Locating, Outlining and Assessing the Roles of Conflicting Pressures in Higher Institution Through a Psycho-Philosophical Analysis

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ABSTRACT It is general belief that quality education was centered on the quality and the efficacy of the teacher, availability of teaching and learning resources, infrastructure and the ability of the pupils or students to grasp and reproduce the concepts. This position often ignores the role of social pressures which are often conflictual in achieving educational goals. Conflicting pressures such as role ambiguity and personality conflict are therefore naturally expected and inescapable in such complex organisations as higher institutions. This work sets out to defend the view that there are conflicting pressures in higher education; and to assess the role of conflicting pressures in higher institutions. The paper is anchored on role patterning theory which is an influential theory on conflicting pressures. Conflicting pressures are characteristic of human existence which was part of the dynamic of life that drives individuals into the future. Factors that contribute to conflicting pressures are highlighted and analysed from psycho-philosophical perspectives. The position of the paper is that conflicting pressures are human dynamics and integral part of any social system but need to be properly managed through psycho-philosophical attitudes and intuitions in order to create a healthy organizational climate that is important for effective performance of higher education.

Keywords: Conflicting Pressures, Higher Institution and Psycho-Philosophical Analysis

Introduction

Higher institutions are complex organisations comprising of varieties of communities of large collections of academic disciplines and functions. It is made up of people with diverse conflicting pressures based on backgrounds, needs, skills, talents, aspirations and status. Higher education is an institution of higher form of learning that provides manpower needs to advance national development in both the public and private sector. Higher institutions whether private or public are training grounds for students, theories are formulated and interpreted with the view to put them in practice. They conduct education and training in different kinds of programmes or disciplines. This is the case in both government and private institutions respectively.

The academic and administrative staffs are key actors in higher institutions as they play significant roles in the management of these complex institutions (Favero and Bray, 2015). Fadekemi and Isaac (2011) submitted that the higher institution community consists of three major sections, the administrators, the academics and the students. Referring to the academic and administrative staff, Favero (2013) stated that

they are the two main groups responsible for determining institutional direction and decision-making which defines and shapes academic programmes. The academic and administrative staffs have distinct patterns of activity that define their relationships and reflect interaction with others within the institution. Employees in complex organisations like higher institution are bound to have diverse expectations of themselves and their colleagues in the course of carrying out their organisational roles. As a result of this, conflicting pressures such as role ambiguity and role conflict are therefore naturally expected and inescapable in such complex organisations as higher institution. This work sets out to critically examine the role of conflicting pressures in higher education from its human angle. The aim of this work is to involve in locating, outlining and assessing the role of conflicting pressures in higher institution through a psych-philosophical analysis. To do this the work will highlight the following:

1. Explain the meaning of conflicting pressures
2. Articulate the meaning of conflicting pressures in relation to higher education
3. Proceed to articulate the different dimensions of conflicting pressures and then
4. Attempt to articulate a theoretical framework that is applied in assessing the role of conflicting pressures
5. Finally, the work will analyse conflicting pressures through a psycho-philosophical analysis

Prevalence of conflicting pressures

Conflicting pressures result from situations whereby the employee's expected roles are different from the perceived roles. Conflicting pressures are incongruence of role expectations and a situation whereby an individual is expected to perform two or more different roles. It involves a situation where individual employee does not have sufficient information about his role and does not know how to meet the requirements (Cordes and Dougherty, 2013; Muraina, 2015). An individual role is affected by the roles of the members within the organisation with whom he/she relates (Dilshad and Latif, 2011). As such, when these expectations are in conflict or incompatible and unclear or vague, it would result in stress and dysfunctionality. When expectations are in conflict, role conflict may result and when expectations are vague, role ambiguity may result leading to role stress and job dissatisfaction (Cordes and Dougherty, 2013).

Katz and Kahn (1966) opine that role stress is a consequence of conflicting pressures including role ambiguity and role conflict. Role ambiguity and role conflict are the most widely studied role stress variables (Celik, 2013). Based on research, Idris (2011) posited that the components of conflicting pressures are role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict which are all related though different constructs. Conflicting pressures is defined as the pressure an individual experience in association with the demands and constraints of organisational and job-specification factors, while role overload is a situation whereby the capability and motivation for job performance of an individual do not match the expectations of his role (Idris, 2011). Celik (2013) also refers to conflicting pressures as consisting of role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict. In this study therefore, the researcher might indicate role stress when referring to role ambiguity and role conflict.

The academic and administrative staffs are interdependent groups who play critical and central roles in higher institution in fulfilling the missions of education, research advancement and public service (Hui-Min, 2009). The issues of conflicting pressures amongst the academic and administrative staff are therefore crucial issues against effectiveness and productivity of higher institution organisations. Scholars in

recent and past time have identified conflicting pressures as the main role stressors in research that have dysfunctional effect on both the individuals and organisations (Tang and Chang, 2010; Schulz, 2013). The negative outcomes of conflicting pressures include tension; lack of confidence; a feeling of hopelessness; anxiety and depression; decreased job satisfaction; distrust in the organisation; ill relationship with members of role set and superior officers; poor performance; which in turn affects the organisations' overall performance (Vanishree, 2013; Celik, 2013).

Literature has recorded the existence of conflicting pressures among the academic and administrators of higher institution (Dilshad and Latif, 2011; Idris, 2011) and that academics experience higher occupational stress than other staff (Winefield, 2013). There are also documented evidence that demographic variables have diverse effect on role ambiguity and role conflict (Sturman, 2013; Muraina and Muraina, 2015). Dua (2014) reported that gender, age, experience and position are variables that have significant effect on occupational stress. There is limited literature pertaining to role conflict and role ambiguity in developing countries compared to the developed countries. Majority of research on role conflict and role ambiguity have examined these constructs among professional groups, e.g. academics, administrators (Duzie, 2012; Idris, 2011), their effects on work-related variables such as performance and job satisfaction among others (Tang and Chang, 2010). However, to the best knowledge of researchers, little researches have focused on these constructs amongst the academic and administrative staff through psycho-philosophical analysis.

Conflicting pressure and higher education

A study conducted on the impact of conflicting pressures in engineering colleges recorded a significantly high and correlated negatively with organisational commitment (Vijaya and Hamamalimi, 2011). Idris (2011) conducted a study to test the effect of conflicting pressures on psychological strain among academic staff of five public universities in Malaysia and found that conflicting pressures have greater influence on academics than work overload. Academic and administrative staff experienced greater conflicting pressures than other occupational groups which impair job performance, work relationship with others, commitment to the university and psycho-physical health. Furthermore, Duzie (2012) reported that academic staff in Australian universities experience high level of conflicting pressures and that worldwide, the experience of conflicting pressures in universities is startling. Kinman and Jones (2014) also confirm the existence of high level of conflicting pressures among the academic and academic related staff (of which the administrators are chief) of UK higher education, and that their conflicting pressures level is higher than that of other profession. They further stated that the level of conflicting pressures among these groups has increased; leaving them dissatisfied in their job and associated the stress to role conflict and overload but surprisingly, not role ambiguity as majority of the respondents, both academic and academic related staff reported that "they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities".

In a similar vein, Dilshad and Latif (2011) confirmed the existence of conflicting pressures among the faculty members at university level, just as Dua (2014) indicated that the university staff experienced high level of work-related conflicting pressures. Dua further stated that faculty staff experienced higher level of conflicting pressures compared to other groups. Academic department chairpersons also experience high level of conflicting pressures both in their academic and administrative duties (Duzie (2012). Oduwaiye (2016) in her study of conflicting pressures as role con-

flict and administrative effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria reported a significant relationship between conflicting pressures and administrative effectiveness. This could be true of universities administrators also. Duzie (2012) stated that conflicting pressures exist among the professional and academic administrators in Nigerian universities. He further stated that conflicting pressures as role conflict stem from uncertainty about the roles of one another.

Dua (2014) studied of the effect of conflicting pressures on physical health, emotional health and job satisfaction at the University of New England and proved that conflicting pressures was not influenced by gender. A similar situation was recorded among Australian university's staff by Duzie (2012) who found that conflicting pressures of chief executive officers in international joint ventures that lower conflicting pressures was recorded for the Chief Executive that have spent longer time in service and role ambiguity lower with more education. Ogbogu (2013), in his paper on conflicting pressures among academic women in Nigerian public universities opine that the multiple role of academic women as care givers and academics, a society controlled by men, female academics experience extensive role conflict which impacts their performance.

Consequently, they experience higher level of work-family conflict than men, implying that they would also experience higher levels of role conflict at work than their male counterparts. Dilshad and Latif (2011) stated that male faculty perceived higher level of role ambiguity and role conflict compared to female faculty members, and Adidu (2008) reported that educational qualifications has no impact on staff and line managers perception of role ambiguity and role conflict. Ogbogu (2013) study revealed that younger teachers were more prone to conflicting pressures than older ones, and that the longer the staffs have served, the less conflicting pressures he/she experienced, and women experienced higher levels of conflicting pressures compare to men. Although Jackson and Schuler (2015) reported that the effect of tenure on conflicting pressures of role ambiguity is inconsistent, Sturman (2013) found a positive correlation between conflicting pressures of role ambiguity and tenure. Schulz and Auld (2016) in their study of perceptions of conflicting pressures in terms of role ambiguity and role conflict by chairpersons and executive directors in Queensland sporting organisations discovered that role ambiguity correlated negatively with tenure i.e. with more years in service, the level of role ambiguity experienced decreased. These conflicting results tend to agree with Jackson and Schuler's earlier submission.

An outline of conflicting pressures: casual factors and negativities

There are a number of dimensions of conflicting pressures; in the part of this work we shall proceed to outline them. This includes in the following:

Conflicting Roles: Conflicting pressures can occur when employees are asked to perform a function that is outside their job requirements or expertise or when two or more employees or groups are assigned to perform the same job. This situation can contribute to power struggles for territory. This causes intentional or unintentional aggressive or passive-aggressive (sabotage) behaviour. Organizations mainly experience role related conflicts where the members have a tendency of wielding their power in inappropriate ways. Conflicting pressures can occur when two or more employees or departments are responsible for separate actions with the same deadline. It determines how the extent to which we depend on each other to complete our work can contribute greatly to conflict (Favero and Bray, 2015). This may easily cause burnout. Burnout

was found to correlate directly with organizational stressors such as workload and role stress. School tends to develop their own independent cultures that are unique to themselves. These norms and values may be generated internally hence creating intentional pressures on lecturers as they strive to conform.

Unpredictable Policies: Whenever institution policies are changed, inconsistently applied, or non-existent, misunderstandings are likely to occur. The absence of clear policies or policies that are constantly changing can create an environment of uncertainty and conflict in an organization (Fadekemi and Isaac, 2011). It is therefore important for employees to know and understand institution rules and policies without any guess work. Organizational policies affect the management and communication styles in an organization to some extent. Employee concerns in terms of salaries and other remunerations, workload and the general school environment as dictated by policies contribute immensely to the lecturers' morale and level of motivation to work. In addition, difficulties with the school administration could raise the level of stress, thus leading to further problems. One of the important policies that is a potential source of conflict but appears to be understated is the organizational communication policy. This is because it is through communication that all interested parties will be updated on the all the aspects of the organization.

Staff Relational Factors: These are factors which emerge as a result of individual differences among employees. Staff relational factors are those which are related to interpersonal conflicts which can be defined as a negative interpersonal encounter characterized by a contentious exchange, hostility or aggression (Fadekemi and Isaac, 2011). Interpersonal conflict is overlapping yet distinct from several other negative workplace phenomena. Interpersonal conflict may be an isolated incident or a common occurrence and, in this sense, it is broader in scope than bullying or social undermining. Interpersonal conflict may include rude behaviour but, unlike workplace incivility, interpersonal conflict would also include instances of respectful yet contentious disagreement. Interpersonal conflict is a clash that involves two or more individuals who perceive each other as being in opposition to preferred outcomes, goals, attitudes, values or behaviours (Favero and Bray, 2015). Daily work hassles raise the likelihood of daily occurrence of conflict with coworkers or supervisors at work and have established that work hassles in general and interpersonal conflict in particular have a direct effect on employees' negative effect (Vittengl and Holt, 2013).

Conflicting Interest Styles: Individuals differ in the way they approach people and problems. Individuals in any system need to understand their own style and learn how to accept conflicting styles from others that arise due to diversity if they are to work as a team (Fadekemi and Isaac, 2011). An example of conflicting interest styles would be where one worker works best in a very structured environment while another worker works best in an unstructured environment. These two workers could easily drive each other crazy if they constantly work in conflict with one another and do not learn to accept one another's work style.

Conflicting Perceptions: Two or more workers can have conflicting perceptions which in many cases involve viewing the same incident in dramatically different ways (Cordes and Dougherty, 2013). Memos, performance reviews, institution rumors, hallway comments, and client feedback are sources of conflicting perceptions especially

when what was meant in the communication or action gets lost in a firestorm of responses to perceived wrongs.

Conflicting Personal Values and Goals: It is a common place to have different viewpoints about an incident, plan, or goal in the workplace and this can easily cause conflict in the workplace. Problems occur in the workplace mainly when associates are responsible for different duties in achieving the same goal. Segregation in the workplace leads to gossip; suspicion, and ultimately, conflict (Fadekemi and Isaac, 2011). The associates therefore need to learn to accept diversity in the workplace if they are to succeed in working as a team. Values are the beliefs and standards held by people and values are beliefs that people use to give meaning to their lives. Values help one to define what is right or wrong in any situation and provide a moral compass for one's life. The personality factors come from individualism or the differences that are inherent in people and it is evident that everybody has a unique combination of values, characteristics, beliefs and life style.

External Factors: External conflict is conflict that originates from an external source outside of the person and the organization. The important thing to note about these factors is that both workers and management respond to them. Some of the external causes of conflict may however not directly instigate industrial action but they do influence general social expectation (Fadekemi and Isaac, 2011). The causes of industrial conflict in Africa is due to the lukewarm attitude of employers and government in responding to the demands of the workers or treating their demand with levity, and also, non-recognition of the Labour Congress as an organ for harmonizing possible conflict between the employers of labor and employees.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework applied for this work is organizational psychology proposed by Katz and Kahn's (1966). In the most general sense, organizational psychology is the scientific study of individual and group behaviour in formal organizational settings. Katz and Kahn, in their classic work, role patterning theory stated that the essence of an organization is "patterned" human behaviour. When behaviour is patterned, some structure is imposed on individuals. The role patterning theory has been the most influential to conflicting pressures. It remains one of the most widely read texts on organizational behaviour. Katz and Kahn develop a perspective in which the systems metaphor is used to mediate approaches as diverse as Marxism, human relations and event-structure theory. In the synthesizing of structural-functionalism with the principles of general systems theory, Katz and Kahn developed a process model for interpreting organizational actions in terms of input, system and output. Their thesis revolves around the notion that formal social systems are homoeostatic, possessing qualities of negative entropy, feedback, differentiation and equality (Cordes and Dougherty, 2013). This structure typically comes in the form of roles (normative standards governing behaviour) as well as a guiding set of values. An organization cannot exist when people just "do their own thing" without any awareness of the behaviour of others.

According to Katz and Kahn (1966), the organisation and the individual are correlated in a theoretical model called role patterning. The individual in an organisation holding a specific role is the focal person and the people he/she relates with at the course of performing the said role are the role set. The role set's beliefs and attitudes

about the focal person's role behaviours helps in defining the focal person's role. In an organisational setting, an individual is positioned in what is called an office, situated in a set of on-going relationships and behaviours. Each office has role expectations partially prescribed as formal job descriptions and partially communicated by members of his/her role sets (Duzie, 2012). This process is referred to as role sending. The role holder, perceives the sent role and interprets what is expected of him, learns and adapts to them. His actions (role behaviour) communicate back to the role sender whether he complies with role expectations, and this action also influence and directs the expectation of others in the organisation.

Assessing conflicting pressure through a psycho-philosophical analysis

Psychologists described conflicting as an interactive opposing behaviour between two or more people, organizations or systems over incompatible goals, interests, scarce resources, values, belief system, power and prestige, nature of relationship as well as performance. Conflicting pressures in any society could range from intellectual jostling or malicious gossip all the way to use of physical force to influence destruction of property or physical injury. However, when it reaches the extent of violence, destruction and killing, it could no longer a healthy part of living and might need to be managed effectively (Cordes and Dougherty, 2013). Conflicting pressures are characteristics of human behaviour and part of the dynamics of life that drives individuals into the future. They are integral part of any social system but need to be properly managed in order to create a healthy organizational climate that is important for effective performance of responsibilities. Staff conflicting pressures in the higher institution have been reported to be common occurrence, resulting from both organizational and staff differences and values.

According to Duzie (2012), the higher institution setting could be a fertile breeding ground for conflicting pressures because of the dynamics and interdependency of the staff-to-staff, student-to-staff, and staff-to outside vendor relationships. Moreover, Kinman and Jones (2014) asserted that conflicting pressures was a normal and natural part of both the higher institution and personal lives. Dilshad and Latif (2011) argued that in a company, an agency or a small-scale business, conflicting pressures could be the very essence of what the organization was about and if conflicting pressures was not occurring, then, the organization had no reason for being. This meant that conflicting pressures in most cases uprooted the very impediments that undermine the organizational development and if absent, the management of the organization might be off-track in managing the affairs of the organization. Reports from research have indicated that the evolution of conflicting pressures in school setups is mainly influenced by threats to resource supply and demand which may be real or perceived (Duzie, 2012). However, the school has the responsibility to develop favorable attitudes towards learning and relationships in each child and therefore all efforts must be employed reduce conflicting pressures incidences to minimum. This is important because it is in the schools that the students are expected to interact with one another, their teachers and educational administrators for purposes of social development.

Empirical study by Muraina (2015) in Ghana and Onsarigo (2007) in Kenya while focusing to establish and analyze the conflicting pressures resolution mechanisms in higher institution had sought to determine factors influencing conflicting pressures in institutions of higher learning. The studies established that conflicting pressures was rife in learning institutions but the means of combating them are limited.

More findings had also indicated that it was better to expose and resolve conflicting pressures before they damage people's relationships or even before they degenerate into violence which undermines institutional stability and performance. The studies concluded that social conflicting pressures in educational institutions demand moral authority and leadership integrity to resolve them. If not resolved on time, they could have a destabilizing effect on institution's performance and learning processes.

Conclusion

The rapid changes occurring in the higher institution call for the need to empower and enhance the practice and capacity of vice chancellor to manage conflicts. Growing research has been conducted to acquire a better understanding of what goes on in higher institutions in Kenya especially in relation to students' performance and causes of student unrest. However, there is a huge gap in school conflict research in Sub-Saharan Africa on the side of the causes of lecturer-lecturer conflict, management-lecturer conflict as well as the external sources of conflict and how the different factors causing conflict under these categories are related. This has occurred even though many schools are plagued with devastating performance related challenges that various forms of conflicts may have contributed to. Understanding the dynamics of this high-level conflict would minimize the negative effects of conflict among educational stakeholders as it would lead to the identification of conflict management needs of schools and also expected to give recommendations on how the conflicts can be resolved without affecting performance and productivity of the lecturers and the students.

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