PRINCIPAL’S MANAGEMENT STYLES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE SCHOOLS

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Schools are important elements of the society. However, there is no perfect school. In the same manner, there is no perfect school principals, teachers, school employees, etc. The duties and responsibilities of principals are clearly stated under the law yet sometimes, different forms of conflict arise between the principal and teachers and/or other subordinates. Personal biases, misunderstandings, miscommunications, lack of communications and even lack of action/response can start or trigger conflicts in the schools.

In every conflict there must be something to do. Of course, conflict arises not only once so if you always do things to resolve these conflicts you are either aware or not that you are already forming a style to resolve such conflicts. This is what we call as conflict resolution. As mentioned earlier, the principal holds a central or key position in the school, therefore his/her administrative powers allow him/her to practice or improve conflict resolution style.

There are studies which aimed to find out most preferred conflict resolution style among schools. There are five (5) conflict management styles: collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising conflict management styles based on Thomas Kilmann Conflict Model as cited by Content’s research. Content’s (1986) study examined the conflict management style of principals and utilized the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Model instrument which is based on five methods of handling conflict. These include: competing (being assertive and uncooperative), accommodating (being unassertive and cooperative), avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative), collaborating (assertive and cooperative) and compromising (moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness). Content stated that individuals are capable of using all five methods of handling conflict and that conflict behaviour is determined as a result of personal predispositions and the requirements of the given situation (Zupan, 2012). Aside from these studies, there are other wide arrays of literature and research on conflict management among school administrators in which some of them will be mentioned later on.
Studies have shown that public school principals usually use collaborating conflict management style while private school principals utilize competing conflict management style. The reason is that in public schools, the principal commonly delegates the tasks to other teacher leaders of the school such as head teachers and master teachers, therefore collaborative conflict management style is the most preferred style among school administrators. In private schools, there is usually only one school leader – the principal, therefore more autonomy and power is being vested in him/her. This is especially aggravated by the fact that in most private schools the principal and the owner of the school is just as the same! Therefore, the powers of a private school principal (usually the owner of the school) are quite more extended than those principals of the public schools wherein collaborative conflict management is compelled to practice.

Ghaffar, Zaman and Naz (2012) offer some ideas on managing conflict to the school administrator. First of all, the school administrator should be aware of the timely recognition of conflicts and that he should promptly respond to the misunderstandings among his subordinates, educators and the students too. Secondly, he should utilize collective judgment in order to overcome his personal biases. Third and most importantly when one understands that conflicts are going to become out of control then the best and most suitable way is to judge his resources, see his enemy’s strength and to handle the conflict what plan of action needs to be adopted, how the decision would be implemented and how to prepare oneself for the possible attack. In the final stage, the school administrator should be clear and very realistic about his merits and or demerits for managing conflict. Conflict management in school is dependent on principal's personal characteristics. Conflict is a dynamic process and its presence in the organization results in organization effectiveness. Principal should not avoid conflict but manage it in the school and then use effective and appropriate strategies to resolve conflict. School effective management is greatly attributed to principal's characteristics. Principal qualification is a good determinant of how school principal play its role in managing conflict in the school. Principals with high qualification showed better result in conflict management skills. It is essential for school principal to take active role in field practice in order to embrace effective management skills that are needed for smooth running of school and effective teaching and learning process. It is imperative for school principal to recognize conflict at first hand and take strong initiative for its resolution. Principals should take collective judgment in order to overcome his personal biases. It is also important for principal to
accept his strength and weaknesses for conflict management. Effective principals accept conflict as part and parcel of all social organization (Batool, Khattak and Saleem, 2016). Janet Wagued (2015) found out that accommodating style was mostly used by secondary school principals. This study are also inconsistent with the findings of Adeyemi (2011) and Rajabi (2012) regarding preferred conflict resolution approach as commonly practiced among schools.

Conflict resolution style or approaches have a direct relationship on human resource management the school based management as well as the overall smooth operation of schools. As a school administrator, I personally use collaborative conflict management style most of the times since it helped me a lot in resolving the problems, issues and challenges in our school at the Division of Bataan. Lastly, I also utilize other conflict management styles depending on the cases or situations.

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References


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