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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: REALIZATIONS FROM ISSUES RESOLVED BY THE SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the causes and types of conflicts that commonly confront school authorities and how they handle such problems. Likewise, to know the best practices they have adopted in dealing with conflicts based on their experiences and realizations. The results of this study will serve as a springboard for developing the school authorities' leadership skills in dealing with diverse people.

10 schools in Quezon City were selected through a snowball sampling or referral method. A total of 114 participants were involved in this study composed of school principals, head teachers, master teachers, and teachers, broken down as follows; 94 joined the conduct of the quantitative survey. 14 of whom participated in both the quantitative and qualitative phases. The remaining 20 participated only in the qualitative phase.

The convergent parallel design of the mixed method is used. The statistical tools used were the frequency count, percentage, rank, and mean score. The phenomenology approach was applied in which the gathered information was transcribed, synthesized, and analyzed using thematic coding, data integration, data saturation, and triangulation.

The common causes of the school relationship conflicts were categorized into (1) Individual, (2) managerial, and (3) organizational-culture causes. The six types of relationship conflicts are (1) head teacher-school principal conflict, (2) head teacher-head teacher conflict, (3) teacher-school principal conflict, (4) teacher-head Teacher conflict, (5) teacher-teacher conflict, and (6) teacher-student/parent conflict.

In individual causes, Difference in Personality and Values emerged as the common causes. In managerial, Leadership Style and Problem in Communications are the common causes. In organizational culture, Internal discussions which affect the image of other colleagues are the common cause.

Various references, conflict resolutions, best practices, and realizations were pointed out. Notwithstanding, many deficiencies were found in managing the school conflict. Thus, the proposed capacity enhancement training program is strongly recommended.

KEYWORDS– Conflict Management, School Conflicts, School Issues, School Grievance Committee

INTRODUCTION

The conduct of this study is rooted in the diverse controversies involving some school authorities that were publicized worldwide through various social media platforms which gained numerous comments and reactions from readers and netizens. In some instances, conflicts between and among school employees were negatively progressed and were elevated to a higher level that is beyond the school administrator's control. Some were even presented to the media which made the situations more dramatic and sensational making the school authorities and institution controversial, putting their credibility in hot water whereby both of them-the school administrators and parties involved were negatively judged and demonized. These publicized controversies have a negative impact on mental health resulting in anxiety among the school authorities in which the image of the educational body in general is tarnished.

It is therefore the interest of the researcher that this study is conducted to find out the causes and types of conflicts that commonly confront the school authorities and how they handle such problems. Likewise, the researcher must know the best practices that the school authorities have adopted in dealing with those various conflicts based on their experiences and realizations from the resolved issues they have handled.

The general problem of this study is: How do school authorities and grievance committees reflect on the cases that they have resolved? Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. How may the school authority-participants be described in terms of the following:
 - 1.1 position
 - 1.2 educational attainment
 - 1.3 seminars and training attended
 - 1.4 number of years in the service,
 - 1.5 role in the School Grievance Committees
2. What are the common causes and types of conflicts attended to by the school authorities and grievance committees?
3. How do school authorities manage conflicts guided by educational leadership principles and legal bases?
4. How do the adopted conflict resolutions minimize the exacerbation of conflicts?
5. What realizations do school authorities and grievance committee members have made in resolving conflicts?
6. What capacity enhancement training program may be proposed to re-skill and upskill school authorities and grievance committees in resolving conflicts?

The results of this study are worth sharing with other school authorities, especially novice school managers and school personnel. This will serve as their springboard in developing their leadership skills and gaining proper dealing techniques with diverse groups of people. Similarly, it will help enlighten everyone in the workplace, that people as human resource is more important than anything else. An organization will not operate without people. Thus, workers must be treated well regardless of their position in the organization, economic status, race, color, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The convergent parallel research design of a mixed methods approach is used in generating data and investigating the management of school conflicts in 10 selected schools in the Division of Quezon City. The selection of the school respondents was based on the security and health protocols of the IATF. The researcher adopted the snowball sampling technique or the so-called referral method in selecting the school respondents to gather substantial information that would be of help in making the undertaking more relevant. This was made possible through coordination with a member of the SDO Quezon City Grievance Committee. It materialized soon after the permit to conduct the study was approved. The referred selected schools have been known to have handled different conflict instances.

The individual participants of this study are the 114 school authorities from the selected schools in the division of Quezon City, which are composed of School Heads, Department Heads, Master Teachers, Teachers, and other school authorities who are designated members and or had been members of the school grievance committee. Relatedly, they have experienced, handled, and decided on various types of school conflicts. Out of the 114 respondents, 94 of them participated in the survey. 14 participated in both the quantitative and qualitative phases while 20 participated only in the qualitative phase. The participants for the qualitative phase were purposefully selected. The interview process was done based on their availability and willingness to take part considering the quarantine status of the community. The identity of the schools and individual participants were hidden using pseudonyms in observance of RA10173 or the Data Privacy Act (DPA) of 2012. This study was conducted in the fourth and last quarter of the school year 2020-2021.

In the quantitative phase, the descriptive design was utilized by the researcher. A researcher-made descriptive survey-questionnaire served as the instrument used to gather data and relevant information. Other items of the researcher-made questionnaire were borrowed from the study of Catana (2015). However, some modifications were made by the researcher to make it relevant and to fit the needs of this current study, such as the specification of school relationship conflicts which are implied in the said trusted reference. The survey questionnaire was validated by the Public School District Supervisor, School Principal, Department Head, and Master Teacher. Four of them have experience in handling school conflicts. Following the validation of the survey questionnaire, the researcher finalized it and placed it in the Google form ready to be accessed by the respondents. The statistical tools used in this study are frequency count, percentage, rank, and mean scores.

In the qualitative phase, the phenomenological method was adapted to arrive at a desirable and more reliable result without having partiality. Semi-structured, one-to-one, and group interviews using the interview guide questions were conducted with the informants via google meet and face-to-face mode. The data gathered were transcribed, synthesized, and analyzed using thematic coding and document analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants' positions are identified to provide information on the school authorities who manage conflicts. There are 94 participants involved in the quantitative survey. 16 or 17.021% of them occupied the position of Department Heads. Seventy-eight (78) or 82.979% are teachers broken down into Junior High School Teachers (JHS), Senior High School Teachers (SHS), Master Teachers (JHS), Master Teachers (SHS), and SPED Teachers.

Participants' educational background serves as one of the bases whereby the school authorities can provide wise, fair, and just decisions in dealing with conflicts. The selected participant schools differ in the number of participants with varied educational attainment. Most of them hold a master's degree doctoral and even a degree in Law. Others have earned Units/ CAR in master's degrees and Doctoral degrees. The attendance to seminars and training

on Conflict Management of the participants are likewise included to ascertain the improvement of skills in handling the conflicts through the application of knowledge learned. 89 or 94.68% have no attendance to Seminars and Training on Conflict Management. Five (5) or 5.32% have Attended Seminars and Training on Conflict Management. Participants' Number of Years in Service determines the span of exposure in handling various types of conflicts. Incorporating this will help strengthen the results of the study. Most of the Participants' number of years in the service ranges from 3-5 years. Others are 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 21-25 years, 26-30 years, and 31 years and over. The role of the school grievance committees needs to be articulated to make the members aware of their functions and for them to perform their tasks efficiently.

The role of the school grievance committees is anchored on D.O. 35 s. 2004 and DECS Service Manual 2000 which is to provide the best way to solve causes of grievance and to prevent employee discontent and dissatisfaction. It is also the role of the committee to be non-partisan and uphold employee morale and establish a desirable and conducive relationship between superior and employee.

In the Individual causes of conflict, the school authorities and grievance committees had experienced and observed, the Difference in Personality and Values. Should this be ignored, it will result in a more serious situation. In the common managerial causes, Problem in Communication and Leadership Style has the greatest number of responses. The common organizational culture causes Internal discussions which affect the image of other colleagues gaining the greatest number of responses. The illustration is shown below.

Table 1

Overall Summary of Common Causes of Conflicts Attended to by the School Authorities and Grievance Committees.

Causes of Conflicts	Types Of Conflicts						Total Score	Mean
	Head Teacher-School Principal	Head Teacher-Head Teacher	Teacher-School Principal	Head Teacher-Teacher	Teacher-Teacher	Teacher-Student/Parent		
A) Individual Causes	Frequency							
Difference in Personality and Values	53	49	58	57	65	67	349	58.16
Difference in Levels of Qualifications, Skills, and Abilities	29	37	33	39	40	42	225	37.5
Difference in Cultural Beliefs	12	9	16	12	18	20	87	14.5
None	29	28	24	21	15	12	129	21.5
B) Managerial Causes								
Problems in communication (e.g., lack of clarity, coordination)	39	45	42	46	56	61	292	48.67
Irregular allocation of the school's resources	9	6	11	10	7	11	54	9.00
Favoritism by the immediate superior	19	19	25	19	21	10	113	18.80
Subjective performance appraisal	14	14	17	14	22	12	93	15.50
Leadership style	50	39	39	44	41	23	226	37.67
None	22	22	22	19	18	21	124	20.67
C) Organizational Culture Causes								
Lack of support for professional growth and development	27	21	30	27	25	24	152	25.33
Internal discussions which affect the image of other colleagues	42	46	35	45	49	35	251	41.80
Excess in promotion	14	15	17	14	21	10	89	14.83
None	26	26	28	26	20	40	216	36.00

In managing conflicts, document analysis and thematic coding were used. The emerging themes and causes of conflicts were identified based on the conveyed ideas given by the participant. It is presented below.

Table 4

Summary Responses for question No. 3 "How do school authorities manage conflict guided by Educational Leadership Principles and Legal Bases?"

Question	Summary of Participants' Responses	Application educational leadership principles, experiences, and legal bases
a) How did you manage the conflict that you have encountered?	<p>Emerging Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -through ADR-dialogue and open communication -group of Department Heads joined force in managing conflicts - exercise impartiality -Seeking support from family and friends -Focus on work and family 	<p>Informant DH6 - resolving conflicts is part of leadership.</p> <p>Informants MT2 and DH16 - Show impartiality in treating the conflict</p> <p>Informant DH18 - Handling sensitive situations with utmost confidentiality.</p>
b) Which among the types of conflicts you consider most challenging?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher-Head Teacher 	<p>Informants DH7 - Have patience and understanding.</p> <p>Informant T4 - Dealing conflicts based on experience.</p>
c) How do you describe the technical skills of the school authorities in dealing with conflicts?	<p>Emerging Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Several participants have undergone training in conflicts management especially the school principals. -Most of the participants have no trainings. -The School Principal deals the conflicts -they settle conflicts in their own circle of influence 	<p>Informants T3 and MT5- Having a strong support system.</p> <p>Informant SH1-The use of related references.</p>
d) What is your opinion on the way your school authorities facilitate the resolution of school conflicts?	<p>Emerging Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Following the guidelines call the parties involved and call the president of the faculty club, to mediate, to solve it in such a way that no one would be aggrieved. -Facilitating with the assistance from outside of the school Division Office, Region and Central Office 	<p>Informants DH3, MT1, DH14 and SH2 - The application of learning from the academe and trainings.</p>
e)What is your view on the leadership styles of the school authorities towards resolving conflicts?	<p>Emerging Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Transformational leadership -Poor leadership -Sought assistance from higher Authorities beyond the school 	

The most challenging type of conflict is the Teacher-Head Teacher conflict. The illustration is shown below.

Table 5

Most Challenging Type of Conflict

Most Challenging type of Conflict		
Type of Conflict	frequency	Rank
1)Head Teacher-School Principal	6	2.5
2)Head Teacher- Head Teacher	2	5.5
3)Teacher-School Principal	2	5.5
4)Teacher-Head Teacher	10	1
5)Teacher-Teacher	5	4
6)Teacher-Student/Parent	6	2.5

In minimizing the exacerbation of conflicts, varied emerging themes were created based on the conveyed answers of the respondents.

Table 6

Summary of question No. 4 "How does the adopted conflict resolutions minimize the exacerbation of conflicts?"

Question	Participants' responses
	Emerging Themes
What Conflict resolution do you usually adopt in dealing conflicts?	-Open Communication -Social Dialogue (ADR) -Win-Win negotiation
How do conflict resolutions help you in minimizing the emergence of conflicts in your school?	-Helped minimize the emergence of conflicts in school -Make people understand each other -Builds Confidence in the leader to resolve conflicts -Baseline to avoid precedent of cases -lessen the percentage of complaints lodged in the Division Office. -Develop harmonious working relationships
Do you have references in resolving conflicts? What are those?	CSC Code of Ethics and manual on rules and procedure, Deped Order 15 s. 2012, Deped Manual, Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, Child protection Policy, Learnings from the academe and trainings
What best practices do you have in dealing conflicts?	Follow proper guidelines mandated Dealing problems on a professional level Show honesty, humility and respect Call for a meeting Join force in handling conflicts Focusing on the problem and listening attentively

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, the following conclusions were drawn.

The school authorities and grievance committees have successfully managed the school-based conflicts that they have encountered. Through the adopted conflict resolutions, such as win-win negotiation and ADR through dialogue and open communication, application of gained leadership principles in the academe, consultation with related legal bases, and consistently employing the best practices, the various types of conflicts were resolved.

Despite the lack of training of other school authorities and other found weaknesses, the school-based conflicts were managed by way of exercising impartiality, good leadership, and seeking assistance from higher authorities beyond the school such as the Division Office, Region, and Central Offices. Likewise, their cooperation, collaboration, teamwork, and fervent desire serve as factors in the successful resolution of conflicts.

The adopted conflict resolutions have varied meaningful results. the emergence of conflicts in school had minimized, people understood each other, confidence in the leader to resolve conflicts is built up, they served as a baseline to avoid the precedent of cases, the percentage of

complaints lodged in the Division Office lessened and the harmonious working relationships of people are developed. With the various experiences that they had, numerous and relevant realizations were likewise made.

From the foregoing conclusions, the researcher offers the following recommendations to improve the management of school conflicts;

1. Relative to the ancillary assignments, school authorities should observe the Department Memorandum No. 105 s. 2015 “Teaching Loads and Assignments of Public School Teachers”. Likewise, they should be mindful of the proper management of time to achieve desirable performance and to avoid compromising other responsibilities.
2. The Seminars or Training on conflict management should be open to all school authorities for them to have the opportunity to strengthen their skills in the same way, all schools should have an established grievance committee not only for compliance with the law but also in preparation for the unexpected emergence of highly sensitive conflicts and to make every school authority expert in conflict management.
3. School authorities’ leadership skills and troubleshooting in managing school conflicts should be enhanced.
4. Professionalism and ethics and other related laws should be continuously revisited to raise the awareness of the School Authorities, to promote healthy and harmonious working relationships, to capacitate them in dealing with conflicts, and to live up to their status as professionals.
5. Strengthen monitoring of the implementation of D.O.35 s. 2004 and D.O. 15. S. 2012.

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