REBRANDING BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract
The study investigated rebranding business education programme for conflict management in public universities in south-east, states of Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study at p≤ 0.05 level of significance. The population for the study was 90 Business educators drawn from public universities that offers business education programme in south-east states of Nigeria. Due to the manageable size of the population no sampling technique was adopted. The instrument for data collection was a structured 28-item statement questionnaire titled" Rebranding Business Education Programme for Conflict Management Questionnaire (RBPCMQ) which was validated by three experts from business education department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu state. The instrument was trial tested on 20 respondents and this yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.84. The researchers were assisted by four research assistants in collecting data for the study. The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study indicate that business education programme when rebranded for conflict management will help in securing, retaining and progressing conflict management techniques in the society and the nation at large. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others, that there should be conflict management training course at all levels of business education programmes which involves professional therapists and educational stakeholders to improve business education lecturers and students' conflict management proficiency within the university educational system, Conflict management intervention programmes should be integrated in business education programme and other vocationally based programmes by curriculum planners to foster effective conflict management practices among students and lecturers.

Keywords: Rebranding, Business Education, Business Education Program, Conflict, Conflict Management.

Introduction

Conflict issues have been the bone of contention in the news for some times now. Families, communities, states and countries at large are battling with one form of conflict crisis or the other. Conflict is a situation in which people or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. A situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes (Yorid and Pakia, 2013, *Hornby, 2015*). Conflict is considered as an inevitable phenomenon in families, communities, institutions of learning, organizations and nations at large. A felt struggle between two or more interdependent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values and goals, or over differences in desires for esteem, control and connectedness (Hocker and Wilmont, 2011). Conflict is defined as the process in which people have divergence opinions over important issues that affect them thereby leading to serious disagreement. Conflicts are generally viewed as relational disputes between two or more parties.

Conflict has sewn into the fabrics of educational institutions including business education programmes as a result of the nature of the functional and relational characteristics of the various academic departments. Miklas and Kleiner (2003) opined that the educational institutions are "a perfect breeding ground for conflict" as a result of the academic freedom present there, whereby the academic staff is more independent in their approaches and viewpoints. A poorly managed conflict does not only affect the students in the universities but also posses' financial burden on parents and also affect the image of the universities within the global context. Alabi (2002) asserted that it is unrealistic and impossible to completely eradicate conflict within the university system but the corollary is that no meaningful development can take place where a system is torn apart by conflicts (Adeyemi and Ekundayo, 2010). This brings about the need to properly manage conflicts in order to retain its positive aspect and improve job satisfaction. The effect and consequences of unmanaged conflicts in the workplace on employees and the organization are crucial (Dijkstra, 2006). In order to manage or develop effective key conflict management strategies, it is essential to know the underlying causes (Havenga, 2005). According to Mayer (2000), if the causes of conflict are known, a conflict chart which directs management processes can be developed. Conflict is inevitable in life but it need

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not have destructive consequences for the group involved despite its causes (*Kuhn and Poole, 2000,* Nahawandi, Denhardt, Denhardt, and Aristigueta, 2015).

Causes of Conflict

Source: *Jones and George (2003). Organizational Conflict, Negotiation, Politics, and Change, Contemporary Management (3rded). McGraw-Hill Companies. Inc. Boston, M.A*

Causes of organizational conflicts as opined by (Jones and Georgem, 2003) include; incompatible goals and time horizons, status inconsistencies, scarce resources, incompatible evaluations or reward system, task interdependencies, and overlapping authority, as aptly captured. Conflict can occur when the following happens: a party is required to participate in activities that contrast with such a person's interest; a party exhibits a certain social tendency which infringes on or is incompatible with another person's behavioural tendency, or when a party wants some resources desired by others which are scarce in supply and as a result other people want may not be fulfilled. Rahim (2002) opined that conflict brings anarchy, disunity, stress, frustration, dissatisfaction, absenteeism, poor performance among employees, fight, war among others leading to displacement in the society it occurs. No nation ever remains the same after conflict. Conflict can be damaging, and many people actively avoid dealing with situations arising from conflict. However, if properly handled, conflict can

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strengthen our dealings with other people and add to our understandings of others views or perceptions, Nahavandi, Denhardt, Denhardt, and Aristigueta (2015), (McKenzie, 2002; Axelrod and Johnson, 2005). The most valuable aspect of conflict is the energy that it generates when not properly managed.

Management, according to (Mukoro, 2013) is the process of mobilizing the available scarce human and material resources in an organization to realize stated goals and planned mission. Akpala in Ile, (2002) defined management as efficiently getting activities completed with and through people in a dynamic setting. It is the combination and utilization of the organizational scarce resources so as to achieve its pre-determined objectives. To the author, management can be viewed from two perspectives namely; as a class of people within the organization working towards the attainment of the ends and goals for which the organization was set up, and as a set of functions performed in the organization for the purpose of achieving organizational goal. Management is viewed as the **process of administering and controlling the affairs of the** organization, irrespective of its nature, type, structure and size, *DuBrin, (2009)*. It is an act of creating and maintaining such a business environment wherein the members of the organization can work together, and achieve business objectives efficiently and effectively. Management activities includes setting the strategy of an organization and coordinating the efforts of its employees (or of volunteers) to accomplish its objectives through the application of available resources, such as financial, natural, technological, and human resources. The term "management" may also refer to those people who manage an organization-individually: managers. Management enhances harmonization if all concerned are on deck to manage conflict.

Conflict management as defined by De Dreu (2002) is a process of managing the clashes or struggles between parties. It is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair and an efficient manner; the limitation, mitigation and/or containment of a conflict without necessarily solving it (Green 2007), (Tanner 2000). Conflict management refers to the process of eradicating violence and actions associated with it thereby leaving the conflict to be dealt. Conflict management is viewed by (Leffel, Hallam, and Darling, 2012) as not implying terminating conflict, but involving the understanding of strategies required to minimize the dysfunction aspect of conflict and enhance its constructive effectiveness. Conflict management is the process of handling disputes and disagreements between two or multiple parties. The goal of conflict management

is to minimize the negative factors that are influencing the conflict and encourage all parties to come to an agreement. Successful conflict management results in a mutually beneficial outcome that is agreed upon by each party. It is rare to have a specific conflict management style that is generalized to every situation *(Huo, Molina, Sawahata and Deang, 2005).* Properly managed conflict increases organizational learning by increasing the number of questions asked and encourages individuals to challenge the status quo and mitigate poverty (Madu, Okanazu, and Enyinnaya, 2019, *Maccoby and Scudder,2011)*

Meta-model of conflict management as opined by (Rahim, 2002, DeChurch and Marks, 2001) created a meta-taxonomy for conflict management styles based on two dimensions, concern for self and concern for others. The authors examined the literatures available on conflict management as at the time and did established what they claimed was a "meta-taxonomy" that encompasses all other models. They argued that all other styles have inherent in the two dimensions; Activeness ("the extent to which conflict behaviors make a responsive and direct rather than inert and indirect impression"). High activeness is characterized by openly discussing differences of opinion while fully going after their own interest; Agreeableness ("the extent to which conflict behaviors make a pleasant and relaxed rather than unpleasant and strainful impression"). High agreeableness is characterized by attempting to satisfy all parties involved. To the authors, activeness did not have a significant effect on the effectiveness of conflict resolution, but the agreeableness of the conflict management style, whatever it was, did have a positive impact on how groups felt about the way the conflict was managed, regardless of the outcome of the brand of people involved.

Brand means to make, sort or array of issue, phenomenon or programme. Brand is a particular type of something. Rebranding involves changing the image of company, organization, programme or services, *Hornby, (2015).* Rebranding is a strategy in which a new name, term, symbol, design, concept or combination thereof is created for an established brand with the intention of developing a new, differentiated identity in the minds of consumers, investors, competitors, and other stakeholders, (*Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006).* **It involves** changing the image of a company, product, programme, logo, name, symbols, or a combination of all of them. Often, this involves radical changes to a brand's logo, name, legal names, image, strategy or themes. Such changes typically aim at repositioning the brand/programme, occasionally to distance itself from

negative connotations of the previous branding. The process can occur intentionally through a deliberate change in strategy or occur unintentionally from unplanned, emergent situations. **The need to rebrand business education programme for conflict management cannot be overemphasized.**

Business education involves teaching students the fundamentals, theories, and processes of business. Amoor, (2010) viewed business education as a component of vocational education which involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences which make its recipients or beneficiaries proficient. Njoku, (2013), defined business education as an educational programme that equips its recipients with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitude and value that enables them to operate in the environment. From the foregoing, changes can occur in positive way to the individual that acquires business education which aid in managing conflicts eminent around her as the years goes by. Business education definitions have continued to change Rufai, (2013). There is rapid change in the world at large with the escalation of conflict in almost every facet of endeavor, business education programme is hope to produce individuals that can manage conflict, Iwuoha and Peters (2019). Business education as a branch of education involves teaching the skills and operations of business. This field of education occurs at multiple levels, mainly a classroom of a school and internships. Al-Alwani(2018) noted that some barriers that hamper the development of business education programme are organizational based rather than individuals. These problem includes; lack of modern instructional facilities, laboratories and workshops equipment to enhance learning outcome among others, Anioke (2011). According to Tjosvold (2008), to work in an organization or university environment is to be in conflict as joint work requires conflict management. Providing more conflict management training in business education programmes would help raise the emotional intelligence of future managers and leaders, *Alper, Tjosvold, and Law, (2000). The world is at present undergoing major transformation and they are multi-dimensional, affecting the technological, economical, social and political development.* Business education programme as one of the leading and well growing education fields in the past decades with the scope very much bright and vast when it comes to its graduates who has several and numerous fields in which they can penetrate and groom their career.

Statement of the problem

Conflict caused by differing perspective may lead to harsh and painful situations, or it can be transformed into creative and productive dialogue. Conflict will become easier to manage if we see it as inevitable but not necessarily destructive, and as a problem to be solved rather than a battle to be won. Conflict can result from career conflict, mentor-mentee issues, leadership tussle, position strife among others, posing conflict to such environment even in institutions of learning. Business education programme is one of the programmes run in institutions; it has many components, as there are different areas of the programme as a whole including accounting, management and marketing depending on the institution. Business education programme can help its recipients to develop specific skills relating to educational issues, theories of learning, equality and diversity, education policy and practice, creativity and education, and a general understanding of education in social, political and economic contexts. Some of its courses include and not limited to work placement modules, providing the opportunity to put theory into practice, gain skills that are useful in a variety of job sectors: communication skills in presenting effective oral and written argument, IT skills, research and analytical skills, interpersonal skills with the ability to work collaboratively as part of a team, problem-solving skills, organization and time management skills, self-management which aid in planning workload, reflecting on and improving personal practice among others which can help to manage conflict. Many programs within business education have its main focus on the career development of its recipients, preparing them for the labor market and ensuring that they possess the requisite knowledge and skills possible that also aid in conflict management. This is assuming will enable its recipients to develop appropriate skill towards managing conflict. This engenders the need to rebrand business education programme for conflict management in public universities in south-east, states of Nigeria.

Purpose of the study
The purpose of the study determines the need of rebranding business education programme for conflict management in public universities in south-east, states of Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined;
1. Ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management.
2. The challenges of conflict management in Business education programme

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study;
1. What are the ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management?
2. What are the challenges of conflict management in Business education programme?

Research Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance
Ho_1: There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers on ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management.
Ho_2: There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers on the challenges of conflict management in business education programme

Methods
Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in universities offering business education programme in south-east states of Nigeria. The population for this study consists of 90 business education lecturers in seven universities that offers business education programme in south-east states of Nigeria. The entire population was used for the study because of the relative small size which is manageable and accessible by the researchers. Hence, there was no sample. The instruments used for data collection for the study was a 28-item structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Rebranding Business Education Programme for Conflict Management (QRBEPCM). The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument used for data collection in this study was validated by three business education experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In determining the reliability of the research instruments, the researcher administered 20 copies of the instruments to 20 business education lecturers from universities in south-south states of Nigeria. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed and collected by the researchers on the spot to avoid loss. All the copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved representing 100% return rate. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 was used to analyze the data collected from the respondents. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient index was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability coefficients obtained was 0.83. The overall reliability index for the instruments was 0.78. These indicated that the instruments were

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reliable. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed and interpreted using Mean (X), Standard Deviation (SD) while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Boundary limit of 3.50-4.00 (Strongly Agree), 2.50-3.49 (Agree), 1.50-2.49 (Disagree) and 1.00-1.49 (Strongly Disagree) was used while the null hypotheses of no significance difference was accepted for items whose p-values were greater than 0.05 level of significance while it was rejected for items whose p-value were less than 0.05 level of significance.

Results
Research question
1. What are the ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict
management?

H0$_1$: There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers on how business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management.

Table 1: Mean Responses on ways Business Education programmes can be rebranded for Conflict
        Management in Public universities in South-east states of Nigeria.

S/N	Item Statements	$\overline{x}$	SD	Remarks	p-value	DEC.
1.	Business education programme offers a great opportunity for practicing social skills amongst learners	3.65	.58	SA	0.00	S
2.	Business education programme provides room for negotiation amongst learners	3.95	.55	SA	0.08	NS
3.	Business education programme provides capacity building amongst learners which engender conflict management	3.76	.43	SA	0.00	S
4.	Business education programme provides update of learners with practical training skills	3.85	.62	SA	0.00	S
5.	Business education programme improved curricular guide that inform a pedagogical delivery in the methodology of learning	3.66	.37	A	0.01	S

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6.	Business education programme is useful and easy to use in imparting knowledge	3.79	.51	SA	0.00	S
7.	Business education programme provides infrastructural support needed to deliver quality vocational education courses and conflict management	3.56	.56	SA	0.00	S
8.	Business education programme provides feedback that reinforces learning outcomes	3.64	.48	SA	0.02	S
9.	Business education programme provides adequate policy framework that provides recipients with requisite skills needed to manage conflict	3.85.	.35	SA	0.00	S
10.	Business education programme enhances research support and linkages to agencies that foster peace devoid of conflict	3.64	.28	SA	0.03	
11.	Business education programme systems allow lecturer and/or students to use external tools easily and facilitate coping with new situations	3.75	.38	SA	0.00	S
12.	Business education programme monitors teamwork, providing meaningful and timely feedback	3.87	.31	A	0.00	S
13.	Business education programme stimulates positive attitudes and progressive development	3.87	.36	SA	0.07	S
14.	Business education programme provides flexible skills needed to participate in knowing economic activities	3.63	.14	SA	0.00	NS
15	Business education programme eschew violence and encourage peace devoid of conflict	3.75	.36	SA	0.00	S
16	Business education programme stimulate cooperation among recipients	3.68	.35	A	0.06	NS

which engender conflict free learning environment				
Grand Mean	**3.74**	**.41**	**SA**	
0.02	S			

Note: χ *–Mean, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Sig @ 0.05: NS = Not Significant; S= Significant, DEC-Decision*

The highlight of table 1 revealed that all the 16 identified items with range of 3.56-3.95 are within the boundary limit of 3.50-4.00 on a 4-point rating scale. This shows that respondents strongly agreed on the ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management. The test of null hypotheses 1 indicated that the p-values of the entire items range between 0.00-0.08. This show that 3 out of 16 items identified as ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management has p-value rang 0.08, 0.07 and 0.06 which are greater than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there are no significant differences in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean rating of the respondents is accepted relative to 3 items. On the other hand, the p-values of the remaining 13 items specifically, items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,11,12,14, and 15 are 0.00 - 0.01 which are less than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there are significant differences in the mean rating of male and female business education lecturers on ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management relative to the items. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents regarding the 13 items is rejected on the ways business education programme can be rebranded for conflict management in universities in south-east of Nigeria.

Research Question
2.   What are the challenges of conflict management in Business education programme?
H0₂: There is no significant difference between lecturers on challenges of conflict management in business education programme

Table 2: **Data on the challenges of conflict management in business education programme in universities in south-east states of Nigeria**

S/N	Item Statements	$\overline{x}$	SD	Remarks	p-value	DEC.
1.	Business education programme does not guarantee that learning mechanisms will be triggered and sustained among learners	3.14	.39	A	0.65	NS
2.	In Business education programme, not everyone feels comfortable, patient, skilled or eager to learn or work on conflict management	3.23	.42	A	0.52	NS
3.	learners might have had bad experience of conflict that they are not happy to be exposed to again	3.47	.59	SA	0.15	NS
4.	Conflict may lead to domination of some members, holding back ideas, fear of being rejected by the group	3.35	.58	A	0.29	NS
5.	Conflict management can be time consuming for explanations of any element of the task or process to learners	3.52	.51	A	0.45	NS
6.	Conflict management sometimes leads to focusing only on the cognitive dimension of the task	3.62	.42	SA	0.33	NS
7.	Huge quantity of information that is produced can be difficult to cope with individually in Business education programme	3.33	.54	A	0.50	NS
8.	Mechanical delivery of learning may delay outcome of Business education programme to conflict management	3.37	.58	A	0.56	NS
9.	Conflict management may not provide actual interaction after all in Business education programme	3.55	.59	SA	0.04	S
10.	Conflict management may be difficult to achieve among parties	3.52	.45	A	0.02	S

11.	Conflict management may sometimes lead to damages among warring parties	3.57	.53	SA	0.69	NS
12.	Conflict management may lead to dissenting views on moral values that basic understanding of what is naturally right or wrong	3.64	.43	SA	0.74	NS
	Grand Mean	**3.44**	**.52**	**A**	**0.41**	**NS**

Note: χ –Mean, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Sig @ 0.05: NS = Not Significant; S= Significant, DEC-Decision

The highlight of table 2 revealed that all the 12 identified items with range of 3.14 -3.64 are within the boundary limit of 3.50-4.00 on 4-point rating scale. This shows that the respondents agreed on the challenges of conflict management in business education programme. The data presented in hypotheses 2 shows that 10 out of 12 identified challenges of conflict management in business education programme between male and female business education lecturers have their p-values ranging from 0.15 – 0.65 which are all greater than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on challenges of conflict management in business education programme. Therefore, the hypotheses of no significant difference are accepted relative to the 10 items. On the other hand, the p-values of the remaining two items specifically item 9 and 10 with ranges 0.02-0.04 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there are significance differences in the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on challenges of conflict management in business education programme. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on challenges of conflict management in business education programme is rejected relative to the 2 items.

Discussion
The study found evidence on ways business education programmes can be rebranded for conflict management in universities in south-east states of Nigeria

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to include; business education programme offers a great opportunity for practicing social skills amongst learners, business education programme provides room for negotiating amongst learners, business education programme provides capacity building amongst learners which engender conflict management, business education programme provides infrastructural support needed to deliver quality vocational education courses and conflict management, business education programme eschew violence and encourage peace devoid of conflict among learners among others. The findings corroborated with the position of Rufai, (2013) and Iwuoha, (2019) who established that Business education programme provides infrastructural support needed to deliver quality vocational education courses and conflict management, provides feedback that reinforces learning outcomes and serves as adequate policy framework that provides facilitator for conflict management. *DeChurch and Marks, (2001),* also agrees that activeness did not have a significant effect on the effectiveness of conflict resolution, but the agreeableness of the conflict management style, whatever it was, did have a positive impact on how groups felt about the way the conflict was managed, regardless of the outcome. Special consideration should therefore be paid to conflict management between two parties from distinct cultures if the conflict is to be managed.

The results presented in Table 2 shows the opinion of respondents on the challenges of conflict management in business education programme to include; business education programme does not guarantee that learning mechanisms will be triggered and sustained among learners, in business education programme, not everyone feels comfortable, patient, skilled or eager to learn or work on conflict management, learners might have had bad experience of conflict that they are not happy to be exposed to again, conflict may lead to domination of some members, holding back ideas, fear of being rejected by the group, conflict management can be time consuming for explanations of any element of the task or process to learners, conflict management sometimes leads to focusing only on the cognitive dimension of the task among learners among others. The finding is in line with *Taylor, (2010)* who stated that depending on how the conflict is managed; the negative effects may be minimized. Also, Jones and George (2003), Miklas and Kleiner (2003) opined that the educational institutions are a perfect breeding ground for conflict as a result of the academic freedom present there, whereby the academic staff is more independent in their approaches and viewpoints. To the authors, some of the challenges of conflicts are incompatible goals and time horizons, status inconsistencies, scarce

resources, incompatible evaluations or reward system, task interdependencies, and overlapping authority, as aptly captured among others.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concludes that conflict will become easier to manage if we see it as inevitable but not necessarily destructive, and as a problem to be solved rather than a battle to be won. Understanding conflict management styles can help increase healthy positive conflict outcomes and lead to improved relationships, increased job satisfaction, and increased retention among concerned groups. Depending on how the conflict is managed, the negative effects may be minimized, and positive effects may result from the conflict. Effective conflict management is based, in part, on a solid understanding of the different ways conflict emerges and can be resolved or manage.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:
1. Conflict management intervention programmes should be integrated in business education programme and other vocationally based programmes by curriculum planners to foster effective conflict management practices among students and lecturers.
2. There should be conflict management training programme enshrine in the workload of all levels of business education students involving professional therapists and educational stakeholders to improve students' conflict management capability within the university education.
3. To promote effective conflict management practices and peace among students, general awareness and sensitization training programmes should be organized at least once in a session for both students and lecturers towards engendering effective conflict management practices and application.
4. Conflict management centers with required facilities should be made available in the tertiary institutions for helping students and lecturers who are victims of conflict circumstances.

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