

# Assessment Of Factors Influencing Management Conflicts In Church Sponsored Public Secondary Schools In Kenya

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**Abstract:** A great number of schools in Kenya have been experiencing a general wave of management conflicts which have mainly affected church sponsored public schools. The study sought to assess the factors influencing management conflicts in the church sponsored public secondary schools of Kipkaren division of Nandi North District. The study employed descriptive survey design. The study targeted 170 BOG members, 17 head teachers, 17 deputy head teachers, and 17 sponsors' representatives all totaling 221 respondents. A census ('sample survey') for all respondents was used. This consideration was made because the target population was small and hence the population was easily handled. A total of 200 respondents returned the questionnaires which comprised of 17 head teachers, 17 deputy head teachers, 17 sponsors' representatives and 149 BOG members. This represents 90.5% rate of return. Data was mainly collected using questionnaires. The head teachers and sponsors' representatives were also interviewed to give in-depth findings. The instruments were prepared by the researcher and established reliability using Cronbach Alpha coefficient which found a reliability coefficient of 0.89 which was a strong enough measure of reliability. Similarly face and content validity was established with the assistance of experts in social science research methodology. The descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and percentages were used to analyze data collected. The findings revealed the major factor influencing management conflicts in schools was religious' differences. The study recommends that a representative team should be appointed in the school's management; that seminars, conferences and symposiums are carried out in educational management from time to time and courses in conflicts and human relation be included in the curriculum for teachers to prepare them for conflict management.

**Key Terms:** Factors, Influencing, Management, Conflict, Church Sponsored

## 1. Introduction

Conflicts affect the accomplishment of the school goals due to attending stress, hostilities and other undesirable factors when poorly managed. The issue of conflict management then becomes paramount for goal accomplishment. Oxford Thesaurus Dictionary of English (2004) defines conflicts as synonymous with dissention, antagonism, opposition, disagreement, disassociation, encounter and combat. From literature, several types of conflicts are experienced in educational institutions. This includes intra personal, intra group, inter personal and inter group. According Robbins (2003), intra personal conflicts involve conflicts within an institution set up. This could include conflicts between both the head teacher and a specific member of BOG, specific teacher or any other specific individual. Intra group conflicts involve differences within a certain group. This may include conflicts within the staff, the BOG, the students, the parents, the sponsor or any other stakeholders in school. Inter personal conflicts are the conflicts between persons. This may include conflicts between specific staff members and students, specific teachers and parents, specific BOG members and sponsor and or any other specific person within a group. Similarly, inter group conflicts may include conflicts between various groups in educational institutions.

The groups could be between staff and students, BOG and other groups, sponsor and other groups or stakeholders. According to DeCenzo (1997), school conflicts can either take horizontal conflicts form, vertical conflicts form, and or role confusion conflict form. According to Ivancevich (1996), many factors are known to influence conflicts in schools. These include work interdependence, differences in goals and perceptions and increased demand for specialists. The sources of these conflicts can be classified into four; namely, competition for scarce resources, divergence, autonomy, and goals divergence as a result to difference in opinion. According to Okotoni and Okotoni (2003), the administration of the Nigerian secondary schools was hampered by high rate of conflicts. According to the report, the causes of these conflicts included personality clashes, administrative incompetence of the head teacher and role misunderstanding between the stakeholders in the secondary schools. In Kenyan perspective, Radoli (2007) reported a case where in January 14, the then Nyanza Provincial Director of Education directed religious groups that sponsored schools not to take part in the institutions' management. This was after a wave of conflicts had seriously slap the institutions in Nyanza province. Opande (2007) reported a case where the Joint Christian Churches Education Secretariat called for an end to the row over the sponsorship of schools in Mt. Kenya region. Moreover, Muga (2008) reported a case where the Catholic Church led a group of churches in calling for an end to a sustained campaign by the AIPCEA to be handed in schools in Central Province. The then Kenya's Education Minister Henry Kosgei instructed the schools run by District Education Boards not to allow sponsors to interfere in schools affairs. Omboko (2006) in a report presented to the area education stakeholders' forum in Kipkaren Division of Nandi North district indicated that 11 out of 17 secondary schools had experienced a lot of management problems mainly due to the conflict between the sponsor, head teacher, community and the government. As a result, head

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teachers and teachers were transferred, interdicted and sacked; learning disrupted impacting negatively on students' academic results but worst of all, permanent tension created between the government, the community and the sponsor. Omboko (2006) further reported that consequent to the conflicts at least six head teachers had been transferred while running of the schools faced a lot of difficulties due to student transfers and low morale with all the stakeholders. The intervention of the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and education office included sending their officials to trouble ridden schools to investigate, mediate and bring about resolution. In some instances resolution took the forms of probing, dispensing the transfer of all or some teachers to other schools, demotion, and reinstatement of wrongly dismissed teachers Omboko (2006). The consequences of the discussed management conflicts on the school and the government have been regrettable. Part of repercussion on schools include disruption of academic programmes, inadequate staffing as a result of transfer, hostility, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities, emergency transfer of subject teachers and qualified teachers were inequitably distributed, Omboko (2006). Moreover Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) point out that management conflicts in schools may have negative impact on the administration capability of the institutions, morale of the staff, and development of institutional structures as well as on the academic performances of the students. Government of Kenya (2001) point out that management conflicts in Kenya's secondary schools had become a major problem that all stakeholders in education should take a great concern. The conflicts affected the community, the church, the school administration and even the government directly or indirectly. If these conflicts were allowed to continue, it would ruin education institutions and education itself. The role of each of these stakeholders in management of Kenyan schools is clearly stated in the Kenya Education Act Cap 211 of 1980 which noted that incase a church managed a transferred school or an organization of churches and it is the wish of the community served by the school that the religious traditions of the school should be respected; the former manager shall be appointed by the local authority to serve as the sponsor of the school. Concerning the privileges of the sponsor, the Act, stated that where the former manager of a transferred school has been appointed by the local authority to serve as the sponsor to the schools:

1. Commission or any agent of Teachers Service Commission responsible for the assignment of teachers to schools on behalf of the Commission, shall assign teachers to schools after consultation with the Teachers Service Commission, and so far as may be compatible with the maintenance of proper educational standards at the school and the economical use of public funds with the agreement of the sponsor.
2. The sponsor shall have the right to use the school buildings free of charge when the buildings are not in use for school purposes after giving reasonable notice of his intention to do so to the head master of the school provided that any additional expenses and the cost of making good any damages incurred during or in consequences of

the sponsor using the building shall be defrayed by the sponsor.

On the other hand, Government of Kenya (1964) noted the following about education and the role of the sponsor and the government: -

1. Education - is a social service and responsibility of the government.
2. Religious Education is to be included in the school curriculum.
3. Churches should participate in the education system through:
  - a) Management of private and semi-private schools,
  - b) Being sponsors of schools,
  - c) Providing teaching personnel, and
  - d) Developing Religious Education syllabus and support materials.

It was therefore Education Act (1980) and Government of Kenya (1964) that brought about the concept of sponsorship. It also recognized the fact that though education was a social service the government could not carry out the responsibility independent of other initiators mainly the churches. Thus, there was the need for partnership and co-operation between the church and the government in education institutions. It was clear that the sponsors had a key role in schools initiated, founded and established in Kenya by the church. Misoi (2008) in a paper presented to the provincial Secondary Schools Heads Association, Western Province, for example, indicated that 10% of the head teachers in Western Province in Kenya went on transfer and 2% left head ship all together because of the management conflicts. The Board of Governors or the teachers had either rejected the head teachers that were transferred or had faced frequent unrest among students in their schools. As a way of preventing and solving future conflicts, the Teachers Service Commission transferred other head teachers to put off conflicts in their new stations. The 2% that left head ship found educational administration too hot to remain around. In turn these conflicts had influenced levels of work satisfaction among teachers and students' academic performances. Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) point out that the causes of conflicts in schools in Osun State in Northern Nigeria included inadequate welfare package for workers, forceful and compulsory retirement/retrenchment of workers, administrative incompetence, personality clashes, role conflicts, and non-involvement of students in school administration. The fact that most of the school administrators were not knowledgeable in conflict management, coupled with the absence of laid down procedures for conflict management in most schools contributed to the high rate of conflicts and industrial actions in the schools. A study by Ageng'a and Simatwa (2011) established that the causes of conflict experienced in schools were poor academic performance, differences in opinions, mismanagement of school resources and financial control, disrespect for prefects, differences in opinions, intimate relationships, harshness by support staff, criticism by other teachers, communication breakdown, late payment of school fees by parents, negative attitudes towards teachers, discipline of students, high handedness by the

administration, irresponsibility, substandard supplies, poor work performance by support staff and financial control inter alia. The above discussion indicates clearly that management conflicts exist in Kipkaren Division, Nandi North District; Kenyan secondary schools. This study was necessitated by the fact that no empirical evidence on a study on factors influencing these conflicts in church sponsored public secondary schools of Nandi North District of Kenya. Therefore, the main focus of the study was to assess the factors that influence management conflicts in church sponsored public secondary schools in Kipkaren division.

## 2. Methodology

Creswell (2009) defines research designs as plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. This study adopted a mixed methods design for it is useful in helping researchers meet the criteria for evaluating the "goodness" of their answers (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) better than do the single approach designs. A mixed method research is an approach to inquiry that combines both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves integration of philosophical assumptions, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and the mixing of both approaches in a study. It is thus more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either one of the two approaches (Creswell, 2009). A major advantage of using the mixed methods research in this study was that it enabled the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory questions with regard to the factors that influence management conflicts in secondary schools as well as answer exploratory questions about the strategies for effective management of conflicts through both open and closed ended questionnaires and interviews. In effect the researcher was able to verify and generate theory in the study on the status of management conflicts in secondary schools in Kenya (Erzberger & Prein, 1997). This study therefore adopted descriptive survey strategy of enquiry in tandem with qualitative and quantitative enquiries. The study was carried in Kipkaren division of Nandi North district. The study was conducted in all the seventeen church sponsored public secondary schools in the Division. The target population was 221 comprising of all 17 head teachers, 17 deputy head teachers and 170 BOG Members. A census ('sample survey') for all respondents was used (Kothari 2008). This consideration was made because the target population was small and hence the population is easily handled. This informed the selection of all 17 head teachers and 17 deputies, all 170 BOG members, and 17 sponsors in the schools. The study area was purposely chosen because all the schools were church sponsored public secondary schools and had witnessed a general wave of management conflicts.

## 3. Study Findings and Discussion

The researcher asked the respondents to tick the factors that influenced management conflicts in their school through structured questionnaires containing list of possible factors associated with management conflicts in their schools. Next to each factor, the respondents rated the factors in terms of the disruptions it may have caused in school where 1 — highest cause followed by 2, 3 ---. The mean score obtained for each cause is indicated as shown along with the percentage score obtained for each task in Table 1. Similarly, the Correlation Coefficient between the factors and the management conflicts in secondary schools is given in Table 2.

**Table 1: Factors Influencing Management Conflicts in Church Sponsored Secondary Schools**

Factor	PRINCIPAL			D/PRINCIPAL			SPONSORS REP			BOG			WHOLE GROUP		
	N/%	MEAN	RANK	N/%	MEAN	RANK	N/%	MEAN	RANK	N/%	MEAN	RANK	N/%	MEAN	RANK
Religious differences	1270.9	2.42	1	1376.4	2.92	2	17100	1.88	1	122	2.20	1	164	2.24	1
Personal clashes between school stakeholders	1376	3.39	4	1588.24	3.40	4	1694.12	2.94	2	118	3.85	4	16281	3.68	2
Inferiority superiority complex between stakeholders	1164.7	3.64	6	847.08	2.50	1	1270.59	4.50	7	10570.49	3.81	3	13668	3.78	3
Misunderstanding of motives between education stakeholders	1058.8	4.40	9	847.08	4.13	8	1058.82	4.00	4	10268.46	3.70	2	13065	3.80	4
Indiscipline on the part of students	1164.7	4.00	8	1058.82	4.30	9	1164.70	3.82	3	9865.77	4.15	5	13065	4.12	5
Role conflict between education stakeholders	1164.7	3.82	7	847.08	3.50	5	1376.47	4.15	5	9765.1	4.27	6	12964.5	4.17	6
Poor academic performance	1270.5	3.08	3	1376.47	3.39	3	1482.35	4.86	8	9765.10	4.58	7	13668	4.35	7
Administrative incompetence of principal	211.7	3.00	2	741.17	3.57	6	952.94	4.33	6	8154.36	4.74	8	9949.5	4.59	8
Misappropriation and embezzlement of school funds	741.1	4.57	10	529.41	4.80	10	952.94	5.44	9	6644.30	5.21	9	8743.5	5.16	9
Unimpressive condition of service of teachers and administrators	1270.5	5.00	11	1164.70	3.82	7	1270.59	6.25	10	10570.47	5.41	10	14070	5.32	10
Indiscipline on the part of teachers and administrations	423.53	7.00	12	65.293	6.33	12	741.17	6.43	11	4731.54	6.09	11	6432	6.20	11
Favoritism by the school administration	211.76	3.5	5	423.53	6.00	11	741.77	9.43	12	5436.24	6.39	12	6733.5	6.60	12

**Table 2: Correlation Coefficient between the Factors and the Management Conflicts in Secondary Schools**

	<b>Management Conflicts</b>
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Correlation Coefficient</b>
Unimpressive condition of service of teachers and administrators	$r_s=0.778$
Administrative incompetence of principal	$r_s=0.708$
Misappropriation and embezzlement of school funds	$r_s=0.803$
Indiscipline on the part of students	$r_s=0.797$
Indiscipline on the part of teachers and administrations	$r_s=0.785$
Personal clashes between school stakeholders	$r_s=0.873$
Inferiority superiority complex between stakeholders	$r_s=0.703$
Role conflict between education stake holders	$r_s=0.795$
Misunderstanding of motives between education stakeholders	$r_s=0.801$
Poor academic performance	$r_s=0.709$
Favoritism by the school administration	$r_s=0.787$
Religious differences	$r_s=0.890$
Poor academic performance	$r_s=0.797$
Favoritism by the school administration	$r_s=0.672$

According to Table 1 on the factors that influence management conflicts in schools and Table 2 on Correlation Coefficient between the factors and the management conflicts in secondary schools, 164 out of 200 respondents representing 82% of the total respondents indicated that the major factor that influenced management conflicts was religious differences. This represents a mean of 2.24. Religious differences and management conflicts were correlated with  $r = 0.890$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $p < .05$ . This implies that religious differences strongly influence management conflicts in secondary schools in Kipkaren division. Personal clashes between stakeholders with a mean of 3.67 with 162 respondents out of 200 respondents representing 81% also influences management conflicts. Personal clashes between stakeholders and management conflicts were later correlated with  $r = 0.873$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $p < .05$ . This implies that personal clashes between stakeholders influenced management conflicts in Kipkaren

division secondary schools. Favouritism by the school administration on management conflicts ranked last with a mean of 6.597. Favouritism by the school administration and management conflicts were further correlated with  $r = 0.67$ ,  $p = .047$ ;  $p < .05$ . This implies that Favouritism by the school administration influences management conflicts in secondary schools albeit in small way. These results reveal that the respondents' ostensibly acknowledged that the major factor that influenced management conflicts was religious differences between stakeholders. This implies that majority of the respondents' perceived conflicts in schools as a result of religious differences. This is a worrying trend that should be reversed. Most respondents perceive personal clashes between education stakeholders as the second major cause of the conflicts in their school. This trend is equally worrying because the stakeholders should know that they are partners in education management. The results from the Table 1 and 2 generally show that most of the listed causes were experienced in varying degrees and therefore impacted negatively on learning, teaching and administration in the schools. The researcher further interviewed the BOG members to suggest other factors that influenced management conflicts in their schools. One of the respondent posed; "Lack of adequate physical and financial resources was the major factor that influenced management conflicts". Another respondent retorted "lack of clear policies, rules and regulations from the government is a major factor that influenced management conflicts in secondary school". This concurred with Government of Kenya (2001) which indicated that the conflicts were perceived to be caused by policies and directives from the central office that head teachers were not a party to. Another respondent quipped "poorly introduced change and change process was another major factor that influenced management conflicts". This concurred with Kogo (2002) that most new principals found themselves in difficult adjusting to their new positions and being accepted in that position. Another respondent declared "long tenures of principals and imposition of principals on the schools by the government was a factor that influenced management conflicts". This concurs with Yee and Cuban (1996) who indicated that long tenures could influence conflicts to some head teachers especially those who did not make any impact on the school in terms of academic and physical development.

#### 4. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of this study, several issues on the implication for school management are observed. The 12 factors advocated by this study influences management conflicts though in varying degrees. The major factor that influenced management conflicts was noted as religious differences between stakeholders. Personal clashes between school stakeholders and inferiority and superiority complex between stakeholders follow in that order. School management, administration, teaching and learning have been adversely affected by management conflicts. This study therefore concludes based on these findings that religious differences were the major factor that influenced management conflicts in the church sponsored public secondary schools. Similarly, lack of adequate physical and financial resources was also noted as another major factor that influenced management conflicts in Kipkaren Division.

## 5. Recommendations of the study

The evidence collected in this study demonstrates that conflicts existed in Kenyan secondary schools and that religious difference were the main factor that influenced management conflicts in secondary schools. There was a continuing need for reevaluation of the need for conflict minimization and resolutions as both administrative and management tool in church sponsored public secondary schools. This study therefore noted and recommends the following:

- a) A frequent stakeholders meetings and consultation in school management should be in practice so as to address cases of management conflicts in school management.
- b) An educated and representative management team for effective decision-making and management of schools should be in practice in some church sponsored public secondary schools.

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