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CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN WORK ORGANISATION
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INTRODUCTION:

Conflict is crisis. It means disagreement and to be in opposition to one another. Conflict is an unavoidable part of life. It has been shown in literature that no single individual can exist functionally in the society without relating with other people. This process of interaction according to Akinola (1995) would bring about bruises here and there that will eventually lead to conflict. Therefore, as long as human beings interact, there is bound to be differences in ideas, opinions and thought. As unavoidable as conflict is, it can make people feel demeaned, alienated and dejected. However, if efficiently managed, conflict can be turned to a desirable part of human interaction in industry.

Noticeable variables of conflict are disputes, disagreements, misunderstandings, discontents, quarrel,

fighting and even, it is generally agreed upon by researchers, that conflict is inevitable in the work place, but contrary to the view of some people, conflict is not always disastrous. It could lead to solution of problems provided it is adequately managed. That the phenomenon would remain in work organizations is not deniable. The important things is that attempts should be made by the actors in industrial relations to refrain industrial conflict from its disruptive stance and use it to promote cooperation, understanding and for finding solution to problems facing industrial relations system. There is, therefore, the necessity to take conflict prevention steps.

Strategies for Management of Conflicts in Industry:

(i) Effective Communication:

Most of the works on the prevention of industrial conflicts have centred on developing effective organizational communication strategies. For example, the background to prevention of conflict by Betts (1975) is concerned with his thought on poor communication which indicates symptoms of

organisational faults, poor line managers, inappropriate personnel policy and inadequate managerial philosophy. In the same vein, Delving (1973) also found that communication is one of the important and most widely neglected aspect of organisational behaviour. Ramsay (1976) after a sample survey of about 2083 employees gave the conclusion that:

> there is no great revolutionary desire by workers to take over the running of industry themselves anything but what they want is information. Information about what is happening and why.

Braimoh (1983) simply noted that despite the crucial role played by communication in organizations, it has not gained the desired recognition, or that it has been relegated to the background as an important area of focus through which serious industrial explosions can occur. Effective communication within a group or between group depends to a considerable extent on the quality of the relationships among the people involved. It follows that where hostility, fear, aggression, distrust and disrespect predominate, communication will be far and less effective.

Corroborating other people's point of view, Omole (1997), observed that in recognition of its all important role in organization, communication has been variously described as, the life blood of the organization; the glue binds its component parts; the harmonizer of its disparate element; the lubricant of its intricate machinery; the life wire and nerve center of its activities. Wherever communication is allowed to cease or fail in any organization, anarchy inevitably takes over.

In concluding this section, we are of the opinion that communication provides a means by which superiors and their subordinates interact, exchange information and ideas, develop plans, proposals and policies; make decisions and manage both human and material resources. Communication is a means by which organizational goals are pursued, attained, sustain and improved.

(ii) Training And Education:
This aspect has also been found to

have worked well in managing organizational conflict. Educated people are easy to govern. The task of education, according to Plato, was to make each person perform most competently and most efficiently the functions of the division to which he belongs.

Training and education are concepts that are often confused and often treated as synonyms. Kariuki (1968) conceived training as broader in scope than education. He argued that education especially at advanced level becomes so specialized that it objective is to enable the learner do a specific job for which he will earn a living. He concluded that many training programmes containing important educational element usually intended to give the trainee broader understanding of the wider issues relating to the specific job he is trained to do. The work of Beach (1980) indicated that education is a more embracing concept than training. He perceived education as been concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and understanding from a wider perspective.

Both Education and training are concerned with human learning,

teaching and basically similar processes of instructional design and implementation (Balogun 1987).

The views of the industrialist are based on the works of Omole (1994). This perspective views both training and education as complementary and overlapping and so, the distinction should be less emphasized. Of much relevance is that managers, union officials and the rank and file need relevant education and training to see them through the daily running of industry. Training and education to be provided should involve the acquisition of knowledge, attitude, understanding and participation of workers so that they can be better partners in industry. Unless workers are emancipated from poverty and ignorance, industrial conflict would continue to he awful and on the increase. Literacy is a vital tool that can catalyse the effective and efficient development of the country's abundant human and natural resources.

Training and educating the participants in industry could be sponsored by the movement, the employers and even trade unions. It could be on-the-job or through

seminars, conferences and workshops that will guarantee acquisition of skills and better understanding. It follows from the aforementioned that if industrial actors are educated, all things being equal, they will stand in infinitely better position to bargain effectively with each other. Collective bargaining can only be adequately pursued where the bargainers know all the required facts. This can only be achieved through training and education. It is hoped that training and education offered the participants will afford the beneficiaries the opportunity for a better leadership and better followership within the place of work. Well informed union members and negotiators would be critical in their choice and well informed followership would see the sense in which their leaders have taken some steps and thereby back them up.

In addition, informality has been found to be the best approach to resolving human and industrial problems and in bargaining, participants should try and avoid legalistic approach in solving problems. It is very intersecting to note as observed by Akinola (1995) that the Japanese industrial relations system

have been able to avoid excessive legalism. There have been certain important court decisions in Japan, particularly on specific problems of labour relations in public sector, but by and large Japanese Industrial relations laws provide a framework within which most problems: are solved directly between the parties in dispute. Therefore, it will be better if the amount of laws and regulations are reduced to the barest minimum in order to bring about conducive atmosphere of collective bargaining.

Finally, it is important that when major decisions are contemplated, the workers should be consulted through their union or through the established Joint Industrial Councils (J.I.C.). It is even more important to ensure that consultation is sincere and effective. Decision makers have to be willing to adopt a much more open style of management and take the pain to ensure that employees understand the aims of the organization and their own individual roles within it. Therefore, the objectives and policies of the section, department and even the organization ought to be subject of joint discussion with

those people who are expected to implement and achieve the result. All efforts must be made that there are no communication gaps and all holes plugged to prevent irregular flow of information between management and its union.

Conclusion:

It has been establish in this paper that constant dialogue through interpersonal communication can considerably minimize conflicts in organizations. There should be avoidance of delay in communication. Information should be passed as early as possible on salient issues to those concerned. Moreover, state intervention in resolving industrial conflict within the country is desirable. This is in recognition of the fact that the government is the largest single employer of labour in the country. On education and conflict, it is our submission that workers and trade union executives should develop themselves adequately so as to follow all the intricacies of bargaining and participant management. It is only the enlightened and informed industrial relations actors who can appreciate their economic and civil responsibilities towards the community and the state.

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