCLUSION

In spite of the palpable sentiment and convergence of conflict resolution theories, lecturers and student will still continue to play the proverbial cat and mouse game, due to mutual suspicion, distrust and reservation that is inherent amongst them. It may be underscored that, a conflict-free atmosphere is conducive to both constructive and creative work. As such, there should be mutual acceptance and tolerance, accommodation and understanding, bearing in mind that uncalled for tensions and conflicts often-lead to mental stresses, psycho-somatic diseases and other deformities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall aim of education is to provide for an informed, enlightened and reformed society, were peace, order, tranquility and development reigns. Besides, research overtime has shown that a society under protracted crises is perhaps deficient educationally, and lacks proper enlightenment. This by implication implies that student and teacher are not supposed to be under protracted crises judging by their standing in the society, which is not to say that conflict is bad per se, if it is allowed to fester is damaging. However, some strategies have being recommended to condense the life span of conflict.

Collaborating Approach

Collaborating approach is opposite of avoiding and is characterized by both assertiveness and cooperativeness. This style focuses on satisfying the needs of both parties involved. In this both parties agree on working together. Scholars have argued that a collaborative approach to conflict management may enhance levels of trust and cooperation between parties in conflict. Collaboration may be a useful strategy for resolving and/or regulating conflicts and loosening the grip of dissension where confrontation involves lecturers and students.

Compromising Style

Compromising style is a mid-way approach to conflict management, it adopts an intermediate course between assertiveness and cooperativeness and it is effective when both parties agree on sacrificing some concerns for achieving a solution. This style could also be of great significance in resolving conflict between lecturers and students.

Accommodating Style

Accommodating style is characterized by both unassertiveness and cooperativeness and it is the opposite of competing style. In this style an individual gives up some of his concerns so as to accommodate the needs of

his adversary. This style could also prove to be the melting point that stymies conflict between lecturer and student. In this case, the lecturer who is seen as the stronger party in this scenario should be ready to show some vulnerability and humility which is inviting for the students, as it reduce the display of obnoxious superiority, thus making the lecturer approachable rather than intimidating and reduce disconnection between lecturers and student, inform of conflict.

Integrating

The integrating strategy has also being proposed to be a more common choice. In terms of effectiveness, this strategy produces the most positive results: as the opponents get to know themselves better, their relations improve and the cause of the conflict can be eliminated more easily. The integrating strategy provides real possibilities for solving even a prolonged conflict.

Understanding Conflict

It has been said by great satirist that every good story has a conflict, and if there were no conflict, there would be no story. In stories, conflict advances the action and creates interest, but classroom conflict provides the opportunity teachers to model appropriate conflict resolution strategies and teach students to cope when things do not go their way. Without forgetting the fact that conflict is natural, functional, and healthy. Teachers could be great help by providing students with the knowledge and skills it takes to effectively resolve a conflict.

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