

Principals' Goal Setting Skills and Conflict Resolution among Teachers in Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated Goal Setting skills as a strategy used by principals to resolve conflict among teachers in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. The objective of this study was to find out the effects of principals' goal setting skills on conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools. This objective was transformed into research question and hypothesis. Based on the nature of the study, research questions and hypothesis, the mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) approach specifically the sequential exploratory research design was adopted. Data was collected using a questionnaire for teachers and an interview guide for principals. Data was collected from 372 teachers and 40 principals. Participants were sampled using the purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The reliability analysis of the instrument, most especially, that for the teachers, was tested using the Cronbach Alpha test with a coefficient value which stood at 0.873. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 23 with the aid of frequency count and percentages while the hypothesis of the study was tested using the Spearman's rho test. Finding show that principals' goal setting skills significantly and positively affect conflict resolution ($P=0.048, <0.05$). The positive sign of the correlation value ($R= 0.159^*$) implies that principals are more likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they have good goal setting skills and are less likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they lack good goal setting skills. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that states there is a significant effect between principals' goal setting skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools was accepted. It was therefore recommended that principals should therefore be trained in this aspect (goal setting skills) so as to better handle the issue of conflict in their schools. Conclusively, findings have shown that the principals' goal setting skills has a vital role to play in conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Introduction

Goal setting is the process of establishing a direction for learning (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Goals setting can also be defined as a specific plan of action that outlines the steps to be taken to maximize success. One of the most essential tasks for any group to be successful is proper goal setting. It is important for principals to work with their fellow teachers and to determine the goals of the organization (school). Spend an adequate amount of time for brainstorming and then dialoguing on the goals. Try to establish one or two objectives that will help to achieve those goals as well. Remember to keep these goals written down and refer to them at various points throughout the year. Don't lose sight of your goals; if you manage to keep them in mind, you'll be that much closer to achieving them.

Conflicts are caused by a number of aspects that create tensions between people. Corvette (2007) contended that conflict exists wherever, and whenever there is an incompatibility of cognitions or emotions within individuals or between individuals. Many schools have broken down relationships because of the existence of this incompatibility. According to Deutch and Coleman (2000), the causes of conflict are differences in knowledge, beliefs and values, lust for power, position and recognition, personal liking and disliking, and perception about organizational culture.

Statement of the Problem

The problem at hand revolves around the insufficient development and application of goal-setting skills and conflict resolution strategies among principals in secondary schools. This issue significantly impacts the overall functioning and atmosphere within these educational institutions, hindering their potential to create positive and thriving learning environments for students and staff alike. One aspect of the problem lies in the inadequate cultivation of goal-setting skills among principals. Setting clear and attainable goals is crucial for providing direction and focus to the school community. However, the absence of effective goal-setting practices can result in ambiguity, confusion, and a lack of direction. Principals may struggle to establish a shared vision and strategic objectives, leading to a fragmented approach to educational leadership. Without well-defined goals, it becomes challenging to align the efforts of teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders towards a common purpose, hindering progress and growth within the school.

Additionally, the insufficient implementation of conflict resolution strategies poses a significant challenge for principals in secondary schools. Conflicts are inevitable in any organization, and schools are no exception. However, without proper training and skills in conflict resolution, principals may struggle to effectively address and resolve conflicts that arise among staff members, between students, or between different groups within the school community. The lack of proactive conflict resolution approaches can lead to unresolved tensions, a negative work or learning environment, and potential disruptions to the educational process. It is crucial for principals to possess the necessary tools and strategies to navigate conflicts, promote open dialogue, and foster a culture of respect and collaboration.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and targeted approach to professional development for principals in secondary schools. Providing training and support in goal-setting skills can empower principals to establish a clear vision, set measurable objectives, and effectively communicate these goals to their teams. However, some principals face many challenges in an attempt to resolve conflict in their schools probably because they lack goal setting skills or they do not use these skills effectively hence the need for this study.

Research Objective

To find out the effects of principals' goal setting skills on conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools

Research Question

What is the effect of principals' goal setting skills on conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools?

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant effect between principals' goal setting skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools.

Ha: There is a significant effect between principals' goal setting skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Goal Setting

Goal setting is the process of establishing a direction for learning (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Goals setting can also be defined as a specific plan of action that outlines the steps to be taken to maximize success. Goal-setting is a powerful technique for helping a mentee develop a solid foundation for future planning and organization. By knowing what he/she wants to achieve in life, a mentee may know where they want to concentrate and what to improve. If mentees can set well-defined goals, they can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. However, one of the most important tasks of the mentor (principal) is to assist the mentee (teachers) in setting short-term goals (less than a year) and long-term goals (more than five years). Aspiring to achieve long-term goals gives the mentee short-term motivation. For instance, a mentee may want to attend a major university (long-term goal). First, he/she needs to do well on the S.A.T. (short-term goal).

According to Carter (1993), a mentee should establish a long-term goal before a short-term goal can be explored. A mentee may not see the need to work toward a goal without understanding the relationship between the short-term goal and the long-term goal. One of the most essential tasks for any group to be successful is proper goal setting. It is important for principals to work with their fellow teachers and to determine the goals of the organization (school). Spend an adequate amount of time for brainstorming and then dialoguing on the goals. Try to establish one or two objectives that will help to achieve those goals as well. Remember to keep these goals written down and refer to them at various points throughout the year. Don't lose sight of your goals; if you manage to keep them in mind, you'll be that much closer to achieving them.

There are several important factors to consider before goal-setting with a mentee (Carter, 1993):

- Establish a relationship of trust over time.
- Establishing confidentiality is prerequisite to goal-setting.
- The mentee should be directly involved in setting goals. With the mentor's guidance, the mentee must articulate each goal, and it must be genuinely his/her goal.
- A short-term goal that can be easily achieved is a good starting point; for example, simply to complete all math homework assignments for the next week.
- Goals must be specific and measurable. For instance, Mary will complete and turn in all English assignments next week.
- To assure that an attempt will be made by mentees to meet their goals, a written commitment contract should be established between the mentor and the mentee.
- If a mentee fails to achieve his/her goal, examine these possible factors:
 - The goal may have been too difficult to achieve.
 - The goal may have been developed without the active involvement and commitment of the mentee.
 - The mentee may be fearful of achieving a self-enhancing goal. Many at-risk adolescents have low self-esteem and believe they are losers. They often become accustomed to making poor choices, reinforcing their negative self-image.
 - The mentor may need to speak to the mentee about his/her fears of being successful and making self-enhancing decisions.

Purpose of Goal-Setting

According to Hellriegel, Slocum, Woodman and Martens (1992), goal-setting helps the mentee

to strive to achieve. Although goal-setting may be challenging, it is generally worthwhile. Its intention is to increase efficiency and effectiveness by specifying the mentees desired outcomes. The following are the most important purposes of goal-setting: guide and direct behaviour, provide clarity, provide challenges and standards, reflect what the goal setters consider important, help improve performance, increase the motivation to achieve, help increase mentees pride and satisfaction in his/her achievements, improve mentees self-confidence, and help decrease negative attitude.

People who use goal-setting effectively suffer less from stress, are better able to concentrate, show more self-confidence, and seem to feel happier.

Goal-Setting Model

A mentee must formulate goals to travel the road to success. The SMART guidelines can help to set effective goals. SMART stands for:

S-Specific: A goal of graduating from high school is too general. Specify how this will be accomplished. (Study more in order to receive better grades.)

M-Measurable: Established criteria for how a goal is to be achieved. Measurable does not refer to a timeline; it means determining a way to measure the mentees success in completing the long-range goal.

A-Action-oriented: Be proactive in taking action that will result in reaching the desired goal.

R-Realistic: Strive for attainable goals, considering the resources and constraints relative to the situation.

T-Timely: Allow reasonable time to complete each goal, but not so much time the mentee loses focus or motivation.

(Adapted from Discovery Focus on Your Values and Accomplish Your Goals. Franklin Quest, 1996)

Dimensions of Goal Setting

Locke and Latham (2002) asserted that goals require certain dimensions to be effective. These dimensions include: goal commitment, goal difficulty, goal specificity, and goal feedback (Locke & Latham, 2002). Research has shown that when a goal embodies these dimensions, its likelihood of being achieved, within the parameters set, is at its highest. Thus organizations, or more specifically, managers, and employees should strive to include them in all goals (Locke & Latham, 2013). I will now expand on each of these elements.

1. Goal Commitment: In order to gain maximum goal commitment, a manager within an organization should ensure that an employee understands the importance of the goal and that the employee has the ability to complete the task with minimal supervision (self-efficacy) (Locke & Latham, 2002). If an employee is committed to achieving a goal and is involved in the goal setting process, studies have shown that this employee will be highly motivated to achieve the goal (Latham & Locke, 1979). By including employees in the goal setting process, you are showing them that their thoughts and input are valued, which in turn will allow employees to stay committed to accomplishing the goal (Locke & Latham, 2002). This is because the involved in goal setting provides employees a sense of ownership and pride (Locke & Latham, 1984). Thus, while assigned goals are shown to be effective, there can be additional advantages to having employees anticipatively participate in the setting of goals (Locke & Latham, 2002).

A. Importance: Throughout the goal setting process, employees should understand the importance of the goal being set. It is not adequate for a manager to simply state that the goal

is important; managers need to work with their employees to ensure there is a mutual understanding of how this goal will help achieve a certain target or objective for the organization. In doing this, the employee feels a sense of importance and, thus, they are more likely to be motivated to complete the task (Locke & Latham, 2002).

- B. Self-Efficacy:** Self-efficacy, or one's confidence in one's abilities to complete a certain task(s) and obtain a specific level of performance (Bandura, 1997), can be leveraged to enhance goal commitment and achievement by employees. When employees have the confidence and they have the skills to complete the required goals, they can self-regulate and adjust their course of action as necessary. Thus, they will improve goal performance (Locke & Latham, 2002). However, it is important for managers to understand that they need to invest in their employees to ensure they are continuously learning and pushing the envelope within their specific industry (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is only beneficial if employees have the motivation and the skills required to be successful (Locke & Latham, 2002).
- 2. Goal Difficulty:** Additionally, there should be consideration given to the difficulty of the goal. It should be difficult enough to ensure the employee is challenged, but not so difficult that the employee is overwhelmed and feels as if it will be impossible to achieve. In order to ensure successful completion of complex goals, it is important that managers set realistic time lines and ensure adequate resources are supplied (Locke & Latham, 2002).
- 3. Goal specificity:** By providing a specific target or goal to achieve, managers are able to ensure that there is minimal ambiguity with regards to the desired outcome. In other words, managers should not simply encourage employees to 'do their best' but instead, should provide specific goals that can be achieved (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Potential Negative Effects of Goals

Latham & Locke (2002) reported ten potential pitfalls in goal setting and ways to overcome them. They discussed the importance of specific and challenging goals over vague or "do your best" goals. However, the first potential problem is that a difficult performance goal may become a hindrance when there is a lack of knowledge of how to attain the goal. In this type of circumstance, it is best to give specific difficult learning goals that support the performance goal.

A second common pitfall is when goals are conflicting among members of a group. The behavior of the members of a group will respond differently if the goal is presented competitively instead of cooperatively.

A third potential problem is when the goal is framed in a negative perspective instead of positively and viewed as a threat. Instead of stating "don't mess up on more than three of these fifteen problems", the goal should be stated "find the answer to twelve or more of these fifteen issues".

A fourth issue is when punishment is used when the goal is not attained. Errors and failures will always occur when setting and pursuing difficult and challenging goals. A fear of failure can discourage a person from setting and achieving a goal. People perform higher when the time frame to attain the goal is reasonable, they are given the opportunity and fully allowed to make mistakes, and then encouraged to learn from the mistakes.

A fifth potential problem is when people rely too heavily on past strategies from previous successes and then misapplying them to even more challenging goals. One way to counteract the misapplication of past strategies to a current situation is to set sub-goals that support the longer term goal. Sub-goals encourage feedback and allow for correction if the goal is out of congruence with reality. A second way to counteract this is to "encourage constructive conflict". This can prevent "group think" where people will outwardly agree with something that they really do not believe just so they are perceived as a supportive member.

A sixth potential problem lies with money as a motivator to attain a goal. People are more likely to overstate their performance when they are just shy of attaining their goal. They may focus too heavily on making the numbers look good instead of the results. People can also find ways to make an easy goal appear to be difficult when motivated by monetary gain. Ways to overcome this are to (1) not punish when the goal is not attained, (2) set the monetary goal up as a percentage as the minimum is met that can increase with increased results, (3) properly judge and reward based on the difficulty of attaining the goal, and (4) have zero tolerance for unethical behaviour.

A seventh issue that can lead to irrational and risky behaviour is when the goal is tied to self-esteem. As a result, the goal may not be abandoned even in the face of overwhelming evidence that it should be. People should always put reality first and remain adaptable to the situation realizing that the goal attainment does not define who they are.

An eighth potential downside is when performance that isn't perceived as part of the goal is ignored. It must be clear as to what outcomes are necessary for the goal attainment.

A ninth possible concern is when people have stretched too far with the number of goals set and they experience increasing stress. Proper training should be in place to help people set challenging, yet achievable, goals.

The tenth and final potential pitfall is when unattainable goals are set for people who have reached or attained a challenging goal in the past. When progressively harder and harder goals are set for those who have a record of achieving goals, it can be perceived as punishment. High performing individuals and groups should be allowed to participate or set their own goals.

In the paper, *Goals Gone Wild* (2009), criticisms to goal setting include the risk of goals being too narrow and causing people to overlook important issues that are related to the goal. Other criticisms include having too many goals, inappropriate time lines, goals that are too challenging, promotion of unethical behavior, psychological effects of goal failure, not having learning goals, creating a competitive environment, diminishing intrinsic motivation, and not individualizing goals. Ordonez et al. (2009) stressed the importance of learning how to set and when to set goals through training and risk mitigation. Many of these risks were addressed in Latham & Locke's 2002 paper, but the scholarship of Ordonez et al. (2009) was questioned in a 2009 paper written by Latham & Locke. They purport that Ordonez et al. framed goal setting as a remedy for problems rather than a motivator for high performance. The researchers also argued the use of anecdotal evidence to support their argument, not accounting for confounding variables when drawing conclusions, and not citing relevant studies.

The concept of Conflict Resolution

Wallensteen (2002) stated the definition of conflict resolution as "conflict resolution is a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solve their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other". Conflict resolution involves the reconciliation or elimination of fundamental differences and grievances underlying the conflict. Parties involved in conflict resolution in schools include; principals, teachers, students, parents, stakeholders and support staff. Conflict resolution occurs when the incompatibility between the preferences of the various parties to a conflict disappears or when the sources of conflict situation are removed. Conflict resolution is a development process, which includes not only preventing violence but also the removal of source of conflict situation.

Challenges Faced by Principals in Managing Conflicts

Msila (2011) stated that the challenges of school heads are to identify the problems endemic in their schools. Msila added that the workload of school heads is becoming unmanageable and as a

result many school heads become unable to manage conflict in their schools. The performance of schools may be lower due to the strategies used by principals in managing conflict. Furthermore, some school principals do not yet master the basic principles of school management or face problem understanding which may hinder the efficiency of the general administration of the school. Moreover, the initial training of some of them does not allow them to acquire enough knowledge in school administration and management.

A rational way of resolving Conflicts

Donna (2017) suggested the following model for resolving interpersonal conflicts;

- 1. Identify the problem:** Have a discussion to understand both sides of the problem. The goal at this initial stage is to say what you want and listen to what the other person wants. Define the things that you both agree on, as well as the ideas that have caused the disagreement. It is important to listen actively to what the other is saying, use “I” statements and avoid blame.
- 2. Come up with several possible solutions:** This is the brainstorming phase. Drawing on the points that you both agree on your shared goals, generate a list of as many ideas as you can for solving the problem, regardless of how they might be. Aim toward quantity of ideas rather than quality during this phase, and let creativity be your guide.
- 3. Evaluate these alternative solutions:** Now go through the list of alternative solutions to the problem one by one, consider the pros and cons of the remaining solutions until the list is narrowed down to one or two of the best ways of handling the problem. It is important for each person to be honest in this phase. The solutions might not be ideal for either person and may involve compromise.
- 4. Decide on the best solution:** Select the solution that seems mutually acceptable, even if it is not perfect for either party. As long as it seems fair and there is a mutual commitment to work with the decision, the conflict has a chance for resolution.
- 5. Implement the solution:** It is important to agree on the details of what each party must do, who is responsible for implementing various parts of the agreement, and what to do in case the agreement starts to break down.
- 6. Continue to evaluate the solution:** Conflict resolutions should be seen as works in progress. Make it a point to ask the other person from time to time how things are going. Something unexpected might have come up or some aspect of the problem may have been overlooked.

In order to achieve a school’s set goals and mitigate conflicts in the school setting, there is need for principals to set goals and use the above six rational ways of resolving conflict.

Theoretical Review

Transformational Leadership Theory by James MacGregor (1978) and Bernard M. Bass (1985)

This theory focuses upon the connections formed between leaders (principals) and followers (teachers). These leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task. Transformational leaders are focused on the performance of group members, but also want each person to fulfil his or her potential. These leaders often have high ethical and moral standards. The theorists of the Transformational leadership theory are James MacGregor (1978) and Bernard M. Bass (1985).

James MacGregor Burns (1978) first introduced the concept of transforming leadership in his descriptive research on political leaders, but this term is now used in organizational psychology as well. According to Burns, transforming leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation". Burns related

to the difficulty in differentiation between management and leadership and claimed that the differences are in characteristics and behaviours. He established two concepts: "transforming leadership" and "transactional leadership".

According to Burns, the transforming approach creates significant change in the life of people and organizations. It redesigns perceptions and values, and changes expectations and aspirations of employees. Unlike in the transactional approach, it is not based on a "give and take" relationship, but on the leader's personality, traits and ability to make a change through example, articulation of an energizing vision and challenging goals. Transforming leaders are idealized in the sense that they are a moral exemplar of working towards the benefit of the team, organization and/or community. Burns theorized that transforming and transactional leadership were mutually exclusive styles. Transactional leaders usually do not strive for cultural change in the organization but they work in the existing culture while transformational leaders can try to change organizational culture.

Another researcher, Bernard M. Bass (1985), extended the work of Burns (1978) by explaining the psychological mechanisms that underlie transforming and transactional leadership; Bass also used the term "transformational" instead of "transforming." Bass added to the initial concepts of Burns (1978) to help explain how transformational leadership could be measured, as well as how it impacts follower motivation and performance. The extent to which a leader is transformational is measured first, in terms of his influence on the followers.

The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and because of the qualities of the transformational leader are willing to work harder than originally expected. These outcomes occur because the transformational leader offers followers something more than just working for self-gain; they provide followers with an inspiring mission and vision and give them an identity. The leader transforms and motivates followers through his or her idealized influence (earlier referred to as charisma), intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. In addition, this leader encourages followers to come up with new and unique ways to challenge the status quo and to alter the environment to support being successful.

Finally, in contrast to Burns, Bass suggested that leadership can simultaneously display both transformational and transactional leadership. Now 30 years of research and a number of meta-analyses have shown that transformational and transactional leadership positively predicts a wide variety of performance outcomes including individual, group and organizational level variables (Bass & Bass, 2008). The full range of leadership introduces four elements of transformational leadership;

- 1. Individualized Consideration:** The degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower's concerns and needs. The leader gives empathy and support, keeps communication open and places challenges before the followers. This also encompasses the need for respect and celebrates the individual contribution that each follower can make to the team. The followers have a will and aspirations for self-development and have intrinsic motivation for their tasks.
- 2. Intellectual Stimulation:** The degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas. Leaders with this style stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. They nurture and develop people who think independently. For such a leader, learning is a value and unexpected situations are seen as opportunities to learn. The followers ask questions, think deeply about things and figure out better ways to execute their tasks.
- 3. Inspirational Motivation:** The degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task at hand. Followers need to have a strong sense of purpose if they are to

be motivated to act. Purpose and meaning provides the energy that drives a group forward. The visionary aspects of leadership are supported by communication skills that make the vision understandable, precise, powerful and engaging. The followers are willing to invest more effort in their tasks; they are encouraged and optimistic about the future and believe in their abilities.

- 4. Idealized Influence:** Provides a role model for high ethical behaviour, instills pride, gains respect and trust. As a development tool, transformational leadership has spread already in all sectors of western societies, including governmental organizations.

According to this theory, principals should motivate and inspire their teachers by helping them see the importance of task (goals). Principals should therefore focus on the performance of their teachers by ensuring that each teacher fulfils his/her potential. Principals who influence their teachers positively can therefore use motivation and inspiration to resolve conflict in their various institutions. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and because of these qualities, the transformational leaders are willing to work harder than originally expected thus limiting the occurrence of conflict.

This theory is related to this study in that schools are organisations composed of individuals that need to work together as a team to achieve their organizational goals. To achieve a school’s set goals and mitigate conflicts in the school setting, there is need for principals to set goals which teachers can use as road maps.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to allow for in-depth exploration of the variables under study. The population of the study comprised of secondary teachers and principals in the South-West Region of Cameroon which comprised of six divisions namely, Manyu, Meme, Fako, Kupe Maunenguba, Lebialem and Indian Divisions. The target population consisted of teachers from three of the six divisions which are Manyu, Meme and Fako divisions. As for accessible population of the study, teachers and principals were sampled from 40 secondary schools. The sample size of the study comprised of 372 teachers and 40 principals and the participants were sampled using the purposive and convenient sampling techniques.

Table 1: Distribution of number of sample size of teachers per division

Division	Public secondary schools		Confessional schools		Lay private schools	
	Total teachers	Sample size per division	Total teachers	Sample size per division	Total teachers	Sample size per division
Fako	1684	111	696	46	1581	104
Manyu	446	29	121	8	53	3
Meme	780	52	137	9	527	36
Total	2,910	192	954	63	2,161	143

Statistics on table 1 shows that out of the 398 questionnaire for teachers, 192 questionnaires were administered to teachers teaching in public secondary schools with 111 from Fako, 29, from Manyu and 52 from Meme divisions, respectively. For confessional schools, 63 teachers were sampled 46 teachers from Fako, 8 from Manyu and 9 from Meme division. Finally, for lay private schools, out of the 143 teachers, 104 were from Fako, 3 from Manyu and 36 from Meme divisions, respectively. The calculation of the sample size by school type and division was free from bias, given that a simple proportion technique was used in distributing the 398 teachers to all the divisions. For instance, to calculate the number of teachers to be sampled in Fako for public schools, the total number of teachers in public secondary schools in Fako was multiplied by 398 and then divided by 6025.

Questionnaire and interviewed guide were the instruments adopted for the study. The questionnaire was designed for teachers and interview guide for the principals. The questionnaire for teachers consisted of both close and few open ended questions. In total, the questionnaire consisted of 37 items. The data for the study was collected using the direct delivery technique that is face to face by the researcher. Finally, findings were presented using frequency distribution tables and thematic tables with all inferential statistics presented at 95% level of confidence interval with alpha set at 0.05 levels, accepting 5% margin of error.

Results and Discussion

Descriptively, findings revealed that a majority of the teachers (81.4%) and principals (82.5%) indicated that principals' goal setting skill is relevant in conflict resolution among teachers with many of the teachers saying that principals with good goal setting skills guide and direct teachers' behaviour toward work and maintain cooperation among them, minimize conflict, improve on teachers' moral and commitment to work while some of them said principals with poor goal setting skills cause conflict among teachers. Principals on the other hand said principals' with good goal setting skills properly handle conflict, building teachers' trust for the principal, helping principals to set standards, properly guide the principal, to use appropriate conflict resolution approaches and help them to encourage unity among the teachers. And, statistically, findings show that principals' goal setting skills significantly and positively affect conflict resolution ($P=0.048, <0.05$). The positive sign of the correlation value ($R= 0.159^*$) implies that principals are more likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they have good goal setting skills and are less likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they lack good goal setting skills. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that states there is a significant effect between principals' goal setting skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools was accepted.

The comparison between teachers' and principals' perception of principals' goal setting skills were presented on figure 1.

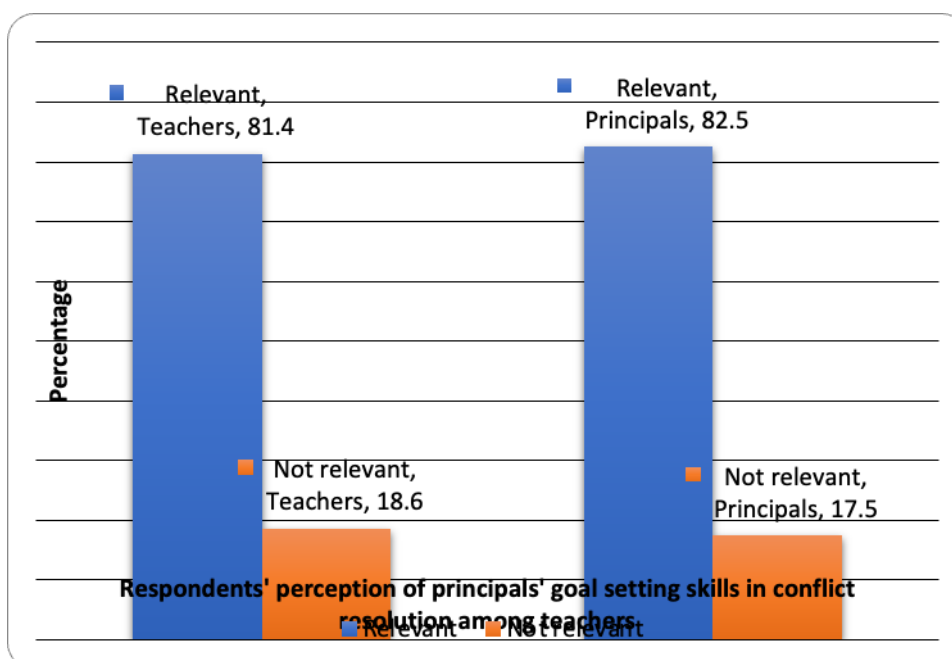


Figure 1: Respondents' perception of principals' goal setting skills to conflict resolution among teachers

Comparatively, findings showed that a majority of the teachers 81.4% and principals 82.5% indicated that principals' goal setting skill is relevant in conflict resolution among teachers.

Conclusion and Implications

Findings showed that principals' goal setting skills significantly and positively affect conflict resolution. The positive sign of the correlation implied that principals are more likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they have good goal setting skills such as assist teachers in goal setting, share goals with teachers, guiding and directing behaviour, establish relationship of trust and are less likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they lack good goal setting skills. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis that states there is a significant effect between principals' goal setting skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools was accepted.

Findings on Teachers' perception on how principals' goal setting skills affects conflict resolution showed that many of the teachers said principals with good goal setting skills guide and direct teachers' behaviour toward work and maintain cooperation among them, minimize conflict, improve on teachers' moral and commitment to work while some of them said principals with poor goal setting skills cause conflict among teachers. A greater majority of the teachers were of the opinion that principals who possess adequate goal setting skills direct and guide teachers' behaviour. They said that "good goal setting skills by principals properly direct all teachers' attention toward their work thus reducing conflict among them" while "negative goals lead to poor behaviours hence causing conflict among them". Some of the teachers also said that "setting goals and sharing it with teachers helps in directing behaviours thereby preventing the frequent occurrence of conflict among teachers". Findings also revealed that principals' with adequate goal setting skills maintain cooperation among teachers. Most teachers said that "it has helped in the attitude of the teachers and thus they try to cooperate with their colleagues", "principals with good goal setting skills always strive to ensure that teachers work together" and that "principals with good goal setting skills help to impact peaceful relationship between teachers and also help to resolve conflict".

According to principals' description of goal setting skills to conflict resolution among teachers, they said that "Principal can easily use goals to resolve conflict among teachers and reminding them on how conflict among them will affect their goals negatively", "Goal setting skills are very essential in motivating teachers and reducing conflict among the teachers and school administration" and that "a principal with goal setting skills will always quickly redirect the focus of his staff when conflict occurs so as to achieve the goals of the school". In addition, principals who possess adequate goal setting skills will always set standard for teachers to follow thus minimizing the rate of conflict occurrence among teachers. However, this findings supports that of Carter (1993) who pointed out that goal-setting is a powerful technique for helping a mentee to develop a solid foundation for future planning and organization. By knowing what he/she wants to achieve in life, a mentee may know where they want to concentrate and what to improve. If mentees can set well-defined goals, they can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. However, one of the most important tasks of the mentor (principal) is to assist the mentee (teachers) in setting short-term goals (less than a year) and long-term goals (more than five years). Aspiring to achieve long-term goals gives the mentee short-term motivation. A mentee should establish a long-term goal before a short-term goal can be explored. A mentee may not see the need to work toward a goal without understanding the relationship between the short-term goal and the long-term goal.

Furthermore, principals with adequate goal setting skills help to minimize conflict as confirmed by some teachers who said that "the open room to share ideas or goals geared at stamping out conflict in the learning environment", and that "principals with goal setting skills always try to reduce the rate of conflict occurrence amongst the teachers". Findings also revealed that "principals with good goal setting skills build trust among teachers which obviously help to reduce conflict". It also improves teachers' commitment to work because when teachers know

where the school is going, they can bring their contribution for the better move of the project. On the other hand poor goal setting skills result to conflict. Some few teachers confirmed this by saying that “some principals are too selfish that they don’t share the goals of the school with teachers which may gradually bring conflict among teachers”.

However, the principal cannot effectively resolve conflict when he/she lacks adequate goal setting skills to give him/her a focus. When a principal lacks adequate goal setting skill, he will not see any reason to resolve conflict among the teachers. Some teachers said that “a poor goal setting skills will mislead the principal thus aggravate the conflict” and that “a principal with no goal setting skill would definitely be lacking in proper approaches in resolving conflict among teachers”. Therefore, a principal must be able to set goals and focus on them so that when conflict arises, they will see the need to resolve it fast in order to focus on achieving their goals. However, this finding confirms that of Hellriegel, Slocum, and Woodman & Martens (1992) who postulated that goal-setting helps the mentee to strive to achieve. Although goal-setting may be challenging, it is generally worthwhile. Its intention is to increase efficiency and effectiveness by specifying the mentees desired outcomes. The following are the most important purposes of goal-setting: guide and direct behaviour, provide clarity, provide challenges and standards, reflect what the goal setters consider important, help improve performance, increase the motivation to achieve, help increase mentees pride and satisfaction in his/her achievements, improve mentees self-confidence, and help decrease negative attitude which can lead to conflict.

Conclusively, findings showed that many of the principals were of the opinion that goal setting skill is relevant in conflict resolution by helping them to properly handle conflict among teachers. Principal can easily use goals to resolve conflict among teachers by reminding them on how conflict among them will affect their goals negatively. Therefore, a principal cannot effectively resolve conflict when he/she lacks adequate goal setting skills to give him/her a focus. Goal setting skills are very essential in motivating teachers and reducing conflict among the teachers and school administrators.

Recommendations

Based on the effects of principals goal setting skills on conflict resolution among teachers, findings showed that many of the teachers were of the opinion that principals with good/adequate goal setting skills guide and direct teachers’ behaviour toward work and maintain cooperation among them, minimize conflict, improve on teachers’ moral and commitment to work while some of them said principals with poor/inadequate goal setting skills cause conflict among teachers. Principals should therefore be trained in this aspect (goal setting skills) so as to better handle the issue of conflict in their schools.

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