

Original Article

Organisational Conflicts in Higher Educational Institutions and Effects on Employee Performance

Daniel Tetteh¹, Gifty Tetteh²

^{1,2}University of Education, P. O. Box 25, Winneba – Ghana

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Abstract - This descriptive survey conducted at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) examines the causes of organisational conflicts and the effects they pose on the performance of employees. Focusing on the development of human resources, this research investigates the existing strategies employed by the institution in conflict management and examines its results thereof, and further outlines strategies to be considered in conflict management at the University of Education, Winneba. Data for this study were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. The target population comprised two hundred (200) staff from the Winneba and Ajumako Campuses of the institution. This study was conducted using stratified probability sampling based on the different categories of staff that comprised; Senior Members, Senior Staff and Junior Staff members. The study gathered that conflict management systems should be integrated within the University of Education, Winneba's system. The integration should be at a higher level of the organisation's hierarchy rather than mere interconnection because conflict management is a human sub-system achieved through a typical development process.

Keywords - Organisational conflicts, Employee performance, Conflict management.

1. Introduction

An organisation consists of several people. The attitudes, feelings, needs and perceptions differ from person to person. Individual differences may cause misunderstandings and conflicts between individuals and groups. Therefore, interpersonal and intergroup conflicts affect the organisation negatively or positively. Thus conflict management is required to resolve conflicts and maintain order; otherwise, employee morale and organisational performance may suffer (Dessler, 2008). Organisations are found in all economic sectors, forming the bedrock of all civilised societies. Organisations are the vehicles that carry out such endeavours for any productive activity to be carried out, be it in the private sector, public sector, political or social sector. A detailed analysis reveals that sometimes one sector of an organisation obeys the operating code of one sub-system, whereas the other sector obeys the code of another sub-system. A very obvious example is media organisations, where the editorial boards act on the operation mode "publicity", whereas the publishing houses refer to the economic code. The same holds true for universities whose research departments are oriented towards truth and understanding, whereas the teaching activity relates to the education system.

Conflict based on scarcity of power, resources or social position and differing value systems occurs when individuals or groups feel that other individuals or groups have frustrated their plans, goals, beliefs or activities. Conflict among

employees in an organisation is simply inevitable; rather, it is the nature of complex organisations (Putnam & Krone, 2006). However, if managed properly, it can positively impact employee satisfaction and performance (Dana, 2000).

Research indicates that management executives spend twice as much time settling employees' disputes than they did a decade ago (Accountemps, 2006). If conflicts are managed properly by applying the best course of action, the organisation can increase its performance by utilising scarce resources and achieving the organisational objectives. (Awan & Anjum 2015). Conversely, unmanaged conflict negatively impacts both employee satisfaction and performance. Timely conflict management can potentially improve employee satisfaction and job performance (Awan & Anjum, 2015). Managements should therefore resolve conflicts so that organisational performance can be increased (Song, 2000).

The University of Education, Winneba, started with the merger of seven diploma-awarding colleges into a University College as a result of national reform in the tertiary education sector in 1987. The University, which started with a student population of 1,889 in 1992, presently has well over 57 000 students pursuing various degrees, diplomas and certificate programmes.

With a mandate to produce professional educators to spearhead a national vision of education aimed at redirecting Ghana's efforts along the path of rapid economic and social development, the University of Education, Winneba has and



continues to tirelessly work towards promoting research as a key ingredient to feed into the Educational Sector in Ghana. The University runs a business, humanities, arts and sciences programmes at its Regular, Sandwich and Distance sessions. The University has consistently worked towards ensuring the provision of quality teaching, learning and research education in Ghana by living up to its special mandate. The Committees of the Council and Academic Board are actively engaged in regulating and upholding the academic standards in the teaching and learning efforts of the University. Accreditation and Re-accreditation of programmes are regularly done to ensure that all courses are duly recognised by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) to be pursued by students in the University.

It has a workforce of about one thousand nine hundred and eighty-one (1,981). An institution such as the University of Education, Winneba, has a workforce with different ethnic, religious, social and academic backgrounds, which means the place is a fertile ground for conflicts. It is, therefore, not surprising that conflict is common in the institution. Conflict may occur on a daily or even hourly basis. These may involve differences between management and senior members, senior members and senior staff, or junior staff, senior staff and junior staff etc.

An observation at the University of Education, Winneba, indicates that conflict is prevalent in the University, touching the workers' lives and negatively impacting the University's performance.

2. Statement of the Problem

The upsurge of conflict at UEW these days has been tearing the University apart and affecting the institution's very existence as a place of learning with dire consequences for the entire country. The type of conflict currently occurring in UEW is highly dysfunctional, affecting the performance of staff, workers, students, and community members and even polarising the whole country on ethnic lines as well as causing the country to incur the displeasure of international organisations like ILO and Amnesty International. The repercussions of such conflicts are low performance, strikes and mismanagement, which eventually deprive the organisation of achieving its set goals.

2.1. Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the causes of conflicts in the University of Education, Winneba.
2. Examine the effects of conflict on employee performance at the University of Education, Winneba.
3. To examine the approaches the University of Education, Winneba, employed in conflict resolution.
4. To examine the outcomes of conflict management strategies at the University of Education, Winneba.

2.2. Research Questions

1. What are the causes of conflicts at the University of Education, Winneba?
2. To what extent has conflict affected the performance of employees at the University of Education, Winneba?
3. What approaches are employed by the University of Education, Winneba, in conflict resolution?
4. What has been the outcome of conflict management practices employed by the University of Education, Winneba?

2.3 Purpose of the Study

This research focuses on institutional conflict and its effects on the growth and development of employees at the University of Education Winneba. This study, through its findings, unearths the causes of conflicts in the institution and outlines strategies that can be employed in mitigating conflicts in the institution. The case of conflict in the University of Education, Winneba, when offered the needed attention, would help address the grievances of staff members, create a conducive working environment and enhance the performance of employees at the institution.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study is a descriptive survey that made use of both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2. Research Instrument

Data for this study was obtained using questionnaires administered in person by the researcher and completed by respondents (staff of the University of Education, Winneba) on their own. On average, it took respondents five minutes to complete a questionnaire. The likert psychometric scale was used in designing the questionnaire for this study with the objective of getting the opinions and attitudes of respondents identified for this study. Additional data was gathered through review documents and interviews.

3.3. Data Analysis Plan

Data was collected, sorted and analysed with the use of the Microsoft Excel application. Interview data were analysed thematically. The researcher sought the permission of University authorities prior to administering the questionnaires. The researcher enlisted the assistance of one senior member and one senior staff member on each of the campuses to help with the questionnaire distribution. The questionnaires were administered to staff in their offices. The data collection process took two weeks to complete because it took time to negotiate access to the 200 staff who participated in the study.

3.4. Population of the Study

The University of Education, Winneba, has four (4) campuses, namely Winneba Campus, Ajumako Campus,

Kumasi Campus and Mampong Campus. The population for this study comprised Senior Members, Senior Staff and Junior Staff of Ajumako and Winneba Campuses taken in April 2018, which totaled 1262 and 121 for Winneba and Ajumako Campuses, respectively. Of this population, a stratified random sampling technique was employed for the study to divide respondents into sub-sections comprising groups and to restrict the possible samples to ensure fair representation of the population from both campuses, which were whittled down to 160 respondents from the Winneba campus since it has a larger population and 40 respondents from the Ajumako campus because it has a smaller staff strength.

Table 1. Statistics of Respondents

Entry Number	Description	Number Of Respondents
1	Staff members Winneba Campus	160
2	Staff members Ajumako Campus	40
3	Total	100

Source: Field data 2018

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Presence of Conflicts at the University of Education (UEW)

The study's primary objective was to investigate whether any conflict situation exists in UEW. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were aware of any conflict in the UEW. One hundred and ninety (190) respondents representing 95% of interviewed, responded in the affirmative, whilst ten (10) respondents constituting 5.0% of those sampled, responded otherwise. This establishes that, indeed, there is the existence of conflict in UEW.

4.2. Manifestation of Conflict at the University of Education (UEW)

Respondents were asked to indicate the manifestations of conflict as observed in University, and the following responses were gathered from the respondents as tabulated below.

From the table, twenty (20) respondents representing 10% of those surveyed, mentioned violent and aggressive behavior of factions in the conflict as a manifestation of conflict as observed. Fifty (50) respondents constituting 25% of those interviewed, mentioned poor performance in academic activities and other extracurricular activities in UEW as signs of conflict on the Winneba and Ajumako campuses of UEW. Forty (40) respondents, representing 20%, mentioned riots and strikes by lecturers and other workers on campus as manifestations of conflict in UEW. Thirty-five (35) respondents making up 18% of those surveyed, indicated the high turnover of workers from the employment of UEW as a sign of conflict existing on the campuses of UEW.

Table 2. Manifestations of Conflicts in UEW

Entry Number	Manifestation Of Conflict	Frequency	Percentage
1	Violence and aggressive behavior	20	10.0
2	Poor performance of all activities	50	25.0
3	Riots and strikes	40	20.0
4	High personnel turnover	35	18.0
5	Stigmatisation and victimisation of staff	30	15
6	Insubordination and absenteeism of staff	25	12.0
7	Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Data 2018

Thirty (30) respondents constituting 15 % of those surveyed, mentioned stigmatisation and victimisation of staff as manifestations of conflict during the upheaval on UEW on campuses. Twenty-five (25) respondents representing 12% of respondents contacted, mentioned that insubordination and absenteeism as a manifestation of conflict have been pervasive on UEW campuses. One can therefore conclude that there was total indiscipline among staff and workers during the time of conflict on the various campuses of UEW.

4.3. Immediate causes of conflicts at the University of Education (UEW)

The study sought to investigate the causes of the conflict in UEW, and respondents were asked to indicate some of the causes of conflict by their estimation. In response, eighty (80) respondents representing 40% of those sampled, mentioned the subtle moves for removing the Vice Chancellor and other key officers from office as the cause of conflict presently at the University of Education Winneba. The table below presents a summary of the causes of conflicts in UEW.

From the table, ten (10) respondents representing 5% of those surveyed, stated that the cause of conflict at the University resulted from the institution of a court case against the University by town folks of Winneba. Forty (40) respondents representing 20% of those interviewed, indicated the cause of conflict in the institution as victimisation and stigmatisation of staff by factions in the University. Fifty respondents constituting 25% of those sampled, mentioned the corruption case levelled against the Vice Chancellor as the cause of conflict among lecturers and staff at the

University. Twenty (20) respondents making up 10% of those surveyed, mentioned discrimination on tribal lines by authorities at the University regarding appointments and the award of a contract as the cause of conflict in the University. This data reveals several reasons for the conflict that prevailed at the UEW, culminating in the chaos engulfing the University administration.

Table 3. Immediate Causes of Conflicts in UEW

Entry Number	Immediate Causes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Removal of the vice chancellor and other key officers from office	80	40.0
2	The institution of court cases against the University by town folks	10	5.0
3	Stigmatisation and victimisation of staff	40	20.0
4	Corruption case against Vice Chancellor and key officials	50	25.0
5	Discrimination on tribal lines among staff	20	10.0
6	Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

4.4. Remote Causes of the Conflict at the University of Education (UEW)

Table 4. Remote Causes of the Conflict in UEW

Entry Number	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tribalism	10	5.0
2	Politics	90	45.0
3	Greed	70	35.0
4	Injustice	30	15.0
5	Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Other causes of conflict in UEW were classified as remote causes of conflict. These remote causes were simmering problems that were not addressed appropriately; they reared up and have been the grounds of present

agitations of tribalism, political manipulation, insatiability, and injustice served on subordinates by their superiors. The table below presents a summary of the results on the remote causes of conflict in UEW.

Table 5. Effect of Conflict on Performance

Entry Number	Effects of conflicts	Frequency	Percentage
1	Breakdown of discipline and respect in the administration of the University	58	29.0
2	Consensus building in taking critical decisions in the University has broken down	45	23.0
3	Factions based on tribal lines emerged among staff members to affect the smooth operation of the University	30	15.0
4	The conflict has resulted in several strikes and counter strikes affecting the effective delivery of the core mandate of the University	20	10.0
5	Research and teaching in the University have been negatively affected due to the conflict in the school	47	23.0
6	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Data gathered from the research suggests that conflict has led to a breakdown of discipline and respect in the administration of UEW. This assertion was made by 120 respondents representing a majority of 60% of respondents accessed. 50 respondents representing 25%, suggested that

consensus building in taking critical decisions in the University has broken down due to conflicts.

On the issue of factions based on tribal lines emerging among staff members as having affected the smooth operation of the University, 30 respondents indicated that conflict in UEW has birthed factions based on tribal lines, which have affected the smooth operation of the institution. This figure represents 15% of respondents accessed. None of the respondents suggested that conflict in UEW has resulted in strikes and counter-strikes affecting the effective delivery of the core mandate of the institution, neither has it negatively affected research and teaching in the University.

4.5. Conflict Resolution Strategies at the University of Education (UEW)

Targeted at ensuring a harmonised atmosphere for the activities of staff members of the institution, the University of Education, Winneba has adopted measures to sanitise its system also as an attempt to manage the existing conflicts identified in the institution. The following table summarises the results of the strategies employed by UEW in managing conflicts. Table 6 conclusively portrays that the strategies adopted, however, have not yielded the best results as gathered by this study.

Table 6. Conflict Resolution Strategies in UEW

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Suspension of offenders	140	70
2	Guidance & counseling to staff	0	0.0
3	Use disciplinary committees to try dissenting workers	20	10
4	Use of experts or mediators to resolve disagreements	20	10
5	Others	20	10
6	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

140 respondents representing 70% of the total respondents, indicated that the most utilised strategy in attempting to deal with conflicts in UEW has been

suspending offenders. This implies that the primary measure in addressing issues of conflict in UEW is by suspending offenders as compared to the strategy of offering guidance and counseling to staff or affected persons for which the research result indicated a complete non-use.

On the use of disciplinary committees to try dissenting workers and on the use of experts or mediation to resolve the disagreement, 20 respondents to each item indicated the present practice of the above strategies in conflict management in UEW, representing 10% of respondents for each of the above-discussed strategies. Another set of 20 respondents representing 10% of the sample size, expressed their thoughts on conflict resolution strategies in UEW. The following themes were identified and presented; intimidation of affected staff, outright dismissal of staff and the use of force or imposition of inappropriate conflict resolution strategies.

4.6. Conflict Resolution Strategies

The study inquired respondents; about their experiences with the outcomes of effective conflict management in UEW. A summary of outcomes of effective conflict management practices in UEW is presented in the following table.

Table 7 shows that 45 respondents representing (22.5%) of respondents, indicated that there is good behavior if effective conflict management is practiced. Another set of 45, representing (22.5%) respondents suggested that there is efficiency when effective conflict management is practiced. 5 respondents representing (2.5%) maintained that UEW management who are knowledgeable about the role of management in conflict resolution experience less or non-personal conflicts in their respective campuses and customers are satisfied. 35 of the sampled representing (17.5%) believed that trained personnel in conflict resolution allowed to mediate brings about effective conflict management. 15 respondents (7.5) of the sample size affirmed that organisations that use conflict resolution management as a function have a positive impact on their respective campuses. In contrast, no respondent indicated that training of UEW management in conflict resolution contributes significantly to reducing personnel conflict. 40 respondents representing (20.0%) maintained that the resource and sourcing policies of the University should be made transparent. 5 respondents representing (2.5%) said that to resolve conflict in UEW completely, personnel development policies should cover all sectors of UEW. 10 respondents representing (5.0%) suggested that compensation and reward structures in an attempt to resolve conflict in the institution should be made transparent.

Table 7. Conflict Resolution Strategies

Entry Number	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	There is good behavior if effective conflict management is practiced	45	22.5
2	There is efficiency when effective conflict management is practiced	45	22.5
3	UEW management who are knowledgeable about the role of management in conflict resolution experience less or non-personnel conflict in their respective campuses, and customers are satisfied	5	2.5
4	Trained personnel in conflict resolution allowed to mediate brings about effective conflict management	35	17.5
5	Organisations that use management in conflict resolution as a function realise a positive impact on their respective campuses	15	7.5
6	Training of UEW management in conflict resolution contributes significantly to the reduction of personnel conflict	40	20.0
7	Resource and sourcing policies of the University should be made transparent	5	2.5
8	Compensation and rewarding structures to be transparent	10	5.0
	Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

5. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was gathered that the root causes of existing conflicts at UEW include the removal of the Vice Chancellor and other key officers from office, the institution of court cases against the University by town folks, stigmatisation and victimisation of staff, and corruption case against Vice Chancellor and key officials with the majority of the sample believed that the removal of the Vice Chancellor is the major cause of conflict at UEW. On conflict resolution strategies, the study concludes that suspension of offenders is a major conflict resolution strategy at UEW; other conflict resolution strategies identified in the study include the use of disciplinary committees to try dissenting workers and the use of experts or mediators to resolve disagreements. On conflict resolution and management approaches and their intended results used at UEW, the study concluded that there is good behavior if effective conflict management is practiced. Furthermore, there is efficiency when effective conflict management is

practiced; UEW management who are knowledgeable about the role of management in conflict resolution experience less or non-personnel conflict in their respective campuses and customers are satisfied, lastly; organisations that use management in conflict resolution as a function realise the positive impact in their respective campuses.

In view of these, it is imperative for the school management to consider the following strategies in conflict management; encourage and promote interpersonal relationships among co-workers to improve their morale, ensure constant dialogue between management and the employees to clarify issues and exchange ideas, engage in group interactions and activities should be followed up to ensure a degree of functionality compatible to conflicts and as well as organise seminars/workshops on organisational conflict management from time to time for the employees to enable them to learn about conflicts and how it can be effectively managed for individual and organisation effectiveness.

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