

[DOI: 10.20472/BMC.2020.011.011](https://doi.org/10.20472/BMC.2020.011.011)

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## **CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS OF PRINCIPALS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND STAFF APPRAISAL IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE**

### **Abstract:**

This study ascertained the capacity-building needs of principals for conflict resolution and staff appraisal in secondary schools. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study was conducted in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State using descriptive survey research design. There are 257 public secondary schools and 298 private secondary schools in the six education zones of Anambra State. Thus, the population of the study constituted of 555 respondents made up of 257 and 298 principals in public and private secondary schools respectively in the six education zones of the state. The sample of this study comprised 167 respondents made up of 30% of the entire population selected through proportionate random sampling technique. A questionnaire developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instrument were determined by three experts. The reliability co-efficients of 0.75 and 0.81 were obtained for sections 'A' and 'B' of the instrument respectively using Cronbach alpha. The researchers together with the help of six research assistants administered the instrument. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research question while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicated that principals need capacity-building on fostering harmony in the schools. They also need capacity-building on the use appraisal to assess deficiencies in work behaviours at scheduled intervals; they need capacity-building on the use staff appraisal to promote staff commitment to the school organization; they need capacity-building on the use staff appraisal to evaluate the staff strengths and weaknesses. It was found that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools on their capacity-building needs for conflict resolution and staff appraisal in secondary schools. It was therefore recommended among others that the principals should use workshops for retraining to improve their administrative capabilities especially in the areas of conflict resolution and staff appraisal.

### **Keywords:**

Capacity-Building; Needs; Principal; Conflict Resolution; Staff Appraisal; Secondary School

**JEL Classification:** A20

## Introduction

In Nigeria as in other parts of the world, education plays important roles. It serves as a tool for human adjustment, civilization and development. It is also one of the means of improving students' capabilities, characters and preparing them for useful living in the society. The acceptance of education as the means for upward social mobility has therefore increased its role in national development and Nigeria is not exceptional.

In Nigeria, education is provided at several levels namely: pre-basic, basic, senior secondary and tertiary. The focus of this study is on secondary education. Secondary education is the type of education students receive after primary education (FRN, 2013). It lays the foundation for tertiary education by providing the fundamental principles and knowledge needed by the students to proceed to tertiary level. In order to achieve the above goals and objectives of secondary education, capacity-building is therefore needed.

Secondary school principals in Nigeria need capacity-building. The reason is obvious. The minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria is NCE (Nigeria Certificate in Education) and principalship is a rank. In secondary schools, a teacher gets to the rank by promotion and becomes a head of a school by seniority irrespective of area of specialization. Thus, one does not need to be a specialist in educational management or administration to become a principal. It is also important to note that there are those who have reached the principal's carder but are not heads of schools. This process of ascending to the rank of principal in Nigeria implies that the capacity of the principals needs to be built or developed.

Capacity-building is viewed differently by different people. According to Eziuzo (2014), capacity-building is much more than training and includes the process of equipping individuals, for instance, the school principals, with understanding, skills, knowledge and training that enable them to perform effectively. Capacity-building can be in many forms including in-service training. In-service training, according to Kamalpreeet (2014) is the traditional and still dominant form of capacity-building among school principals.

In-service training maybe direct instruction, skill demonstration, workshop, presentations, orientation by an expert or experienced employee on job processes in a school organization (Mgbodile, 2004). In the same manner, Nakpodia (2010) stated the forms of in-service training to include attendance conferences of principals, subject association conferences and other related international conferences. Nakpodia further stated that principals value the opportunity to attend workshops and discuss professional matters with other principals. To this end, formal training of principals should be a continuous process.

The secondary school principals in Anambra State are faced with the challenge of achieving high standard of performance. Most of them (principals) seem to be lacking the capacity to function in the area of conflict resolution and staff appraisal. On this note therefore, this work focused on conflict resolution and staff appraisal. Conflict must exist before it can be resolved. On this note, we need to understand the meaning of conflict to enable us appreciate the concept of conflict resolution.

Conflict is the disagreement and disharmony between or among people. People have always existed and co-existed as group. These could be cultural ethnic, social, political or work groups. Schools when seen as organizations exist as groups but also with sub groups. These groups are made up of individuals with multivariate background (Nikam, 2010). The background of people in the sub groups could have resulted from ethnic, cultural, religious, educational or political consideration. When these converge in an organization such as a school, there is the likelihood of the existence of issues that can cause misunderstandings, likes and dislikes, among others. The innumerable interdependence that is inherent in organizations makes conflict inevitable. Conflict which is an overt behaviour in which one party seeks to advance its own interest in its relationship with others can arise within and among groups and subgroups.

When people think of the word conflict, they often think of wars or violence. However, conflict exists at all levels of society in all sorts of situations. It is easy to forget that we experience conflict every day of our lives. The word, conflict, is associated with the disharmony between/among people. It affects the lives of either individuals or societies. Conflict is almost impossible to be avoided because it is a natural part of life. Conflicts only come into existence when incompatible actions or tendencies clash (Onyeachu & Jane, 2010). This means conflicts emerge, when (seemingly) incompatible or unfulfilled interest, different expectations, intentions and attitudes collide and all involved agents believe their position is right, yet they are dependent of each other or have to use the same resources (Osakwe, 2010). Sule (2013) posited that conflict is not positive (constructive) or negative (destructive) by itself; it is the way of managing conflict that makes it either constructive (positive) or destructive (negative). The problem occurs when people use destructive ways to solve conflicts and these ways then cause conflicts which could manifest through stress, anxiety, loneliness, resentment, suppressed anger, fatigue, illness and others alike.

Conflict is part of school life, especially when there are competing visions of what ought to in schools; incompatible interests collide on a daily bases. Not only is this true for the relationship among teachers, but of teachers and students and especially for the teachers who are most different and seemingly contradictory in their expectations in order to successfully guide the students through their studies (Sullivan, 2001). The daily interactions with students and the incessant demands of teaching often lead to

overwhelming pressures and challenges which may lead to stress and consequent negative physiological, psychological and behavioural consequences. In these cases, internal school politics between various constituencies must be addressed by the principal in order to maintain a healthy working climate and a positive school culture. This is the whole essence of conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution is the process of controlling conflict in human relations. If a conflict is well managed and resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the parties concerned, it could lead to some qualitative development in the relations between them. Conflict arises when the causes are not addressed or dealt with satisfactorily. The principal is, therefore, required to manage people in the school organization in a fair and consistent manner that will minimize conflicts. In order to minimize conflicts, everyone needs to know and agree on their different roles, responsibilities, expectations and ways of working together. Sule (2013) posited that Board meetings may be used as an excellent forum to hold periodic “straight talk” sessions, a practice that can address stormy issues directly and, in many cases prevent long-term stormy conflicts from escalating and becoming a destructive force. In this process, communication needs to be open enough to allow the parties involved in a conflict to express themselves fully and be heard. Handling staff in this respect does not only ensure an understanding of the existing conditions in a school, it also directs the staff to towards sustaining peaceful working relationships with one another in the school (Latham, 2012). The principals, therefore, need to build their capacity to enable them resolve conflicts. Apart from conflict resolution, the principals also need to build their capacity in the area of staff appraisal.

Staff appraisal according to Latham (2012) consistently ranks as one of the most time consuming aspects of human resource management functions or practice. Ayeni and Akinfolarin (2014) posited that the essence of the appraisal is to assess staff's character, attitudes, potentials and past performances on the job. It entails assessing the extent to which school objectives, as judged by teacher and students' performances have been achieved. Ayeni and Akinfolarin further explain that appraisal of staff is needed in the schools to measure the quality of services rendered by the teachers and for the retention of well qualified staff; it serves to assess the impediments or constraints to goal achievement i.e. factors that are responsible for poor teacher and students' performance. Of course, staff appraisal in the school system is necessary in order to reward hardworking teachers through promotion and for the transfer or dismissal of staff whose activities and conducts are found unsatisfactory. In other words, appraisal information or feedback can be utilized as a necessary tool for staff reward or discipline.

In secondary school, one of the key responsibilities of principal is the appraisal of the performance of the subordinates. The essence of this appraisal is to assess their character, attitude, potentials and past performance on the job (Ayeni & Akinfolarin (2014). In other words, staff appraisal system is a standard rating procedure adopted by

managers to regularize behaviour. Appraisal is therefore a process of letting people know what is required or expected of them, assessing how they are doing, reviewing this with them regularly and agreeing with them what happens next. Appraisal can therefore be viewed as a social relationship characterized by information sharing to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and to avoid conflicts.

In conducting staff appraisal, data are gathered by systematic observations, not to only to measure current performance, but also to reinforce strengths, identify deficiencies, give feedback and the necessary information for changes in future performance. For appraisal to be effective, it must be an on-going cooperative intervention and a shared responsibility between the appraising officer and the subordinate being appraised.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to determine the capacity-building needs of principals for conflict resolution and staff appraisal in secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. capacity-building needs of principals for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Anambra State;
2. capacity-building needs of principals for staff appraisal in secondary schools in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the capacity-building needs of principals for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the capacity-building needs of principals on staff appraisal methods in secondary schools in Anambra State?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for conflict resolution.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for staff appraisal.

### **Research Method**

The study was conducted in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. The descriptive survey research design was used. The population for this study constituted of 555 respondents made up of 257 and 298 principals in the 257 public and

298 private secondary schools respectively in the six education zones of the state. The sample of this study comprised 167 respondents made up of 77 principals from public secondary schools and 90 principals from private secondary schools who were sampled through proportionate random sampling technique. This sample comprised 30% of the entire population. A questionnaire developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instrument were determined by three experts. The reliability coefficients of 0.75 and 0.81 were obtained for sections 'A' and 'B' of the instrument respectively using Cronbach alpha. The researchers together with the help of six research assistants administered the instrument. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In answering the research questions, the overall scores were used.

## Presentation of Results

**Research Question One:** What are the capacity-building needs of principals for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 1:** Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Public and Private Secondary Schools on their Capacity-Building Needs for Conflict Resolution.

S/NO	As a Principal, I need building my capacity for effective conflict resolution among staff and students in the following areas:	Pub. Sch. Principals			Priv. Sch. Principals			Overall		
		$\bar{X}$	Sd	Dec	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Dec	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec
1.	Fostering harmony in the school.	3.6	0.42	A	3.3	0.38	A	3.5	0.40	A
2.	Organizing seminars or talk on conflict resolution and its effect on teaching and learning.	3.0	0.39	A	2.9	0.39	A	3.0	0.39	A
3.	Explaining to teachers the need for conflict resolutions and its effect on teaching through dialogue	3.4	0.45	A	3.1	0.41	A	3.4	0.43	A
4.	Instructing teachers on how to resolve conflict through dialogue	3.3	0.43	A	3.0	0.39	A	3.2	0.41	A
5.	Explaining to teacher on how to resolve conflict through avoidance approach	3.2	0.41	A	3.6	0.47	A	3.4	0.44	A
6.	Recommending incentives at the end of the year for teachers who are not involved in conflicts.	3.2	0.41	A	3.6	0.48	A	3.5	0.45	A
7.	Sanctioning individual teachers who are always involved in conflicts.	2.9	0.38	A	3.1	0.40	A	3.0	0.39	A
8.	Using leaders to resolve conflicts.									
<b>Cluster <math>\bar{X}</math> &amp; Sd</b>		<b>2.80</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>A</b>

Data analysis presented in Table 1, shows the mean and standard deviation of the principals in public and private secondary schools on their capacity-building needs for

conflict resolution in secondary schools. Analysis shows that the mean scores of items 1 to 8 are agreed with mean scores ranging from 2.9 to 3.60. The overall mean of 2.90 with standard deviation of 0.36 for both principals in public and private secondary schools indicate that the respondents agreed on listed items as areas they need capacity building for conflict resolution. However, the cluster mean of 2.80 for public secondary school principals and 2.83 for private secondary school principals as well as standard deviation of 0.26 for public secondary school principals and 0.37 for private secondary school principals reveals that the respondents agree that principals need to practice items 1 to 8 in order to build capacity for effective conflict resolution among staff and students. In addition, there are slight differences in the mean scores and standard deviations of public and private secondary school principals, though they differ but the differences are insignificant.

**Research Question Two:** What are the capacity-building needs of principals on staff appraisal methods in secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 2:** Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools on their Capacity-Building Needs for Staff Appraisal.

S/N	Questionnaire items	Pub. Sec. Principals			Priv. Sec. Sch. Principal			Overall		
As a Principal, I Need to Build My Capacity for Effective Staff Appraisal in the:										
9.	Use staff evaluation to assess deficiencies in work behaviour at schedule intervals	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec.	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec
		2.56	0.32	A	2.98	0.39	A	2.8	0.36	A
10	Use staff appraisal to promote commitment of staff to the school organization.	2.88	0.37	A	3.34	0.44	A	3.11	0.41	A
11	Use staff appraisal to evaluate the staff strength and weakness	2.88	0.37	A	3.34	0.44	A	3.11	0.41	A
12.	Use of staff appraisal to promote dear communication between members and of staff on what activities and result are expected of them	3.34	0.44	A	3.46	0.45	A	3.4	0.45	A
13.	Use of staff appraisal to communicate to the staff how well the staff is doing and what can be jointly done to improve specific aspects of the staff job performance	3.01	0.39	A	3.07	0.39	A	3.0	0.39	A
14.	Use of staff appraisal as a guide for recognizing and rewarding good job performance.	3.22	0.42	A	3.26	0.42	A	3.2	0.42	A
15.	Use staff appraisal to identity areas of staff performance which need improvement.	3.11	0.38	A	3.15	0.41	A	3.1	0.40	A
16.	Use appraisal information for recommendation for promotion, salary step decision, and merit pay	2.56	0.32	A	2.56	0.32	A	2.6	0.32	A
17.	Use staff appraisal in planning the staff members' abilities and personal characteristics needed to carry-out the job, through in-service training	3.23	0.43	A	2.56	0.35	A	2.7	0.42	A
18.	Use of staff appraisal as a control measure to establish a standard for all staff in the school organization.	3.03	0.40	A	3.56	0.42	A	2.8	0.35	A
Cluster $\bar{X}$ and Sd		2.98	0.38	A	3.13	0.40	A	3.0	0.39	A

Data analysis presented in Table 2, shows the mean and standard deviation of principals in public and private secondary schools on their staff appraisal capacity-building needs in secondary schools in Anambra State. Analysis shows that the mean scores of items 9 to 18 are agreed with mean scores ranging from 2.56 to 3.56.

However, the cluster mean of 2.98 for public school principals and 3.13 for private school principals with overall mean of 3.0 as well as standard deviation of 0.38 for public school principals and 0.39 for private school principals with overall standard deviation of 0.39 reveal that the principals agreed that they need to employ the strategies stated in items into 9 to 18 in order to build their capacity for effective staff appraisal among staff. In addition, there are slight differences in the mean scores and standard deviations of public and private secondary school principals, though they differ but the differences are insignificant.

### Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses One (H<sub>01</sub>): There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for conflict resolution.

**Table 3: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on their capacity-building needs for conflict resolution**

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Df	t(call)	t-value (0.05)	Decision
Pub. Sch. Principals	77	2.80	0.26	165	1.4	1.96	H <sub>01</sub> not rejected
Priv. Sch. Principals	90	2.83	0.37				

The analysis in Table 3 above shows that t-calculated of 1.4 is less than critical value of the t-test which is 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for conflict resolution.

Hypotheses Two (H<sub>02</sub>): There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for staff appraisal.

**Table4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on their capacity-building needs for staff appraisal**

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Df	t(call)	t-value (0.05)	Decision
Pub. Sec. Sch. Principals	77	<b>2.98</b>	<b>0.38</b>	165	1.5	1.96	H <sub>02</sub> not rejected
Priv. Sec. Sch. Principals	90	<b>3.13</b>	<b>0.40</b>				



The analysis in Table 4 above shows that t-calculated of 1.5 is less than the critical value of the t-test which is 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for staff appraisal.

### **Summary of Findings**

Based on the data analyzed, the major findings are as follows:

1. Principals in secondary schools in Anambra State need capacity-building in the area of fostering harmony in the school; organizing seminars or talks on conflict resolution and its effect on teaching and learning; explaining to teachers the need for conflict resolutions and its effect on teaching through dialogue; explaining to teachers how to resolve conflicts through avoidance approach; and sanctioning individual teachers who are always involved in conflicts among other strategies.
2. Principals in secondary schools in Anambra State need capacity-building in the area of using staff appraisal to assess deficiencies in work behaviour at scheduled interval; using staff appraisal to promote commitment of staff to the school organization; using staff appraisal to evaluate the staff strengths and weaknesses; employing staff appraisal to promote clear communication between members of staff on what activities and results are expected of them on the job; using appraisal information for recommending staff for promotion, salary step decision, and merit pay among other strategies.
3. It was found that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for conflict resolution and staff appraisal.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study indicated that principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State need to foster harmony in the school, organize seminars or talks on conflict resolution and its effect on teaching and learning, explain to teachers need for conflict resolutions and its effect on teaching through dialogue, explain to teachers on how to resolve conflicts through avoidance approach, sanction individual teachers who are always involved in conflicts among other strategies, in order to build their capacity for effective conflict resolution in their schools.

Depending on the nature of conflicts and the parties involved, various methods were suggested; these include the use of disciplinary committee; intervention of the school authority and/or elders in the community. Sometimes, the interventions of the local inspectors of education or the board in-charge of secondary education could be needed. The board officials could be sent the conflict ridden schools to carryout investigation; mediate or resolve the problem. The foregoing views of the authors strengthened the reality of the findings.

The findings of this study are in agreement with the views of Ayodele, Buari, and Oguntuase (2016) that conflict between personnel and at times between departments has the potential to cause great rift in faculty harmony. Therefore, when rules are not adhered to, the principal must resolve the conflicting issue through dialogue. The findings also agree with the views of Agharuwhe and Nkechi (2019) who stated that developing effective strategy for conflict management in the school requires major factors in the education enterprise working in harmony and unity in conflict management strategy. The principal in such a situation (of conflict) must ensure that communication is open promptly to avert the situation before it escalates and more people become involved.

The findings are also in consonance with that of Adetula (2018) that seminars, conferences and symposia would be organized from time to time for the management cadre of secondary schools, on educational management and conflict resolution techniques. There are certain essential skills needed for identifying and dealing with conflicts constructively; these skills include using neutral language, active listening, understanding distinct point of view, identifying problems and negotiating and mediating to resolve conflicts.

In the same manner, the findings on staff appraisal indicated that principals in secondary schools in Anambra State need to use appraisal to assess deficiencies in work behaviour at scheduled interval, use staff appraisal to promote commitment of staff to the school organization, use staff appraisal to evaluate the staff strengths and weaknesses, employ staff appraisal to promote clear communication between members of staff on what activities and results are expected of them on the job, use appraisal information for commendation for promotion, salary step decision, and merit pay among other strategies, in order to build their capacity for effective staff appraisal among staff.

The findings of the study on staff appraisal is in agreement with those of Nwakpa, (2015) that an appraisal feedback would help the employees know their strengths and weaknesses and how management perceives their contributions individually, to the organization. The findings of the study are also in consonance with those of Olaleye (2013) which posited that staff appraisal should be employed (by the organization) to:

- (1) promote clear communication between employees and the supervisor

(administrator) on what activities and results expected of the employees and (2) staff appraisal should as a guide for recognizing and rewarding good performances. Thus, appraisal feedbacks are necessary for worker's promotion, pay increases and in-service training and development. The finding is further in conformity with those of Ayodele, Buari, and Oguntuase, (2016) that organizations should employ staff appraisal as a policy standard control system for all staff. The control, purposes of staff performance appraisal systems, the author suggested, should be seen clearly when linked with performance related pay and the potential of the system for identifying less-than-capable (in performance terms) members of the staff. The views of the authors cited above strengthened the reality of the findings of this study.

The analysis of the hypotheses indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State on their capacity-building needs for conflict resolution and staff appraisal. The result indicated that school ownership did not affect their responses significantly. The null hypotheses of no significant difference were therefore not rejected.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that capacity is the ability of individuals, organizations, or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. The principals need capacity-building in conflict resolution and staff appraisal.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made in the light of the findings and discussions that followed:

1. Secondary school principals in Anambra State should undergo training on skills that can be used in identifying and dealing with conflicts such as: using neutral language, active listening, identifying and understanding distinct point of view, identifying problems and negotiating and mediating to resolve conflicts.
2. Secondary school principals should use staff appraisal feedback to promote commitment of staff to the school organization, to indentify the staff strengths and weaknesses for necessary in-service training of the staff.
3. Higher institutions in the State should use the capacity building needs of the principals as identified in this study to develop intervention programmes for retraining the principals in the State through workshops and seminars short-duration retraining courses.
4. It is also recommended that principals should make use of the findings of the study to seek for sponsorship from government, non-government organizations (NGOs) and Parents-Teachers-Association (PTA), to attend capacity-building

workshops or retraining programmes in the areas they require capacity-building, in order to improve their administrative capabilities.

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