

ABSTRACT

This is the first in-depth research in Canada that analyzes what universities are presently doing to manage conflict and resolve disputes involving students and to propose what universities can do to best manage conflict in the future.

Interviews were conducted at 20 Ontario universities to gather primary data for this research. Interviewees with first-hand knowledge about student conflict identified the most difficult to resolve disputes: graduate students-supervisors, misconduct, mental health, and interpersonal disputes. These disputes are analyzed to:

- comprehensively understand what is being done, and not done, at the universities;
- provide possible solutions for these problematic disputes; and
- extract recommendations that are generalizable for all universities to more effectively manage conflict and resolve disputes involving students.

The first step in developing strategies for the appropriate management of conflict is recognizing the difference between “conflicts” and “disputes”; consequently these terms are examined in the context of a university. The existence and operation of Ombudspersons and Conflict Management Centres at universities are investigated, and the immense potential of these two systems to manage conflict and resolve disputes on campuses is analyzed.

This research culminated in the development of the *3P-Pathway for Conflict Management on Campuses*: for every conflict and dispute that occurs on campus, there must be a **P**olicy, a **P**erson and/or a **P**rocess identified to deal with the conflict or dispute in order that an appropriate conflict management response occurs. In addition:

- The 3 Ps (**P**olicies, **P**ersons, and **P**rocesses) must be infused with the commonly held and acknowledged values, goals, and guiding principles of the institution;
- A culture of dispute resolution must be developed; and
- The institution must strive for excellence in all that it does.

Ideally, universities should also have a centre where any dispute can be referred for resolution and a system of keeping abreast of conflict areas that are developing.

To eliminate the present disconnect or gap that exists between the conflicts and disputes occurring on campuses and a conflict-managed environment, it is recommended that all universities establish the *3P-Pathway for Conflict Management on Campuses*.