

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**STAFF-RELATED CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN
GHANAIAN POLYTECHNICS: A CASE STUDY OF TAKORADI
POLYTECHNIC**

SARAH MORRISON

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GHANAIAN POLYTECHNICS: A CASE STUDY OF TAKORADI
POLYTECHNIC

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature Date.....

Name: Sarah Morrison

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature Date.....

Name: Dr. Y. A. Ankomah

Co-Supervisor Signature..... Date.....

Dr. G.K.T. Oduro

ABSTRACT

Conflict is an unavoidable aspect of organizational life. It can either energize the organization or degenerate into a war of words and actions. Takoradi polytechnic is no exception. The study identified the causes of conflict among staff of Takoradi polytechnic; examined the positive and negative effects and recommends how they can be managed effectively.

The research which involved 273 respondents, employed the descriptive case study survey and data collected through questionnaire and interviews. Tables, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze and present data. The research was conducted at Takoradi polytechnic using the staff as a case study.

Results of the study have revealed that conflicts exist among staff of Takoradi polytechnic at all levels and the various causes were known by the staff. Claim for superiority, fighting for positions and limited resources were the major causes of conflict identified. It was also realized that conflict among staff of Takoradi polytechnic impacted both positively and negatively on their performance. Besides this, the study indicated that conflict is encountered with regard to staff allowances and accommodation to a large extent. It was also discovered that management often employed the use of committees and meetings to resolve conflicts and build bridges.

Based on the findings, it concludes with recommendations among which is that management should ensure fairness in dealing with all forms of conflicts.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband, Ebo and my daughter Baaba for their cooperation and understanding.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Conflict appears to be a universal characteristic of human associations. It is difficult to imagine either simple or complex relationships which are not in part defined by the nature of the conflicts which test and vitalize the bonds people form with each other. At the same time, it is difficult to accept conflict as a natural and inevitable condition. It is an uncomfortable condition; one for which the natural tendency is to seek a resolution.

Conflict is generally regarded as disagreement regarding interests or ideas (Esquivel & Kleiner, 1997). It is an inevitable part of organisational life since the goals of different stakeholders such as managers and staff are often incompatible (Jones, George & Hill, 2000). Bagshow (1998) notes that conflict is a fact of life in organisations as well as other areas of life, as people compete for jobs, resources, power, acknowledgment and security. Dealing with it is difficult because it arouses primitive emotions such as people feeling threatened, which creates a version of the age-old stress response fight or flight. Within organisations, therefore, conflict may refer to the discord that occurs when the goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those individuals or groups block or frustrate each others attempt to achieve their objectives. (Fisher, et al., 2000) say that conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals. It can originate between two or more people, or between two or more

groups. Conflict may be triggered by ethnic, religious, racial and economic differences, or may arise from differences in values, beliefs and attitude regarding issues.

French (2000), Barker, Tjosuold and Andrews (1988) and Dahrendorf (1989), in separate studies, commonly discovered four conditions which are vital for a conflict situation to exist. These conditions are:

1. There must be sets of individuals exhibiting some levels of togetherness in an organization. These could be voluntary groups, religious groups, families, communities, nations, or some other collections of individuals.
2. There must be some level of interaction among members because without contact and communication there can be no conflict. The contact may merely be propaganda about other people, culture, or group since it need not be personal
3. There must be different levels of position/status ranks to be occupied by group members, implying a hierarchy of relationships. All individuals cannot occupy the same position at the same time.
4. There must be existence of scarcity of needed resources and a general dissatisfaction.

Conflict is likely to occur wherever people from different backgrounds come together. It could happen between two people or sectors in the institution. It could also be said that the probability of conflict occurring is higher when there is a larger group of people than when the group is small. This is so because diversity

among members of a group results in difference in goal, beliefs, perceptions, and preferences. Conflict occurs on the basis of the fact that human wants are insatiable but our resources to satisfy these wants are limited or relatively scarce hence the conflict. Again, in Ghanaian tertiary educational institutions, there are workers with different qualifications which could bring about personality conflicts. This may involve people with low academic qualifications who have stayed on the job for a longer period of time, as against those with high qualifications, but have been on the job for a relatively short period. Thus it should not be a surprise that an institution such as Takoradi Polytechnic could be a fertile ground for conflict since it has a great number of people with diverse views and aspirations.

Since conflict is an essential aspect of all organisations, almost every polytechnic staff has some personal experience with or involvement in conflict situations either as a junior staff, senior staff, or senior member. This is because conflict could be experienced as people interact with other colleagues at meetings, programmes and discussions (Olorunsala, 1997). Yet, it is commonly believed that very few managers accept the reality of conflict. Although it is true that conflict brings about discomfort and can be a source of problems, it is additionally true that conflict has a positive dimension in organisations.

One of the earliest studies (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976) that examined organisational conflict reported that 20 percent of managers' time is spent in managing conflicts. Given today's diverse work, teams, environments, globalisation of business and educational institutions, it can be argued that the

actual percentage of time that managers devote to conflict management nowadays is far above that reported in 1976. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing because if properly managed, it can be a creative force for institutions and the individual. Differences in opinions could be regarded as valuable sources of cross-fertilisation which begin to enrich our experiences. There are instances that people often say in retrospect that their past conflicts experience had contribute to their present positive experience. Conflict also provides feedback to management because it tends to bring issues to the fore. When under stress, people are more likely to express their real feelings, which otherwise may never have surfaced, for redress. Further, minor conflicts when properly managed can prevent pressure from building up to the point where it is destructive because petty complaints are often examples of tension release.

At the workplace, conflict can be a source of testing management ability to demonstrate effectiveness in handling welfare issues of subordinate. The power of management by their subordinates to see if management acts on their behalf. It also tests the will power of individuals and the staying power of employees. The predominant outcome of conflict is change. Change is a process of education and it plays a major role in the development of tertiary education. The educational mission of higher educational institutions requires the ability to maintain flexibility to adapt to societal needs and to lead in the advancement of knowledge and societal transformation. When conflict among staff of such institutions is viewed as a catalyst for learning and change, it can lead to the advancement of knowledge and societal transformation. It is important to recognize that conflict is

a fundamental ingredient of change, therefore the way conflict is managed, rather than suppressed, avoided, or ignored, gain ever increasing importance in the governance of tertiary educational institutions.

Conflict can be said to have two faces, on the one hand, it can delay or prevent the achievement of institutional objectives and personal goals, and therefore may be unproductive. On the other hand, conflict can promote innovation, creativity and the development of new ideas that make institutional growth feasible (Blake & Mouton, 1978). In the past, management theorists used the term “conflict avoidance” but today this phrase has been replaced with the concept of conflict management. Conflict management recognizes that while the conflict does have associated costs, it can also bring with it great benefits. In effect, conflict management minimizes the dysfunctional consequences of conflict. Today’s manager seeks not to avoid but to manage conflict within the institution. Conflict may be viewed as a situation in which the concerns of two or more persons operating within the unit appear to be incompatible. It can also be internal to the individual. Whatever the type of conflict, an effective manager uses the situation as an opportunity for growth for both the institution and person(s) involved. When conflict is effectively managed, it fosters an understanding and appreciation of differences, presents new and different possibilities and shifts the paradigm of the status quo.

For many years, tertiary educational institutions followed either of two diametrically opposite theories of conflict management – the authoritarian approach (Traditionalist) or human relation approach (Behavioural). Those who

use the authoritarian approach tend to settle conflict by mandate backed by authority and view conflict as dysfunctional to the organization. Those who questioned existing policies and practices were branded “troublemakers” and “boat rockers”, and their talents went untapped. Those who worked within the system were good workers but not necessarily productive workers. The behavioural/human perspective challenges the traditional view and sees conflict as a natural part of the organization due to disparity of power and control. They perceive conflict as a frequent phenomenon, natural as well as inevitable but can be dealt with. This perspective denies that conflict is always a manifestation of abnormal organizational behaviour; it has rather the potential to be positive in determining an organization’s performance (Kelly, 1970).

When conflict within the campus community or among staff is viewed as a catalyst for learning and change, constituting a key institutional resource as opposed to something that must be avoided or suppressed, it could go a long way to enhance institutional activities. Conflict aversion, avoidance and escalation most often lead to confrontations that do little to accomplish constructive change. In this context, institutions are increasingly welcoming, understanding and utilising conflict positively to accomplish important educational and social purposes.

It is surprising to note that in the literature on tertiary education, there is little work which can legitimately be said to treat conflict and its management in polytechnics. But no one would seriously deny that conflict is pandemic among

staff of academic institutions in our country of which Takoradi polytechnic is no exception.

Takoradi Polytechnic has over the years witnessed many conflict situations; the recent one was between the students and the administration which resulted in the closure of the institution. One wonders whether the institution is doing enough in the management of conflict. It is hoped that when conflict among staff is effectively managed and utilized positively by the institution, the management will be able to handle any conflict that may arise in the institution. It is based on this premise that the researcher will attempt to apply a useful conceptual approach to the understanding of conflict in tertiary educational institutions, specifically at the Takoradi Polytechnic and to present the current consensus in the management literature about how conflict can be managed effectively.

Statement of the Problem

As a social system, Takoradi Polytechnic has social structures. These structures, whether they exist formally or informally, are blue-prints for control and hierarchies. The literature on tertiary education supports the view that as social systems, universities, polytechnics and colleges may exhibit the kinds of mutually reinforcing differences which make the emergence of conflict inevitable (Nader 2001). For instance, there is a constant tugging and pushing over who should have the right to make certain decisions and over the bases upon which decisions should be made. Faculties are split into many ways by their various approaches to truth, reality and values. Even within a department, there are

multiple divisions beyond those of senior members, senior staff and junior staff which create cliques among staff. One can begin to recognize the perils involved when some cliques begin to line up against other cliques consistently on a large number of issues. It becomes especially dangerous when some cliques capture control of decision-making power at the expense of the power of other cliques.

Takoradi polytechnic, like any other tertiary institution, definitely has cases of conflict. It faces conflict situations as management deals with staff associations such as Polytechnic Teachers' Association of Ghana (POTAG), Polytechnic Administrators Association of Ghana (PAAG), Teachers and Educational Workers Union (TEWU) and others. Besides, conflict situations emerge involving students and other stakeholders and even among the management of the polytechnic. Among the sources of these conflicts are issues on promotions, appointment of heads of departments, elections for Deans and Vice Rector, payment of allowances, remuneration, sponsorship and staff development. These conflicts have implications for the polytechnic. To what extent is the management of the polytechnic able to manage these existing conflicts? What structures are available for managing the conflicts? Questions such as these are critical in our understanding of the state of conflict management in Takoradi Polytechnic. Yet, little evidence exists to help us achieve this feat. It is to fill this gap that necessitated this study into the conflict management practices among staff of the polytechnic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the conflict management practices that existed among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic. To this end, the study specially looked at the following objectives:

1. To identify causes of conflict among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic;
2. To examine how such conflicts negatively and positively affect staff performance;
3. To find out how conflict among staff of the Polytechnic are managed.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of staff related conflicts at Takoradi Polytechnic?
2. What are the factors that lead to staff related conflicts in Takoradi Polytechnic?
3. How do these conflicts affect staff performance in the Polytechnic?
4. What structures are available for managing staff related conflicts in Takoradi polytechnic?
5. In what ways can the management of staff related conflicts be enhanced in Takoradi Polytechnic?

Significance of the Study

The research would be of immense benefits to researchers especially those interested in polytechnic education. In carrying out this study, it was the aim of the researcher to provoke discussions among researchers interested in tertiary

educational institutions in Ghana, especially Polytechnics on the levels of conflict, their causes, the impact of conflict on Polytechnic institutions and management strategies required to deal with them.

The study would also be of significance to policy makers at Takoradi Polytechnic because the data obtained from the study could provide valuable information for enhancing policy guidelines and procedures on conflict management in the Polytechnic. The results of the study, which the researcher hopes to document to the Polytechnic management will assist management to appreciate better the positive aspects of conflicts because if managed effectively could lead to several advantages including an increase in understanding of others and oneself. This will contribute to healthy organisational climate and a more effective teaching-learning environment.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was confined to the staff of Takoradi Polytechnic which comprised senior members, senior staff and junior staff. It covered mainly causes of conflict, effects as well as how conflicts are handled and managed among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic.

It excluded students of Takoradi Polytechnic due to the fact that a similar research had been carried out at University of Cape Coast by Doe (2007), which hinged on student conflict management practices.

Limitations of the Study

According to Kumekepor (2002), the success of a case study is dependent on how professionally equipped an investigator is before embarking on an

investigation using a case study method. Since the researcher is not professional in this area, the validity of the conclusions drawn from the study may be affected. Besides, the confined area of study and the sampling procedure will render the findings less representative beyond the study area of Takoradi Polytechnic.

Also, due to the sensitive nature of the topic which could easily arouse emotions, respondents' mood as at the time of responding to the questionnaire could influence the responses given. Besides, labour turnover is inevitable in every organisation and for that matter Takoradi Polytechnic. Hence respondents at the time of data collection for the study may change as a result of situations such as transfers and retirement. These could affect the validity of the findings, as such generalization should be done cautiously. Additionally, because of the time frame given to the respondents to return the questionnaires, there was the tendency of the respondents making other people provide the responses on their behalf. This could also be a limitation to the study.

In addition, the researcher's pre-sampling understanding of Sarantakos' (1998) formula for determining sample size was later found, during her viva to be contextually misunderstood. While the initial understanding was within a heterogeneous population context, it was realised at the viva that Sarantakos' proposition was applicable within homogenous a population context. This latter finding could be a limitation for the sampling process in terms of ensuring representativeness of the sample. However, this limitation does not affect the overall conclusions that emerge from the study.

Operational Definition of Terms

- Conflict:** It is a situation in which incompatible goals, attitudes, emotions or behaviours exhibited by Takoradi Polytechnic staff lead to disagreement or opposition among staff or between staff and management within the Polytechnic.
- Conflict Management:** It is the interventions that management put in place to alter the level and form of conflict in ways that maximize its benefits and minimize its dysfunctional consequences at the Polytechnic.
- Dysfunctional Conflict:** It is an unhealthy destructive disagreement between staff and management or among staff that hinders the achievement of Takoradi Polytechnic.
- Functional Conflict** This is a healthy constructive disagreement among staff or between staff and management that promote quality performance at Takoradi Polytechnic.
- Senior Member:** They constitute the top level manpower group .They consist of both academic and non-academic staff of the Polytechnic not below the rank of Lecturer or Assistant Registrar.
- Senior Staff:** They are the middle level manpower group not below the rank of an administrative assistant, research

assistant, accounting assistant, auditing assistant, technicians, library assistant, and a nursing officer.

Junior Staff:

A staff in Polytechnic who holds either the General Certificate of Education 'Advanced' Level or 'Ordinary' Level or Senior Secondary School Certificate of Education or lower qualification whose skills are needed to support teaching, research and practical work in the Polytechnic. They constitute the lower level manpower group in the Polytechnic.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one focuses on the introduction which comprises the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and research questions. It also covers significance of the study, delimitation of the study, operational definition of terms and the organization of the study. Chapter two deals with review of the related literature while the third chapter treats the methodology. Chapter four deals with the presentation of results and discussion of the findings of the study. The chapter five provides summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on the study of conflict and its management in organizations. It deals with the following headings: definition of conflict, causes of conflicts in organizations, levels of conflict, functional versus dysfunctional conflict, the relationship between functional and dysfunctional conflicts, the concept and evolution of conflict management, conflict management approaches and empirical studies on conflict management.

Definition of Conflict

There is no one comprehensive definition of conflict hence it has a plethora of definitions as it depends on the perspective from which one is looking at the concept. Definitions of conflict have been given from various disciplines such as psychology and behavioural science. However, the common dominant themes in these definitions are the aspects of differing needs, goals, or interests and the perceived or real interference from those needs, goals or interest. Perception plays an important role in conflict. If the conflict is not perceived by either party, then it does not exist. However, when a conflict is perceived it occurs whether or not the perception is real (Mcshane & Glinow, 2000; Horowitz & Bordens, 1995; & Certo, 2000).

Hellriegel Slocum & Woodman (1998) argue that the term conflict is difficult to define, because it occurs in many different settings. They further

explain that the fundamental nature of conflict seems to be disagreement, contradiction or incompatibility and thus, refers to any situation in which there are incompatible goals, cognitions or emotions within or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition or aggressive interaction. An activity that is incompatible with another is one that prevents, blocks or interferes with the occurrence of the second activity. Certo (2000) buttresses this statement by defining conflict as the struggles that result from incompatible or opposing needs, feelings, thoughts or demands within a person or between two or more people. Weiten (1986) shares similar views when he explains that conflict exists when there is a coexistence of incompatible motives, behavioural impulses, beliefs or values. In an apparent support of this view, Nelson and Quick (2000) define conflict as any situation in which incompatible goals, attitudes, emotions or behaviours lead to disagreement or opposition between two or more parties. Tjosvold, cited in Kreitner (1998), gives an insightful definition, according to him, conflict involves incompatible behaviours; one person interfering, disrupting or in some other way making another's action less effective. Thus, conflict can be compared to a situation that makes one feel less effective. Based on the above definition, Kreitner (1998) came out with two faces of conflict, namely competitive (or destructive) conflict and cooperative (or constructive) conflict.

This implies that certain types of conflict promote organizations' objectives including institutions of higher learning whilst others could retard the progress of the organization. Mullins (2005) views conflict as a behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of some other person's goals. Sawyerr

(1997) posits that conflict is a clash within, between or among entities. He emphasizes that conflict is natural and inevitable occurrence within human society. In a similar vein, Gunn (2002) sees conflict as an inescapable part of human nature involving a misunderstanding or disagreement that causes a problem or struggle to achieve goals between people, groups, or nations.

According to Crawley (1992), conflict is a manifestation of differences working against one another. Mcshane and Glinow (2000) affirm this assertion as they define conflict as a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party. On their part, Horowitz and Borden (1995) maintain that conflict is a disagreement over social issues, beliefs and ideologies or specific behaviours that occur when two aspirations are incompatible or when two or more parties have divergent interests concerning the same issue. From the various definitions given, two distinct features permeate; these are 'divergent views' and the 'incompatibility' of those views. The different definitions bring to the fore the rather many levels of conflict, namely, intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup and organizational conflict.

Causes of Conflict in Organizations

This section probes the various causes of conflict in organizations. To manage conflict effectively, managers must identify and understand the many causes of conflicts in organisations. Working teams bring together a variety of personality and skills, each perceiving tasks and actions in different ways. This diversity is what gives the team in-depth and broad range of skills required to successfully achieve organizational objectives; yet, this diversity will usually,

inevitably bring conflicts ranging from simple disagreements on task to fundamental personality clashes. Causes of conflict could be classified into two broad categories: Structural factors, which stem from the nature of the organization and the way in which work is organized and personal factors, which arise from differences among individuals (Nelson & Quick (2000), Mchane & Glinow (2000), Schnake (1987) and Krietner & Kinicki 2004). They explain further that some causes of conflict that relate to the organization's structure include specialization, interdependence, common resources, goal differences, authority relationships, status, inconsistencies, and jurisdictional ambiguities. With regard to causes of conflict relating to personal factors, they intimate that it springs from individual differences which include skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, values and ethics, emotions, communication barriers and cultural differences.

Structural Factors

Interdependence

Work that is interdependent requires groups or individuals to depend on one another to accomplish goals. Depending on other people to get work done is fine when the process works smoothly. However, when there is a problem, it becomes very easy to blame one another and conflict escalates.

Schnake (1987) defines interdependence as situations where one party can not do its work unless the other party does its work too. According to him, task interdependence results in conflict for two main reasons. The first is when only one group is dependent; the independent group may not feel the need to comply

with requests. The second situation where task interdependence can result in conflict is when the parties have different goals, priorities, or disagree upon the way the tasks should be performed. Thus when two or more individuals or groups are dependent upon one another for successful job performance, the opportunity for conflict increases. Wright and Noe (1996) identify three distinct types of interdependence. These are: pooled interdependence, sequential interdependence and reciprocal interdependence.

Pooled interdependence, according to Wright and Noe (1996), is a situation where each group works separately but the organization's overall success rests on the total performance of the groups, while they assert that sequential interdependence requires one group's output to serve as another group's inputs. They reiterate that a poor performance by the first group will affect the second group's performance negatively. This can trigger conflict between the two groups. Under the reciprocal interdependence, they describe it as a situation where each group's outputs serve as input to other groups in the organization. According to them, the close links among the groups provide grounds for potential conflict.

Goal Differences

Schnake (1987) observes that the differences in the goals that individuals or groups want to accomplish could create a source of conflict. He explains that when individuals have incompatible personal goals, conflict is likely to occur. This assertion is buttressed by Pondy's, (1969) observation that when two parties in an organization must work together, for example, a dean of a faculty and the

head of department of the same faculty may have divergent views on how certain courses are to be conducted and may not agree on how to do so. This source of conflict is goal divergence.

Authority Relationship

According to Nelson and Quick (2000), the nature of a traditional boss-employee relationship which brings to mind a vision of a hierarchy or of a boss who is superior to the employees could stimulate conflict. For many employees, the relationship is not a comfortable one because another individual has the right to tell them what to do. They also point out that some bosses are more autocratic than others; this compounds the potential for conflict in the relationship. Kreitner (1998) shares the same view when he states that as long as productive organizations continue to be arranged hierarchically, conflict caused by status and power difference is bound to happen. Closely related to authority relationship cause of conflict is what Nelson and Quick (2000) have termed status inconsistencies, a situation where some organizations have strong differences between management and non-management workers. For example management may enjoy privileges such as flexible schedules, personal telephone calls at work and longer lunch hours that may not be available to non-management employees. According to them, this may result in resentments, leading to conflict.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) also see organizational complexity as a major cause of conflict in most organizations. They explain this as where conflict is triggered as a result of the number of hierarchical layers and specialized task increase.

Specialization

According to Nelson and Quick (2000), specialization is one of the structural factors that cause conflict in an organization. When jobs are highly specialized, employees become experts at a particular task. This makes them less knowledgeable about other people's job leading to conflict situation. Kinard (1988) point out that too much of specialization can cause conflict among employees. Tasks that are routine and fail to challenge an individual's creativity are likely to cause boredom and frustration. He further explains that specialization often leads to departmentation and members of a particular department are often carried out with their own ambitions ignoring the larger corporate goals (Mullins, 2005).

Limited Resources

Stoner (1978) indicates that limited resources in an organization could be a potential cause of conflict. He explains that since every unit in an organization has limited access to human and material resources, the problem of how to share these resources could trigger conflict. There is a likelihood of some groups getting less than they need. He also points out that as a unit in the organization fights for the greatest possible share of available resources there is the likelihood for it to result in lack of co-operation which could result in conflicts. This is confirmed by Nelson and Quick (2000) in their observation that any time multiple parties must share resources, there is potential for conflict. They explain further that the potentials are enhanced when the shared resources become scarce. For example, one resource which is often shared in an organization by managers is secretarial

support. It is not uncommon for a secretary to support ten or more managers, each of whom believes his or her work is most important. This puts pressure on the secretaries and leads to potential conflicts in prioritizing and scheduling work. Owens (2001) adds his voice to limited resources as a cause of conflict by explaining that when the organization's resources are insufficient to meet the requirements of the sub-units to do their work, there is competition for scarce resources. This implies people will compete for resources like budget allocations, space for lectures and other utilities. This is confirmed by Mcshane and Glinow (2000) when they assert that scarce resources generate conflict because scarcity motivates people to compete with others who also need those resources to achieve their objectives.

Role Ambiguity

According to Schnake (1987), role ambiguity refers to the extent to which individuals and groups within an organization understand what is expected of them. They may not have a clear understanding of their responsibilities or of the constraints upon them. He reiterates that role ambiguity can lead to conflicts between groups or individuals because both may want to assume responsibility for the same thing or because they may both want to avoid it. Mcshane and Glinow (2000) write that ambiguity breeds conflict because the uncertainty increases the risk that one party intends to interfere with the other party's goals. This is buttressed by Nnadi (1997) that unclear job description and employee roles tend to become a problem because employees are unsure of what their job responsibilities are. Kreitner (1998) terms role ambiguity as overlapping

jurisdiction and explains it as unclear job boundaries which often create competition for resources and control.

Communication Problems

Nelson and Quick (2000) observe that communication barriers such as physical separation and language can create distortions in messages, and these can lead to conflict. They reiterate further that value judgment in which a listener assigns a worth to a message before it is received can also generate into conflict. Stoner (1978) sees communication breakdown as a common cause of intergroup conflict. He sites how the same phrase may have different meanings to different groups thereby creating conflict. He explains further that undefined use of that phrase may lead to harmful misunderstanding. Conflict often occurs due to lack of opportunity, ability, or motivation to communicate effectively. (Mcshane & Glinow, 2000). They explain further that some people lack the necessary skills to communicate in a diplomatic non-confrontational manner. When one party communicates its disagreement in an arrogant way, opponents are more likely to heighten their perception of the conflict. Arrogant behaviour also sends a message that one side intends to be competitive rather than cooperative. This may lead the other party to reciprocate with a similar conflict management style. Again, ineffective communication can also lead to less motivation to communicate in the future.

Schnake (1987) writes that absence of frequent communication between groups or individuals representing different structural levels can trigger conflict. He further explains that when individuals or groups lack information about other

individuals or groups, misconception and distrust can develop. Misconception and distrust, he stresses are typical promoters of conflict.

Personal Factors

Opong-Mensah (1999) contends that since organizations and institutions have greater numbers of people, it tends to be fertile grounds where conflicts of many kinds are initiated and felt. According to Nelson and Quick (2000), the causes of conflict that arise from individual differences include skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, values and ethics, emotions, communication barriers and cultural differences. Under the skills and abilities, they explained that the workforce of any organization is composed of people with varying levels of skills and abilities which help the organization to achieve its goal. These skills and abilities of the workforce also hold potential for conflict, especially when jobs are interdependent. A competent worker may feel uncomfortable to work with less competent workers. Besides, other workers may feel their skills are more important and needed by the organization than other workers' skills and abilities.

With regard to personalities, Nelson and Quick (2000) contend that people come to work places with diverse character traits which may negatively affect their relationships leading to conflict. For instance, to expect to like all your co-workers may be a naive expectation, as would be the expectation that they will all like you. On perception, they explain that because people perceive things differently, it could serve as a cause of conflict in an organization. An example is in the area of motivation. If management and workers do not have the same perception of what motivates people, the reward system can create conflicts.

Since management usually provides what they think employees want rather than what employees really need.

Nelson and Quick (2000) point out that most people have their own sets of values and ethics but the extent to which they apply these values and ethics in the work place varies. Some people have strong desires for approval from others and will work to meet such people's ethical standards; others are relatively unconcerned with approval from others and strongly apply their own ethical standards, still others operate seemingly without regard to ethics or values. They also assert that the moods of others can be a cause of conflict in the workplace. Problems at home often spill over into the work arena and the related mood can be hard for others to deal with. Mullins (2005) also sees changes in an organization as a cause of conflict. He is of the view that rapid and repeated internal changes can be a source of worry. He explains further that changes bring about disequilibrium. Some people may be favoured when there is a change in the organization and therefore will welcome it; others may be at a disadvantage and feel insecure with the inability to predict patterns with regard to the known. Such people will inevitably find ways to resist and defeat changes they perceive as threatening to their well being or to their social role.

Levels of Conflict

This section deals with the nature and organizational implication of four basic types of conflict. These are: interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict, intergroup conflict and organizational conflict.

Inter-personal Conflict

Inter-personal conflict occurs between two or more people. It normally arises as a result of two or more people competing for the same job, position or for limited resources (Rao, Rao & Narayana, 1987).

According to Mcshane and Glinow (2000), the most commonly cited reasons for inter-personal conflict in organizations are personality differences, perceptions, clashes of values and interests, power and status differences, and scarce resources. Wright and Noe (1996) do not only admit that this type of conflict arise out of differing values, goals or needs of individuals. They are also of the view that it is also likely to arise within groups that are heterogeneous, not only in the sense of representing the diversity of the workforce but also when representing different functions as in the case of cross-functional team. Kinard (1988) explains interpersonal conflict to involve confrontation or rivalries in the work place between individuals or between individuals and groups. He also cites competition for the same job or for limited resources and position as the root cause of interpersonal conflict. On individuals and groups interpersonal conflict, he states that it arises whenever group members resist conforming to group norms in an effort to promote his or her own selfish interest. Nnadi (1997) buttresses this by stating that a group can go against an individual when the individual tries to promote personal interest at the expense of other employees or breaks the group's norms or rules. It could also occur when other employees feel threatened by an individual's achievement.

Intra-personal Conflict

It is a type of conflict that occurs within an individual. According to Nelson and Quick (2000), there are several types of intrapersonal conflict, some of which are, inter-role, intra- role and person-role conflicts. They define role as a set of expectations placed on an individual by others. The person occupying the focal role is the role incumbent and the individuals who place expectations on the person are role senders. On the various types of intrapersonal conflict, they explain inter-role conflict as one that occurs when a person experiences conflict among multiple roles in his/her life. The most common inter-role conflict that many employees experience is work/home conflict, in which their role as workers clashes with their role as parents. With regard to intra-role conflict, they explain it to mean a conflict within a single role. It often arises when a person receives conflicting messages from role senders as to how to perform a certain role. Suppose a Rector receives counsel from his personnel manager that he needs to socialize less with management employees, whilst he has also been told that in order to be a good leader he must relate well with all his personnel, this may result in intra-role conflict. Person-role conflict, according to them, occurs when an individual in a particular role is expected to perform behaviours that clash with his/her values. For instance, a purchasing officer may be asked by the bursar to inflate the prices of goods bought jet this may be against the moral value of the purchasing officer. This may cause the purchasing officer to experience person-role conflict.

Kinard (1988) also posits that conflict within an individual or intrapersonal conflict often results from conflicting needs and frustrating situations. A person entering an organization comes with high ambitions and attitudes. For instance, a junior staff of polytechnic might have an ambition of becoming a senior staff. This ambition may necessitate sacrificing an equally important role such as time at home with family in order to perform extra task or attend lectures to upgrade him or her self. Sometimes, a solution seems impossible and the problem persists for a long time. The individual's stressful state in this scenario is caused by conflicting needs. Again, he states that intrapersonal conflict can exist when people know what they want but are unable to attain it, or when a situation prevents them from behaving according to how they perceive their roles. He further identifies another cause of intrapersonal conflict as role ambiguity, a situation that arises when role demands are not clearly communicated. When incompatible demands are placed on an individual by two different groups of people, role conflict occurs. He cites the example that a manager's boss may expect him or her to reduce a budget and cut down spending, while the manager's subordinates want their budget increased. Here, the manager may be uncertain whether he or she should represent higher management interest or that of the people in the department.

Kinard (1988) concludes that an individual in a given situation usually plays one or a few roles, shifting among them when entering situations where he or she has a different position or status. He proposed that when roles conflict, the

individual must work out some scheme of priority or compromise. If this is impossible, frustration will cause performance or moral problems.

Schnake (1987) explains intrapersonal conflict as conflict within an individual. It concerns inner priorities, an individual's own values, goals and perceptions. Wright and Noe (1996) point out that these conflicts arise when acting with regard to one value or goal prevents one from fulfilling an equally important goal or need. Nnadi (1997) confirms this assertion by stating that intrapersonal conflict exists within an individual as a result of having various needs. Schnake (1987) illustrates intrapersonal conflict with a supervisor who may give an instruction to a subordinate to do something that the subordinate considers to be morally unacceptable. In such a scenario, the subordinate is confronted with conflict between wanting to do as the supervisor says and doing something he believes to be morally wrong. Schnake (1987), however, makes it clear that because intrapersonal conflict occurs within the individual, it becomes difficult to recognize it, let alone manage it, unless the person is willing to share it with another person.

Wright and Noe (1996) group intrapersonal conflict into three types, the first type, they term, approach-approach. Under this, the individual has to choose between two equally attractive, profitable and desirable alternatives. The problem one faces is deciding on only one out of the various best alternatives. Out of the three types of intrapersonal conflict the approach-approach seems to be the least stressful since each alternative chosen has a capacity of yielding a desirable outcome. The second type of intrapersonal conflict is avoidance-avoidance, where

the individual is torn between choosing two equally bad, undesirable and unattractive alternatives that have bad consequences. Unlike approach-approach, one would want to prevent both outcome in avoidance- avoidance, but it is inevitable. There must be a choice of one. An instance is where a Rector of polytechnic with serious financial problem has to choose between satisfying the financial demand of his staff, and allowing them to pursue their sit down strike. Either of these choices has an unpleasant effect. The final one, which is the approach-avoidance intrapersonal conflict, is a choice among a set of options that are perceived to have both good and bad outcomes. It deals with decisions that must be made between alternatives that are thought to involve both positive and negative outcomes. This type of intrapersonal conflict seems to be common in work places today, because many employees have to choose between the desire for career success which requires spending all their time at work place and the desire for more personal time which can limit career success and even job security.

Rao, et al.(1987) refers to intrapersonal conflict as intra-individual conflict that is internal to the person and is probably the most difficult type of conflicts to analyze. They explain that everyone is faced with some form of need and that need becomes the basis for one's behavior at any given time. Goal directing is part of the human endeavour and need satisfaction encourages people, whereas non-satisfaction of needs demoralize one's spirit and leads to the exhibition of unacceptable behaviour pattern. Ironically, organizations are basically formed with the aim of meeting humanistic and economic needs of individuals but the

nature of the same organization tends to create so many problems for individuals working in them. They further explain that as organizations grow, they tend to be less sensitive to the needs of individuals. In addition to the loss of their freedom, the individual is also stripped of his or her identity.

Inter-group Conflict

Inter-group conflict is the most frequent occurring problem facing managers in large organizations. According to Likert & Likert (1976), inter-group conflict occurs between groups or teams in an organization. They explain further that it arises as a result of the following situations: groups fighting for scarce resources, differences of opinion about the way a unit should be managed, dependence of one group on another, communication problems, and different interest and goals as well as lack of clarity of responsibilities. Kinard (1988) notes that inter-group relations are vital to the success of large organizations. He also observes that intergroup conflict occurs between two or more departments or interest groups because of limited resources such as personnel, money and equipment. He again explains that inadequate resources to satisfy the needs and wishes of all groups, as well as communication difficulties, conflicting interests, goals of groups and overlapping task definitions are factors which give rise to intergroup conflicts in organizations.

Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman (1998) identify four different categories of intergroup conflicts within institutions. These are:

1. Vertical conflict - This type of inter-group conflict occurs between employee groups at different levels.

2. Horizontal conflict - It occurs between groups of employees at the same level
3. Line-staff conflict - It happens between support teams and teams responsible for creating services.
4. Diversity based conflict - It occurs between groups due to the nature of diversity such as race, religion, ethnicity, age and gender.

Shani and Lau (2000) refer to inter-group conflict as clashes and opposition between two teams or groups. According to them, inter-group conflict can be best understood by first considering conflict within the individual. They note that in the socialization process, individuals learn the conforming behaviours of society to the detriment of satisfying their own drives and desires. This process, according to them, can lead to internal conflicts that could easily be directed against other people. They give a second aspect of socialization process as where the individual develops a self-identity, which can be thought of as an integration of all the groups he or she has been a member of and has admired. These they term, positive reference groups. They also term groups that individuals have rejected as negative reference groups. They further explain that positive reference groups are groups that individuals are likely to cluster together when threatened or frustrated. All other groups become negative reference points.

Nelson and Quick (2000) observe that conflicts between groups can have positive effects within each group, such as increased group cohesiveness, increased focus on tasks, and increased loyalty to the group. However, it may have negative consequences when groups in conflict tend to develop an “us

against them” mentality whereby each sees the other group/team as the enemy, becomes more hostile, and decreases its communication with the other group.

Wright and Noe (1996) note that inter-group conflict in organizations often arises between line and staff employees. The line employees are those who are directly involved in organization’s product whilst staff employees provide supportive services. This can be likened to the academic staff and the administrative staff in higher educational institutions. The line-staff conflict is one arising from the role and perceptual differences between line and staff employees. They submit that inter-group conflict can affect behaviour positively within each group, such as increases in group cohesiveness, task orientation, loyalty to group and acceptance of autocratic leadership as admitted by Nelson & Quick (2000). They also agree with other writers that inter-group conflict occurs for four basic reasons: the groups are interdependent; they have different goals, their perceptions are different and the organization increasingly needs specialists.

Organizational Conflict

Organizational conflict is a broad term that covers all levels of conflict. It is paramount to stress here that most of the factors that cause organizational conflict are due to the bureaucratic structure of the organization. Organizational conflict is the discord that occurs when the goals, interest or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those individuals or groups block or frustrate each others attempt to achieve their objectives (Miles,1980). Organizational conflict can also exist between departments and divisions that

compete for resources or even among senior members who may be competing for promotion to the next level in the organizational hierarchy.

Kinard (1988) observes that the very structure of an organization could cause conflict to emerge. He identified three major areas namely, specialization, the scalar principle and the chain of command. Highlighting on specialization, he admits that although it can make an organization more efficient, too much of it could have negative effect on employees. For instance, tasks that are routine and fail to challenge an individual's creativity are likely to lead to boredom and frustration. Besides as specialization increases due to expansion of the organization, departmentation becomes an unavoidable consequence and often members of a particular department normally team-up with one accord to achieve their own departmental goal to the detriment of the larger corporate goals (Rao, et al. 1987; Mullins 2005). They call this type of conflict horizontal conflict. The scalar principle of organizational structure had its foundation on the basis that authority flows in a scalar chain, that is, in a direct line from top to bottom starting from the top hierarchy member to the lowest subordinate in the case of polytechnic, from the Rector down to the messenger. The chain of command concept is based on the management principle that an employee must take instruction from one superior. If conflict is to be minimized, then authority must be well defined.

Functional Versus Dysfunctional Conflict

The distinction between functional and dysfunctional conflict hinges on whether the organization's interests are served or not. Mensa and Effah (2003)

observe that conflict could be positive or negative depending on the circumstances under which it occurs. According to them, conflict is positive when it produces gains, innovations, new ideas as well as fostering unity and understanding among members, but if it produces stress, hostility, discomfort and fear, then it could be seen as negative.

Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly and Konopaske (2003) explain functional conflict as a confrontation between individuals or groups that enhance and benefit the organization's performance. Whereas dysfunctional conflict is any confrontation between individuals or groups that harms the organization or hinders the achievement of the organization's goals. Beneficial conflicts often turn into harmful ones when conflicts are not properly handled. In most cases, the point at which functional conflicts become dysfunctional is difficult to identify precisely since the very same level of stress and conflict that creates a healthy and positive movement towards organizational goals in one institution may prove extremely disruptive and dysfunctional in another institution.

According to Gibson et al (2003), some organizational researcher's contest that dysfunctional conflict should be eliminated while functional conflict should be encouraged but this is not what actually happens in most institutions. In practice, most managers attempt to eliminate all types of conflict whether functional or dysfunctional. Some of the reasons given are that anti-conflict values have historically been reinforced in the home, school and church. Traditionally, conflict between children or between children and parents has mostly been discouraged. In school systems, conflict is discouraged; teachers

have all the answers, and both teachers and students are rewarded for orderly conduct. Religious doctrines also stress peace, tranquillity and acceptance without questioning. In the same vein, managers are often evaluated on and rewarded for the lack of conflict in their areas of responsibility. Anti-conflict values, in fact, become part of the culture of the organization. Harmony and satisfaction are viewed positively, while conflicts and dissatisfaction are viewed negatively. Under such conditions, managers seek to avoid conflicts, functional or dysfunctional that could disturb the status quo.

In every organization, an optimal level of conflict exists that can be considered highly functional; it helps generate positive performance. On the other hand, when the conflict level is too low, performance can suffer. If this low conflict level continues, the organization's very survival can be threatened. Also, if the conflict level becomes too high, the resulting chaos can also threaten its survival. An example is dissension in labour unions and its impact on performance. Fighting between rival factions in the union that becomes too great can render the union less effective in pursuing its mission of furthering its members' interest.

According to Nelson and Quick (2000), diagnosing conflict as functional or dysfunctional is not easy. The manager must look at the issue, the context of the conflict, and the parties involved. They came out with certain questions that will guide a manager to determine the nature of conflict a manager may be facing. The questions are as follows:

1. Are the parties approaching the conflict from a hostile standpoint?

2. Is the outcome likely to be a negative one for the organization?
3. Do the potential losses of the parties exceed any potential gains?
4. Is energy being diverted from goal accomplishment?

They explain that if the majority of the answers to these questions are 'yes', then the conflict is probably dysfunctional. Once the manager has diagnosed the type of conflict, the manager has to either work to resolve it if it is dysfunctional or stimulate it if it is functional.

Functional Conflict

Functional conflict is normally referred to in management literature as constructive or co-operative conflict (Amason, 1996). It has been defined by Nelson and Quick (2000) as a healthy, constructive disagreement between two or more groups. It is a form of conflict that supports organizational goals and improves performance (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001; Robbins, 1997). Functional conflict produces a lot of benefits for the individuals in the organization and the organization as a whole. To the individuals, conflict could lead to development of new ideas, learning and growth. For instance, when individuals engage in constructive conflict, they develop a better awareness of themselves and others. Besides, it improves working relationships because when two parties work through their disagreements they feel they have accomplished something together. Also, by releasing tensions and solving problems in working together, morale is improved. To the organization, functional conflict could result in positive change and innovation. This is so because it tends to encourage creativity among individuals which is translated into increased productivity. It

also improves quality of decision-making by allowing all views, especially those that are unusual or held by a minority to be weighed in important decisions (Cosier & Schwenk, 1990).

Researches attest to the functionality of conflict. For instance, as far back as 1960s there was evidence indicating that conflict can also be positively related to productivity. It was shown that, among established groups, performance tended to improve more when there was conflict among members than when there was fairly close agreement. The researches noted that when group's analyzed decisions that had been made by the individual members of that group, the average improvement among the high conflict groups was 73% greater than that of those groups characterized by low-conflict conditions (Hall & Williams, 1966). Others have found similar results. Groups composed of members with different interests tended to produce higher-quality solutions to a variety of problems than do homogenous groups (Hoffman & Maicer, 1961).

Nelson and Quick (2000) have also identified four interrelated steps in creating a conflict positive organization. These are:

1. Value diversity and confrontational differences. To them, differences among staff of an organization should be seen as opportunities for innovation, and diversity should be celebrated. Open and honest confrontations bring out differences, and they are essential for positive conflict.
2. Seek mutual benefits, and unite behind cooperative goals. On this point, they stressed that conflicts have to be managed together. Thus, through

conflict, individuals learn how much they depend on one another. Even when employees share goals, they may differ on how to accomplish the goals. What is paramount is that they are moving towards the same objectives. Joint rewards should be given to the whole team for co-operative behaviour.

3. Empower employees to feel confident and skilful. To them, people must be made to feel that they control their conflicts and they can deal with their differences productively. When they do so, they should be recognized.
4. Take stock to reward success and learn from mistakes:-Employees should be encouraged to appreciate one another's strengths and weaknesses and to talk directly about them. They should celebrate their conflict management successes and work out plans for ways they can improve in the future.

Flowing from the above explanations, one could conclude that though working through conflict is often difficult; there is much that can be gained from it when supportive learning climates, working models and leadership examples are in place.

Dysfunctional Conflict

Dysfunctional conflict is an unhealthy, destructive disagreement between two or more people (Nelson & Quick, 2000). It does not support organizational goals and hinders organizational performance. It takes employees' focus away from the work to be done and places it on the parties involved. It breeds

discontent, dissolves common ties and eventually leads to the destruction of groups. It also drains energy that could be used more productively. Its origin is often emotional or behavioural. For example, a disagreement that involves personalized anger and resentment directed at specific individuals rather than specific ideas are dysfunctional. They often rely on threats, deception and verbal abuse to communicate. In dysfunctional conflict, the losses to both parties may exceed any potential gain from the conflict (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001; Robbins, 1997).

The Concept and Evolution of Conflict Management

The idea of conflict management has undergone a considerable evolution. Kreitner and Kincki (2004) note that during the 20th century, scientific management experts such as Taylor (1947) initially believed all conflict ultimately threatened management's authority hence needed to be avoided or quickly resolved. The experts later observed that human relationists recognized the inevitability of conflict and advised managers to learn to live with it.

Emphasis was placed on resolving conflict whenever possible. In the early 1970s, it was realized that conflict has both positive and negative outcomes depending on its nature and intensity. This perspective introduced the revolutionary idea that organizations could suffer from too little conflict.

Figure 1 present a diagram on the relationship between conflict intensity and outcomes.

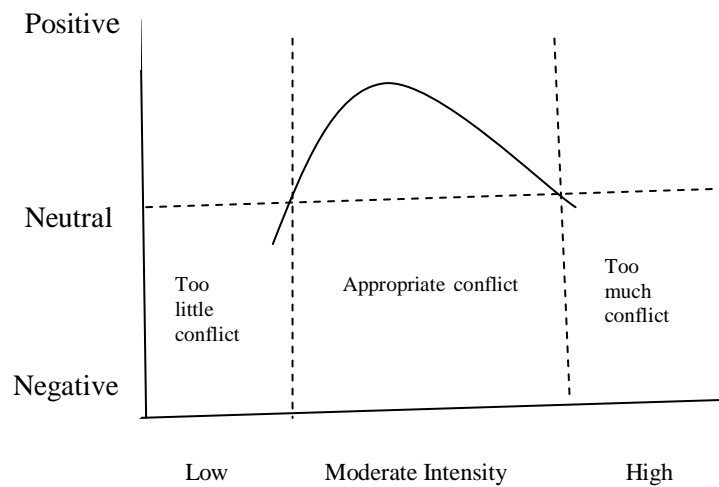


Figure :1 The Relationship between Conflict Intensity and Outcomes

Source: LD Brown, *Managing Conflict of Organizational Interfaces*, (Reading: MA, Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1985), figure 1.1.p.8, 1986, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. Reprinted with permission.

Work groups, departments and organizations experiencing too little conflict tend to be plagued by apathy, lack of creativity, indecision, and missed deadlines. Excessive conflict, on the other hand, can erode organizational performance because of political infighting, dissatisfaction, lack of teamwork, and turnover. Workplace aggression and violence can be a manifestation of excessive conflict, appropriate types and levels of conflict energize people in constructive directions. Management should not strive to eliminate all conflicts, only those which have disruptive effects on the organizations efforts to achieve its goals. Some degree of conflict may prove beneficial if it is used as an instrument for change or innovation. Thus, the critical issue appears not to be conflict itself but rather how it is managed. Hence, conflict management has become an invariable test for managers who are poised to attained organizational goal.

Conflict Management Approaches

Conflicts in the workplace are not to be ignored. Unaddressed conflicts will foster and get worse. Individuals need to have the skills and knowledge on how to manage conflict as competently as possible when the inevitable conflict surfaces. More so, management of conflict is one of the important roles played by managers in organizations (Roper, 2005) as managing workplace conflict is one of the crucial investments for long term viability and success for a business (Oudeh, 1999). In addition, it was found that managers spent in excess of 20% of their time dealing with conflict (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976). Cetin and Hacifazlioglu (2004) argue that the way a conflict is handled would affect the nature of the conflict, that is, whether it becomes beneficial or destructive. The benefits of conflict should not be underestimated. Conflict which is managed effectively and appropriately would add substantial value to an organization, as it is considered as a healthy ingredient in business life (Robbins, 1973). In addition, it acts as a catalyst for change (Lacey, 2000). Conflicts which are managed well will create a healthy workplace for its workers where good relationships, trust and respect will prevail among its employees. Having such working environments will result in stimulated team spirit and increased productivity. Furthermore, with strengthened working relationships, the “us” versus “them” polarization can be eliminated (Pederson, 1996). This is crucial as good working relationships are important to achieve organizational goals. Damaged relationships would hinder future team work.

Snowden and Gorton (2002) define conflict management as the “efforts designed to prevent, ameliorate, or resolve disagreements between and among individuals and groups” (p. 89). There are various styles that can be used to handle conflicts. As far back as the 1940s, Follett (1940) discovered three main ways to handle conflict: domination, compromise and integration. She also found others such as avoidance and suppression. Blake and Mouton (1964) were the first to present the conceptualization of the five management conflict styles for managing conflict. They classify the five conflict management styles as problem-solving, smoothing, forcing, withdrawal and sharing. These styles were based on two dimensions in relation to the attitudes of the manager’s concern for production and concern for people. They drew up these dimensions on nine-point scales to form the grid. The horizontal axis represents concern for production while the vertical axis represents concern for people. The one end represents low concern while the nine depicts the highest concern. Blake and Mouton (1973) also note that though one of these styles may be dominant in an individual’s actions, it might be changed to another if the first is not effective. These styles were later relabelled by Thomas (1976) as avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising and collaborating, based on two intentions of an individual; co-operativeness and assertiveness. In co-operativeness, one party attempts to satisfy the other party’s concerns, while in assertiveness the party attempts to satisfy its own concern. Using the conceptualization by Blake and Mouton (1964) as well as Thomas (1976), Rahim and Bonoma (1979) categorized conflict management

styles into avoiding, obliging, dominating, compromising and integrating. Their model was based on two dimensions; concern for self and concern for others.

Other researchers have also focused on the dual concern model by using different terminologies. Among them, Conerly and Tripathi (2004) provide a dual concern model with the dimensions centered on how much one cared about achieving one's goals – how assertive one was and the second dimension on how much one cared about the relationships – how cooperative one was. Their five conflict management approach based on these two dimensions were withdrawing, forcing, smoothing, confronting and compromising. Masters and Albright (2005) present a dual concern model which focused on what was valued: the relationship or the outcome. With this, they also propose five conflict management approaches; avoidance, competition, accommodation, collaboration and compromise. Besides these five conflict management approaches based on the dual concern models, there have been others who have suggested various models to handle conflict. For instance, Nicotera, (1993) and Kindler (1996) suggested eight and nine styles respectively to handle conflict. However, various studies on conflict management have proved that the five conflict management approaches: avoidance, competing, accommodation, collaboration and compromise are commonly used by a lot of organizations.

Figure 2 present the diagram on five conflict management approaches.

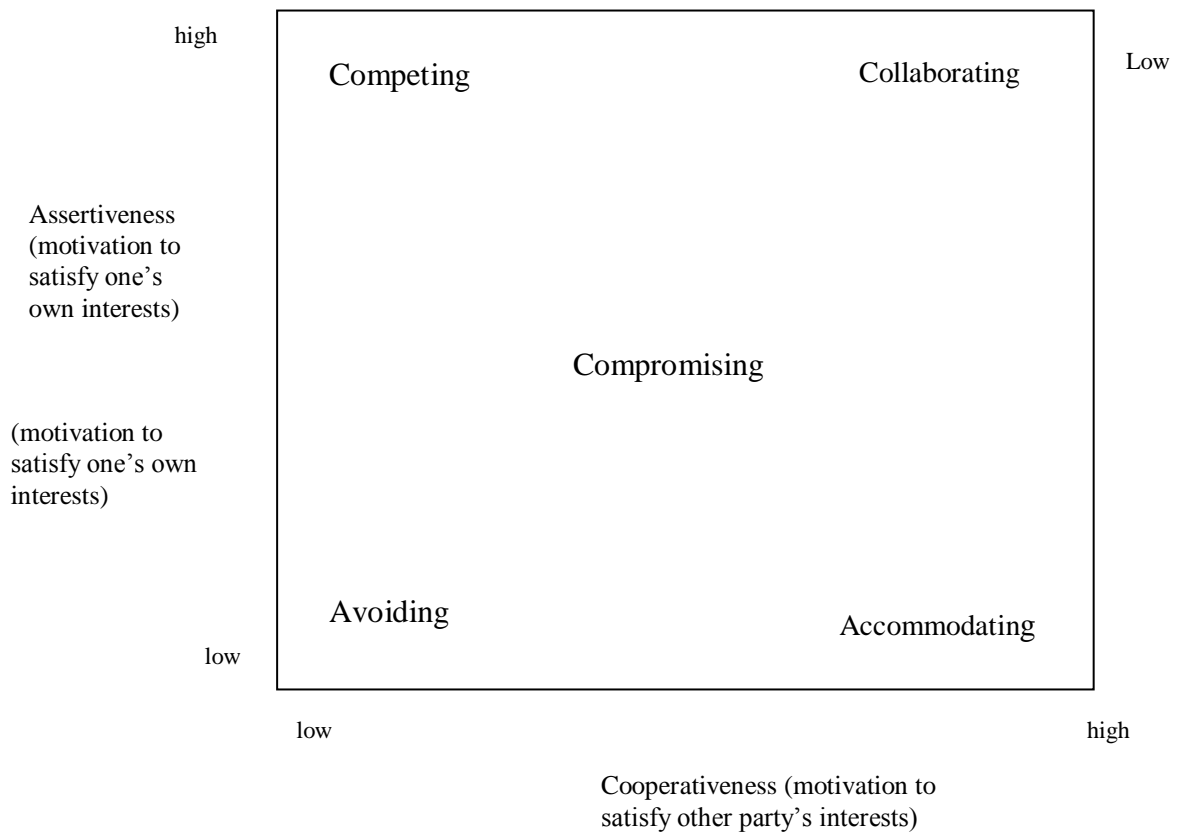


Figure 2: Conflict Management Approaches

Source: Adapted from T. L. Ruble and K. Thomas, 'Support for a Two-Dimensional Model of Conflict Behavior', *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 16 (1976), p. 145

According to Nelson and Quick (2000), these five conflict management styles are based on two major facts, assertiveness (the extent to which one wants his goals to be met) and co-operativeness (the extent to which one would want to see the other party's concern met).

The avoiding approach of conflict management is a non-confrontational approach to problems. It involves passive behaviours such as withdrawing or side

stepping issues of contention in order to avoid issues which might be harmful to relationships involved. Miles (1980) contends that side stepping issues of contention may eventually cause conflict to escalate to uncontrollable proportions. Common avoiding attitudes include quitting, avoiding the source of conflict, putting off discussions and forming alliances with others (Martin and Bergmann, 1996). Unfortunately, problems that are not quickly addressed tend to grow over time. Besides, relationships can be damaged by unresolved issues. Nelson and Quick (2000) state that the avoiding approach is low on both assertiveness and cooperativeness. It is often used when the conflict is not critical or is perceived to be beyond the capacity of management. Over use of this style can lead one into giving up too many of one's right and personal goals to the advantage of others. Again, avoidance tends to give the impression that one cannot change. It allows conflict to simmer and heat up unnecessarily rather than provide an avenue for improving it. In addition to this, it keeps one from working through a conflict and reinforces the notion that the best way to handle conflict is to avoid it.

The competing approach of conflict management is very assertive and uncooperative, an authoritarian approach to problems and involves only one side getting their way through. According to Nelson and Quick (2000), it may be useful in a situation where one is absolutely sure of the decision taken and also in making unpopular decisions which need to be implemented. They further reiterate that relying solely on competing approach is dangerous since managers who do so may become reluctant to admit when they are wrong and may find themselves surrounded by people who are afraid to disagree with them. Fisher (1983) also

states that competing approach is necessary in emergencies, sometimes certain actions need to be implemented quickly to save a situation. Wright and Noe (1996) also indicate that the competing approach involves attempting to win with the presumption that others will lose. Shani and Lau (2000) buttress this statement by indicating that the competing approach implies winning at the expense of others. They view this style as an assertive, uncooperative mode as said by Nelson and Quick (2000). They further explain that members of the assertive group invariably attempt at achieving their own goals at the expense of the others through argument, authority, and threat or in extreme cases, physical force. Though Owens (2001) admits that conflict has some benefits for organizations he sees this style as being viewed almost universally as destructive and terms it a classic win-lose situation.

On the other hand, accommodation in a conflict situation is where one yields entirely to the conflicting point of view, sometimes to the extent of compromising oneself. This approach should only be used infrequently and on issues of little relevance to the organization's progress and also to maintain positive relationship with workers in an organization.

Collaboration refers to the concept that people work together incorporating both the work of individuals and the product of larger collectives. It occurs when a group of equally vested parties interacts in a process of shared rules, norms and structures to resolve an issue in which they are all vested. According to Nelson and Quick (2000), collaboration is high on both assertiveness and cooperativeness. In this approach, problems are solved in ways

that go beyond fairness. Working towards collaboration involves an open and thorough discussion of the conflict and arriving at a solution that is satisfactory to both parties. It is also information sharing so that both parties can identify common ground and potential solution that satisfies both or all of them. They further explain that collaboration may work effectively in a situation where both parties are completely open and honest in expressing and prioritizing their desired outcomes and are committed to the final solution. It is also useful when consensus building is necessary to ensure continued positive interaction and a strategy worth considering when time constraint is not an issue. Unfortunately, it is an approach which consumes a tremendous amount of time and energy; many conflict situations are either very critical or too insignificant to justify the time it takes to collaborate (Whetter & Cameron, 2000).

According to Mchane and Glinow (2000), compromising is trying to reach a middle ground with the other party, that is, a position in which your losses are offset by equally valued gains. Nelson and Quick (2000) note that the compromising style is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness because each party must give up something to reach a solution to the conflict. They further explain that compromises are often made in the final resolution stage when time is of essence and may be an effective backup style when efforts towards collaboration are not successful. They, however point out that compromises are not optimal solutions since these mean partially surrendering one's position for the sake of coming to terms and, thus, comprises do nothing to improve relationships between the parties involved in the conflict. In conclusion,

Kathman and Kathman (1990), Bryson (1990), Huczynski and Buchanan (1997), Edwards, Catherine, Walton and Graham (2000) agree with Thomas (1976) who identified the five approaches. They, however, argued that the different approaches are needed for different situations. The potency of each approach depends on the characteristics that surround the conflict. These, among others, include the nature of the conflict issue, the relative importance of maintaining a supportive relationship, the nature of formal relationship between the parties, and the time constraints. (Whetten et al., 1994).

Competence-based View to Conflict

Spitzberg and Canary (1985), and Canary and Spitzberg (1989) used the competence-based view to conflict to describe how people managed their disputes. Though this model was initially used in association to personal relationships, recent studies have used it in organizational settings as well and have outlined three features to the competence-based view to conflict. (Papa & Canary 1995). The first feature centres on the impressions of an individual's communicative behaviour, not just the behaviour itself. In a conflict, it is important to know how an individual's behaviour is perceived as it can be interpreted in different ways. For example, a supervisor might threaten his subordinate with a bad performance report if the subordinate fails to complete the project by a certain deadline, as such, though such a threat is perceived as inappropriate, in this instance, it is an appropriate approach.

The second feature to the competence-based approach to conflict focuses on two behavioural criteria that are linked to communication quality, namely;

appropriateness and effectiveness. Appropriateness refers to communication that avoids violation of relational or situational sanctioned rules, whereas effectiveness refers to communication that achieves the valued objectives of the interactant. Canary and Spitzberg (1985) discovered two appropriateness factors; general appropriateness and specific appropriateness. General appropriateness (also known as situational appropriateness) relates to the evaluation of the individual's behaviour over the whole conflict episode. It focuses on the ability of the individual to conduct a polite conversation and adapt to the situation. Specific appropriateness (also known as relational appropriateness) concerns particular behaviours acted by the individual during the conflict episode. It focuses on the behaviour that is generally pro-social and constructive in nature. A partner's competence is influenced more by appropriateness than effectiveness while assessments of one's own competence are determined more by effectiveness than appropriateness.

Spitzberg and Canary (1985) and Spitzberg, Canary and Cupach (1994) crossed appropriateness and effectiveness as dimensions which resulted in a grid with four cells. This grid depicts the various combinations of appropriateness and effectiveness. An individual who is inappropriate and ineffective does not follow rules and does not attain desired goals. This individual's interaction is minimizing in orientation. An individual is seen as sufficing when he is appropriate but not effective. This individual is neither doing anything wrong nor does he obtain valued objectives through interaction. An individual who maximizes is effective but inappropriate as he is able to attain valued objectives but he or she violates

standards of relational preference. The individual who is both appropriate and effective is one who obtains valued objectives while maintaining the integrity of the interaction. This grid is similar to the conflict styles grid and management styles postulated by Blake and Mouton (1964 and 1973). If the conflict management styles are overlaid with the appropriateness and effectiveness, they will look like the illustration in Fig. 3.

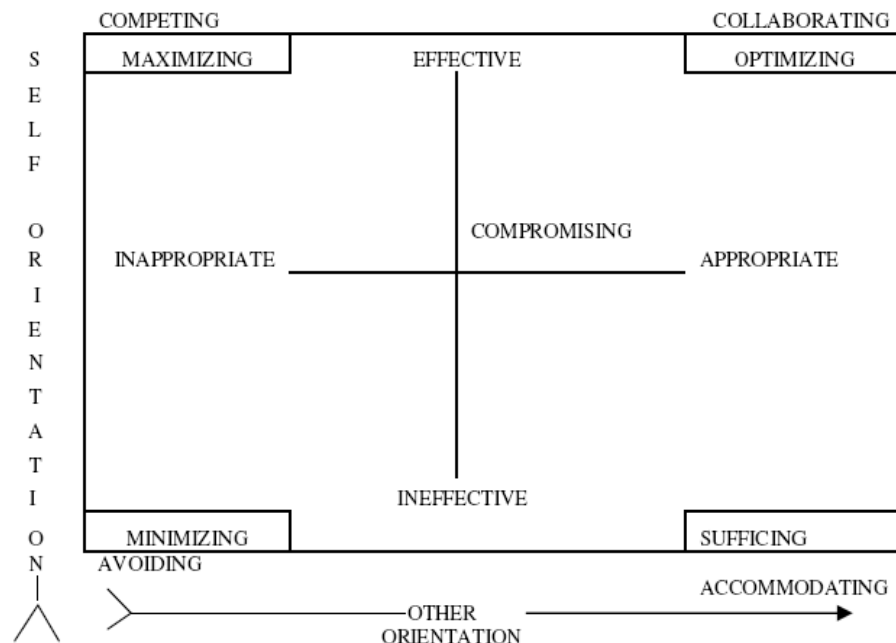


Figure 3: Effectiveness and Appropriateness Context of Conflict Management Approaches

Source: Adapted from Spitzberg, Canary and Cupach (1994). In *Conflict in Personal Relationships* (p. 186)

Competing behaviour is similar to a maximizing orientation where the individual has no care for the consequences to the other person. Avoidance relates to a minimizing orientation where the individual is unable to fulfill his or her own

as well as the other person's expectations. An accommodating conflict management style is when the individual is very concerned about appropriateness as compared to fulfilling his interests which is similar to the sufficing response.

A compromise is achieved when the individual seeks a middle path to self and other's interest. In the collaborating style, a win-win formula is practiced in producing an optimal response. Here appropriateness ensures that care is shown to the other parties' interests and expectations, while effectiveness represents a pursuit of self interests (Spitzberg, et al., 1994).

The final feature of the competence-based approach looks at how the conflict behaviours are evaluated on competence which is linked to relational outcomes (Spitzberg & Canary, 1985). Research has shown that perceptions of competence mediate the relationship between conflict behaviours and relational features (Papa & Canary, 1995). This means that when two conflicting parties manage a conflict successfully in terms of appropriateness and effectiveness, the relationship between them is preserved in addition to having the conflict resolved.

Strategies for Managing Conflict in an Organization

Conflict can be a useful tool that can bring about changes in an institution. It is like a two edged sword. The way it is handled determines its outcome. Conflict brings about both development and progress or negative and devastating consequences in the institution or society.

According to Nelson and Quick (2000), the overall strategies for handling conflict are competitive versus co-operative strategies. They state that the competitive strategy is founded on assumptions of win-lose and entails dishonest

communication, mistrust and a rigid position from both parties. On the other hand, the co-operative strategy, according to them, is based on different assumptions such as the potential for win-win outcomes, honest communication, trust, openness to risk vulnerability and the notion that the whole may be greater than the sum of the part. This is in support of what Nnadi (1997) identified as some basic strategies for dealing with conflict. Those strategies are:

1. The win-lose strategy
2. The lose-lose strategy
3. The win-win strategy

The win-lose strategy, according to Nnadi (1997) creates winners and losers. He explained that an administrator who views conflict as a personal threat may use this approach. The administrator may use his administrative authority to impose a decision on employees. This will make the administrator feel like a winner, the subordinates who may not be in the position to complain, may end up becoming the losers. This creates communication problem and frustration for subordinates. The win-lose strategy of conflict management which brings about communication problems will have a negative impact on the organization as indicated by Nelson and Quick (2000).

Lose-lose strategy, according to Nnadi (1997), results from compromise where the individuals involved in the conflict do not achieve all they want. Both parties make sacrifices in order to come to consensus. No one emerges as a winner. Nnadi (1997) intimates that lose-lose strategy revolves around personal perspectives rather than the organizational perspectives. Nnadi (1997), however,

points out that while compromise may sometimes be necessary it is not the best strategy of managing conflict. It could be used for trivial issues but not issues that require quality solutions.

Win-win strategy, according to Nnadi (1997), hinges on producing solutions acceptable to all parties involved in the conflict. This, Nnadi (1997) claimed, could be achieved when all the parties are open and honest about facts, opinions and feelings. This seems to be in agreement with what Nelson and Quick (2002) term co-operative strategy, as indicated earlier. Nnadi (1997) explains further that to achieve a win-win solution in conflict resolution, administrators should adopt and practice problem-solving style of managing conflict which permits open participation and commitment to a solution that is acceptable to all.

According to Mcshane and Glinow (2000), conflict management also involves altering the underlying structural causes of potential conflict. These include emphasizing subordinate goals, reducing differentiation, improving communication and understanding, reducing task interdependence, increasing resources and clarifying rules and procedures. They explain super-ordinate goals as common objectives held by conflicting parties that are more important than the departmental or individual goals on which the conflict is based. They further explain that focusing attention on super-ordinate is particularly useful where conflict is caused by goal incompatibility and differentiation. By increasing commitment to corporate-wide goals, employees feel less conflict with co-workers regarding competing individuals or departmental level goals. It offsets the problem of differentiation since it establishes a common frame of reference.

Heterogeneous team members still perceive different ways to achieve corporate objectives, but the super-ordinate goal strategy ensures that they mutually understand and agree upon the objectives themselves.

Nelson and Quick (2000) buttress this point by stating that super-ordinate goal is one effective technique for resolving conflict since it focuses the parties on larger issues on which they both agree and help them realize their similarities rather than their differences. Thus, in using super-ordinate goals as a means of resolving conflict, management must design goals that cannot be achieved without cooperation of conflicting parties.

On reducing differentiation, Mcshane and Glinow (2000) intimate that management can alter the conditions that create differentiation in the organization. Some organizations do this by providing uniform for their workers. Others do this by rotating workers in the organization.

According to Mcshane and Glinow (2000), communication and understanding among employees in an organization play a critical role for effective conflict management. They explained that by improving the opportunity, ability and motivation to share information, the parties develop less extreme perceptions of each other than if they rely on stereotypes and emotions. Direct communication, according to them, provides a better understanding of the other party's work environment and resource limitations. Some organizations have improved communication and understanding among their employees by introducing dialogue meetings, a situation in which the disputing parties are made to discuss their differences. This helps the parties to understand each other's

mental models and fundamental assumptions so that they can create a common mental model for the team.

Mchane and Glinow (2000) intimate again that reducing task interdependence in an organization could minimize dysfunctional conflict. They further explain that this might occur by dividing the shared resource so that each party has exclusive use of part of it. Also, sequentially interdependent jobs may be combined so that they form a pooled interdependence. They observe that increasing resources serves as an obvious means to reduce conflict due to resource scarcity. They, however, explain that managers working with tight budgets may feel reluctant to implement this. This notwithstanding, they need to carefully compare those costs with the costs of dysfunctional conflict arising out of resource scarcity. Nelson and Quick (2002) confirm that it is one of the conflict resolution techniques which is so simple that managers normally overlook.

Mcshane and Glinow (2000) also suggest clarifying rules and procedures as another effective technique for resolving conflict. They intimate that some conflicts arise from ambiguous decision rules regarding the allocation of scarce resources, consequently, these conflicts can be curbed by establishing rules and procedures. By clarifying and making clear rules and procedures governing a task, it minimizes misunderstandings and leads to a good working environment.

Studies on Conflict Management

Byers (1987) research conducted at the Pennsylvania's State University was on the relationship between principals' and teachers' perception of conflict, conflict resolution behaviour and leader personality. Byers discovered that there

was a significant relationship between teachers' attribution of principals' conflict resolution behaviour and teachers' perception of levels of conflict and organizational commitment. He concluded that teachers perceived the co-operative conflict handling strategies such as confrontation and compromise as positively related to their commitment to the organization and negatively related to the level of conflict.

Mcfadden (1991) also carried out a study on conflict management strategies and techniques of nine students in small liberal arts institutions in Ohio State. The study sought to find out the individual's behaviour in conflict situations and also to ascertain whether conflict management strategies and techniques were employed at their particular institutions. The population was about 3000. Their findings were that two modes of preference for handling conflict in small liberal arts institutions exist. These are compromising and collaborating. Competing was the least mode in handling conflict in the institution. Thus the study proposes dialogue as one of the conflict management strategies.

Olorunsola (1997) notes that to achieve peace, harmony and stability in libraries, there is the need to deal with internal strife, both real and imagined. Based on this vision, he wrote an article. It sought to bring out conflict from its closet in a Nigerian university library and examined the sources of internal conflict among staff rather than the external environment. It also sought to tackle the issue from the destructive aspects of undesirably high levels of conflict in a university library. The result of the study indicated that the bureaucratic structure, poor communication, organizational policies and inadequate material resources

are the major causes of conflict in the library. The study also revealed that the close interdependency between units in the library is a source of friction among staff. In summary, the study provides evidence for the effective management of conflicts through prevention, by means of enhancing communication and advocating for proactive approach to handling conflict.

Corwin (1969) in his survey of routine staff in twenty-eight (28) public schools selected some organizational characteristics as his variable structural differentiation, participation by subordinates in the authority system, regulating procedures and stability and interpersonal structure. The survey findings confirmed the traditionally accepted beliefs about the link between organizational complexity and conflict. He concludes that as the school becomes more structurally differentiated, both the rate of authority problems and rate of conflicts between teachers and administrators increases. He further notes that conflict between these groups also increases with school population.

In summary, the study reveals that minor disputes increase and major disputes decline with teacher participation in authority system. From this, Corwin (1969) theorized that regular faculty participation prevents aggravation of minor disputes into major ones. He finally concludes that the variable of size, structural differentiation and staff heterogeneity contribute to organizational strain while cohesive peer relations and participation in authority system increase conflict only if it is already present. In essence management must deal with petty squabbles before it generate into big problem.

Doe (2007) carried out a study on conflict management practices among students in the University of Cape Coast. The purposes of the study among others were to:

1. Identify the common sources of conflict among students in the University of Cape Coast.
2. Identify the common types of conflict among students in the University of Cape Coast
3. Investigate the effects of unmanaged conflict in the halls of residence
4. Investigate the conflict management techniques employed by the students.

Three hundred and seventy one students were used for the study. It was discovered from the study that sources of conflict among the students were numerous. Some of them were personality incompatibility of room mates (excessive noise making), the feeling of superiority of some students over others, spreading unkind gossip about each other, competition for limited resources and differences in perception. It was also noted that conflict occasionally occurred among the students due to differences in their backgrounds. The study also revealed, intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, intra-group conflicts and intergroup conflict as the types of conflict that existed among them.

Some effects of unmanaged conflict as indicated by the respondents are chaos, suspicion, low academic performance, blackmailing and the creation of unnecessary tension. More so, the study indicated that the rational conflict management practices mostly employed by the students were accommodating,

Compromising, collaborating, avoiding and competing. Besides the above conflict management practices used by the students, it was also revealed by the research that students consulted other colleagues in conflict situations to solicit advice on how best a particular conflict can be managed without allowing it to escalate to higher levels.

A number of researchers have conducted studies on various aspect of conflict in higher educational institutions. One such researcher is Koomson (2007) who conducted a study on conflict management mechanisms in the administration of higher educational institutions in Ghana. The study was administered at the University of Education, Winneba. The objective of the study was to investigate whether conflict existed at the University of Education, Winneba and the frequency of their occurrence. It also aimed at determining whether management of the University was able to transform conflicts into progress, thereby helping to achieve organizational goals. The population for the study was 270. It was discovered from the research that instigators of conflict in the institution were numerous, predominant ones included limited resources, role ambiguity, communication obstacles, time pressure, favouritism and allocation of accommodation. Among the staff, other instigators found were unrealized expectations, promotions and development system. On the part of the students, other causes discovered were autonomy and the grading system. These instigators may of course, not be peculiar to the University.

The study further revealed that an effect of non-management of conflict was dissatisfaction which led to demotivation and low productivity. It indicated

that, management often relies on the use of dominance or suppression methods such as forcing, smoothing, avoiding and coercion as a conflict management mechanism. These threatening approaches which portrayed management as defensive, made employees feel their views were not respected. Integrative problem solving which identifies and defines the problem, discusses the problem and arrives at a mutually acceptable solution was not employed. Thus, conflict if not dealt with will eventually lead to low productivity and apathy in organisations.

Summary

Conflict is generally regarded as disagreement regarding interests or ideas. It may be caused by the need to share scarce resources, goal incompatibility, values, beliefs, task interdependence, communication problems, organizational ambiguities, emotions etc.

Conflict can take on any of several different levels in an organization including, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup conflict. It could also be functional or dysfunctional depending on how it is handled and whether the individual(s) or organizations interests are served. Functional conflicts benefit the main purpose of the organization, encourage new solutions to problems and enhance the creativity in the organization. Dysfunctional conflict is destructive and does not promote the main purpose of the organization. Managing conflict is very essential in any organization. Managers have at their disposal a variety of conflict management styles, such as avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising and collaborating and competence-based view to conflict

management. . The skill of conflict management is to apply the right style for the situation. The chapter also reviewed studies on conflict management as carried out by scholars such as Byers, Mcfadden, Corwin, Doe and Koomson.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in order to describe staff related conflict management practices that exist in Takoradi Polytechnic. The credibility of research findings and conclusions extensively depend on the quality of the research design, data collection, data management, and data analysis. This chapter is therefore dedicated to the description of the methods and procedures used in order to obtain the data, analyse and interpret it. Specifically, the chapter covers the research design, selection of case study, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instrument, pilot-testing of the instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis.

The Research Design

The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive case study. The purpose of employing descriptive case study method is to describe the nature of conflict management practices as they existed during the time of the study and to explore the causes, effects and how conflict is being managed. The researcher opted to use this kind of design considering the desire to acquire first hand data from the respondents so as to formulate rational and sound conclusions and make recommendations for the study. A case study allows an in-depth intensive study of a problem which may not be feasible with other designs (Sproul, 1988). The descriptive case study design is used to provide systematic account that is accurate and precise. Events are simply described and the number of times

something occurs is provided. It also deals with facts, opinions, attitudes and perceptions. Besides, data collected by way of a descriptive design represent field conditions and answer questions analytically since it involves describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting situations as they are presented.

Kumekpor (2002) also noted that the descriptive case study design is appropriate when analyzing cases that are infrequent, temporary and non-recurrent such as students and workers' uprising and riots of all kinds. He again explained that this design is useful where retrospective views of an event are necessary and provide insights into events that are characterized by riots. However, this design is not without problems. As pointed out by Kumekpor (2002) there is the tendency for people to give false information in sensitive cases such as conflicts, leading to the possibility of suppression of vital information or refusal to co-operate. In my bid to draw meaningful conclusions from the study of the staff-related conflict management practices in Takoradi Polytechnic, I found the descriptive case study paradigm appropriate. Besides, this design is highly recognized by policy makers in social sciences hence, it is widely used in educational research.

In terms of approach, the study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach focused on obtaining numerical findings from the survey method. The interview, on the other hand, made up the qualitative approach of the study as this focused on personal description and individual insights of the key persons. This study employed the combined approach so as to overcome the limitations of only a single approach.

Selection of Case

The choice of Takoradi Polytechnic stems from the fact that, it is one of the oldest polytechnics in Ghana where some of the staff have been working for over 10 years. There is therefore a likelihood of conflict manifestation being more pronounced in old institutions than the fairly new ones. This is because by virtue of their long service in the institution members would have greater knowledge about their rights and privileges and would try to defend them at the slightest provocation. There is the tendency of these degenerating into conflict situations. As one of the old polytechnics in Ghana, therefore, Takoradi Polytechnic is likely to experience these conflict situations in a much clearer form that could allow for investigation. Indeed, Takoradi Polytechnic has for sometime now been in the news for experiencing various forms of conflict. The recent one was between the student body and the administration.

Population

Population of the study comprised all senior members (teaching and non teaching), senior staff (teaching and non teaching) and junior staff of Takoradi Polytechnic. The Polytechnic has altogether a staff population of 736. Out of which 156 are senior members 272 are senior staff and 308 are junior staff.

Takoradi Polytechnic, one of the ten Polytechnics in Ghana today, was established as Takoradi Technical institute in 1955. In 1963, it was upgraded to a second cycle institution to provide technical and trade courses. In 1965, the Institute was again upgraded into a Polytechnic but it still remained a second cycle institution. However, it was elevated to the status of a tertiary institution to

offer Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes by the PNDC Law 321 of 1992. The first batch of tertiary students began their studies in 1992/93 academic year (Source: Personnel Department of Takoradi Polytechnic).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The researcher used the purposive and simple random sampling techniques to select the respondents. This was done to ensure that the sample adequately represented the target population, to obtain the most relevant information, and to allow informational adequacy and appropriateness of data. A sample size of 276 out of 736 of the population was selected for the study. This constitute (36%) of the population. The sample was made up of 109 junior staff, 96 senior staff and 71 senior members. These three groups of staff from different departments in the Takoradi Polytechnic were randomly and purposively invited to participate in the study.

The junior, senior staff and 57 senior members were selected through random sampling. This sampling method is conducted where each member of a population has an equal opportunity to become part of the sample. As all members of the population have an equal chance of becoming a research participant, this is said to be the most efficient sampling procedure. In order to conduct this sampling strategy, the researcher used the pick from the hat method. The researcher defined the population first, listed down all members of the population by assigning numbers against their names, placed them in a hat, and picked them one after the other with intermittent shaking of the hat. In addition, 14 senior members in administrative positions were purposively selected because certain vital

information could only be obtained from such calibre of staff. The selected members made up the sample. For this purpose, a self-administered survey questionnaire was given to the staff to answer, while the 14 senior members were interviewed.

Research Instruments

The instruments used to elicit relevant data for the study were questionnaire and interview guide. (See Appendices A and B respectively). Kerlinger (1973) observed that the questionnaire is widely used for collecting data in educational research because of its efficacy for producing information about practices and conditions and for enquiring into the opinions and attitude of respondents. Sarantakos (1998) also observed that the use of the questionnaire provides a wider coverage, since researchers can approach respondents more easily. He further noted that the questionnaire is less expensive, produces fast results, stable, constant and has uniform measure without variation. Besides, it offers less opportunity for bias caused by the presence or attitude of the researcher. Sarantakos (1998), however, was of the view that since the questionnaire is anonymous, researchers are not sure whether the right people have answered the questions. He again stated that there are also no opportunities for motivating the respondents to answer the questions with the use of the questionnaire.

The researcher used open and closed-ended questions to elicit information on staff-related conflict management practices in Takoradi polytechnic. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items; one open-ended and 29 closed-ended item

was divided into two parts (One and Two). Part One solicited participants' background information. Respondents were required to indicate the following: category of staff, department, sex, status academic and professional qualification and length of service. The researcher developed items on personal data herself. Part Two dealt with the research questions. It was divided into three sections. The first section dealt with research questions one and two, the second section dealt with research question three, while the third section dealt with research questions four and five. The researcher adapted a design used by Kofi (2004) on conflict management in university libraries in Ghana to design part of her questionnaire which dealt with causes of conflict (intrapersonal, interpersonal and intergroup), and effect of conflicts on staff performance. Items on conflict management approaches however, were an abridged version of a 35 item instrument developed by Rahim (1983) adapted by Robbins (1997) and Nelson and Quick (2000).

To identify causes of conflict among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic, there were two items under intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict with a variety of options. There was also an open ended option for each of the two items. With regard to intergroup conflict, there was four rating scale format response as follows; Very large extent, Large extent, Little extent, Very little extent. Under the effect of conflict, one item was used with 16 options as well as an open-ended one. With regard to conflict management, there were 15 items with five point Likert scale format response as follows: Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very often, Always. There were three statements for each of the five conflict management approaches. These were competition, avoidance, compromise, accommodation

and collaboration. The respondents were requested to indicate the approach used by the staff of Takoradi Polytechnic by ticking the appropriate numbers that best corresponded to their responses. The respondents were requested to express their views on the possible ways by which conflict could be managed in their institution.

The researcher also had interview sessions with selected senior members to enrich the data. Ten questions were developed for the interview guide.

Pilot-testing of Instrument

To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to some of my colleagues to refine, after which it was given to the supervisors to scrutinise. Thereafter, the designed instrument was subjected to pilot-test to ascertain its reliability. The questionnaire was administered to staff of Cape Coast Polytechnic. Though Cape Coast Polytechnic is a relatively newly established institution, it has similar characteristics of Takoradi Polytechnic, such as structure of programme, composition of staff that will enable the staff to respond appropriately to the designed instrument on trial bases. Forty copies of the questionnaires were randomly distributed to the staff of Cape Coast Polytechnic (senior members, senior staff and junior staff). Out of this number, 35(87.5%) completed questionnaires were retrieved. Though there was a general consensus to return the filled questionnaire within three weeks from the day it was distributed, it took the researcher about two months to retrieve all the thirty-five copies.

A few shortcomings, specifically on the framing of some items were pointed out. The registrar also made very useful suggestions especially on the need to reduce the open-ended questions to attract more people to fill the questionnaire and also make the analysis less cumbersome. The researcher also had the opportunity to interview three of the senior members. In the interview, questions were read, explained where necessary and the respondents' answers were recorded on the interview guide. Suggestions made on the questionnaire and the interview guide helped in the re-structuring of the instruments for the final study. The reliability coefficient of the pilot-testing instrument was .75. Based on the results of the pilot-test, the survey instrument was found to be reliable and valid and therefore was adopted for the final study.

Data Collection Procedure

After pilot-testing, a letter of introduction was obtained from the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the University of Cape Coast to enable the researcher administer the questionnaire at Takoradi Polytechnic. Permission was sought from the Rector through the registrar to administer the questionnaire. Before administering the instruments preliminary contacts were made with the respondents where the purpose and significance of the study as well as assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of respondents' responses were discussed. This was done to obtain more candid and reliable responses. One of the senior members who had knowledge on field research volunteered to help with the administering and collection of the questionnaires. The respondents were given three weeks to fill the questionnaire. This was to give

them ample time to answer the questions at their convenience. Out of 300 copies of the questionnaire administered, 262 (87%) were retrieved with difficulty. The researcher had to call at respondents' offices on several occasions before getting the 262 completed questionnaires. It was the wish of the researcher to use one month for this exercise but due to the difficulty encountered in the collection of completed questionnaires and the conducting of interviews, the whole exercise lasted two months.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Sarantakos (1998), the analysis of data allows the researcher to manipulate information collected during the study in order to assess and evaluate the findings and arrive at some valid, meaningful and relevant conclusions. Since the study is purely descriptive, the main statistical tool that was used to analyze the data was Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS).

The version used for the data analysis was SPSS15.0. To make issues clearer and give good visual impression on values without having to read long sentences, tables were used to support the analysis. Again, to facilitate easy identification, the completed questionnaires were given serial numbers. The researcher prepared scoring keys to the various questions. The responses to questionnaires were assigned values and scored accordingly. With respect to the open-ended questions the researcher used content analysis for the presentation of the data.

With regard to conflict management practices among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic, a list of 15 statements relating to conflict handling approaches or

conflict handling styles was included in the survey questionnaire on a five point Likert scale with 1 being “Rarely” and 5 as “Always”. Respondents were requested to respond by indicating how often they relied on each of the conflict handling approaches or styles for managing conflicts. For ease of analysis, response categories 3, 4 and 5 representing “often”, “very often” and “always” on the five point Likert scale were collapsed into one response category and labelled “often”, while the 15 conflict handling styles were grouped into five broad areas according to Rahim’s (1983) classification. These broad classifications were: competition, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise with each broad area consisting of three components.

In analysing the interview data, the recorded responses were transcribed and the common elements within the context of the research questions identified. Thereafter, I grouped them in categories and selected relevant statements to support discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results on conflict management practices among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic are presented. It is organized into four main parts. The first part describes the personal data of the respondents. Part two present the results on causes of conflicts among staff of the Takoradi Polytechnic. In part three, the positive and negative effects of conflicts are examined and this is followed by the analysis on how conflict among staff of the Polytechnic can be managed effectively in section four.

Personal Data of Respondents

The personal data of the respondents are discussed under the following sub-headings: category of staff, department, gender, status, academic and professional qualification, and length of service. The reason for this aspect of the analysis was to determine the calibre of people used for the study in order to make a fair assessment on their views on conflict management practices at Takoradi Polytechnic.

The results are displayed in various tables with respondents' departments/sections/units, recorded under school or department while highest academic qualifications attained were also collapsed from the original nine categories into four main categories. This study sought to find out the gender

distribution of respondents. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by gender.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	N	%
Male	174	66.4
Female	88	33.6
Total	262	100

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

Table 1 depicts that 174 (66.4 %) of the respondents were males as against 88 (33.6%) females. This situation is not peculiar as is usually the case in many organizations due to the fact that there is a gender imbalance in the various positions in many organizations and in the country as whole. The views of males were therefore dominant in the study.

Table 2 provides the schools and departments of the respondents.

Table 2

Schools/Departments of Respondents

School/department	N	(%)
No response	35	13.4
Applied Arts	116	44.3
Applied Science	12	4.6
Business Studies	8	3.1
Engineering	12	4.6
Administration	79	30.2
Total	262	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

Even though some respondents did not indicate the department/section/unit they belonged to, it is clear from Table 2 that most of the respondents were from the School of Applied Arts 116 (44.3%). This is followed by the Central Administration 79 (30.2%). School of Business had the least number of 8 (3.1%). The study also considered category of staff at Takoradi Polytechnic. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Category of Staff

Staff category	N	(%)
Teaching	52	19.8
Non-Teaching	210	80.2
Total	262	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

It can be observed from Table 3 that majority 210 (80.2%) of the respondents belong to the non-teaching category of staff when compared with that of the teaching staff category of 52 (19.8%) respondents. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the staff at the Polytechnic fall under middle level manpower group with a few senior members in the teaching category and at the top administrative positions such as the rector, vice rector and the registrars.

The study also tried to find out the status of the respondents. Responses are captured in Table 4

Table 4

Status of Staff

Status	N	(%)
Senior member	56	21.4
Senior staff	96	36.6
Junior staff	110	42.0
Total	262	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

With regard to status, majority of the respondents investigated were Junior Staff 110 (42.0%). The Senior Staff were 96 (36.6%) with 56 (21.4%) being in the senior member status. This was expected since in most organizations junior and middle level personnel are always in the majority.

Another personal characteristic of the respondents that was investigated was the highest academic qualification. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Highest Educational Qualification of Staff

Highest qualification	N	(%)
SSSCE	11	4.2
No response	86	32.8
Specialist	19	7.3
HND	35	13.4
First degree	59	22.5
Second degree	52	19.8
Total	262	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

It is surprising that about 86 (33%) of the respondents for unknown reasons did not indicate their academic qualification. However, it is gratifying to note from Table 6 that majority 59 (22.5%) of those who provided responses were holders of first degree followed closely by those 52 (19.8%) holding second degree. In the Polytechnic set up, senior members require higher degrees. They form the academic and top administrative staff members such as the Rector, Vice Rector and Registrars. Senior staff should hold at least first degree and the junior staff should at least have SSSCE.

Participants were asked to indicate the number of years that they had served the organization. Table 6 shows the length of service of the respondents.

Table 6

Length of Service

Length of service	N	(%)
No response	41	15.6
1 to 5 years	163	62.2
6 to 10 years	42	16.0
11 to 15 years	12	4.6
21 years and above	4	1.5
Total	262	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

Table 6 reveals that most of the participants 163 (62.2%) fall under 1 to 5 years whilst 4 (1.5%) have been with the organization for 21 years and above. It is clear from the table that the length of service of respondents varies considerably. This could be attributed to the fact that majority of the respondents have not served in the Polytechnic for very long and might not have acclimatized themselves with the working environment. This may cause them to experience one level of conflict or the other in the course of playing their role and with other co-workers.

Nature and Causes of Conflicts among Staff of Takoradi Polytechnic

Research questions one and two sought to explore the nature of conflicts in Takoradi polytechnic and causes of such conflicts. The data suggests that the

three types of conflicts: intrapersonal, interpersonal and intergroup conflicts characterise the nature of conflicts in the polytechnic. The intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts included five and seven possible factors respectively, while the inter-group conflicts covered seven issues which are thought to result in conflicts between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members in that order. Therefore each broad area is examined in the light of the issues involved.

Causes of Intrapersonal Conflicts

With regard to the causes of intra-personal conflicts, five factors identified as causes of intrapersonal conflict in the literature review were included in the survey questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate which of the five factors can be identified as causes of intra-personal conflict. Respondents were to indicate one or more of these factors. Table 7 shows the multiple responses reported by the respondents.

Table 7

Causes of Intra-personal Conflicts Among Staff of the Takoradi Polytechnic

Causes	Senior members		Senior Staff		Junior Staff		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Choosing between equally good alternatives	28	20.6	36	17.0	22	12.5	86
Choosing between two equally bad alternatives	8	5.9	44	20.8	22	12.5	74	14.1
Choosing among a set of options	32	23.5	44	20.8	66	37.5	142	27.1
When not quite clear about role as a staff	40	29.4	44	20.8	22	12.5	106	20.2
Different expectations about job	28	20.6	44	20.8	44	25.0	116	22.1
Total	136	100.0	212	100.0	176	100.0	524	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

Table 7 reveals that a total of 524 responses were reported, and of these, the highest number of 212 was reported by the senior staff while the least number of 136 were reported by the senior members. “Choosing from among a set of options that had good and bad outcomes” was the most frequently mentioned cause of intrapersonal conflict among the junior staff. Among the senior members, “When not quite clear about role as a staff” was identified as the leading cause of intrapersonal conflicts”. From the senior staff, four options were equally cited as the leading causes of intrapersonal conflicts namely, choosing between two equally bad alternatives, ‘choosing among a set of options that have good or bad outcomes’, ‘when not quite clear about role as a staff’ and ‘when you have different expectations about your job’. The least reported cause of intrapersonal conflict among the three categories of respondents was “Choosing between equally good alternatives’ with the least mention of this cause from the junior staff, followed by the senior members and senior staff respectively.

This finding is in agreement with Wright and Noe’s (1996) identification of type of intrapersonal conflict. These are “Approach-Approach” which deals with choosing between two equally attractive, profitable and desirable alternatives;” Avoidance-Avoidance” where the individual is also torn between choosing two equally bad, undesirable and unattractive alternatives that have bad consequences “ and Approach-Avoidance” which deals with choice among a set of options that have both good and bad outcomes.

Respondents were asked to select from eight possible factors they thought were the causes of interpersonal conflicts in their Polytechnic. Respondents were to tick as many factors as possible. The responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Causes of Inter-Personal Conflicts Among Staff of the Takoradi Polytechnic

Causes	Senior members		Senior Staff		Junior Staff		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Differences in behaviour among individual staff	40	17.5	76	20.9	77	22.6	193
Relationship between superior and subordinate	28	12.3	40	11.0	44	12.9	112	12.0
Struggling for position	40	17.5	56	15.4	55	16.1	151	16.2
Competing for limited resources	44	19.3	40	11.0	11	3.2	95	10.2
Gossiping	16	7.0	48	13.2	66	19.4	130	13.9
Differences in perception	32	14.0	64	17.6	55	16.1	151	16.2
Feeling of superiority	28	12.3	40	11.0	11	3.2	79	8.5
Lack of respect	0	.0	0	.0	22	6.5	22	2.4
Total	228	100.0	364	100.0	341	100.0	933	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

From table 8, among the senior members competing for limited resources and recognition 44 (19.3%) was mentioned as the leading factor that causes interpersonal conflict. From the senior and junior staff side, differences in behaviour, among individual staff was reported as the leading cause with 76 (20.9%) and 77 (22.6%) respectively.

Overall, however, this study has revealed that the respondents are aware of the factors promoting interpersonal conflicts among the staff of the Polytechnics with more frequent mention of “Differences in behaviour among individual staff”, “Power struggle”, and “Differences in perception” as the top three factors promoting interpersonal conflicts among the staff of the Polytechnics.

The interview sessions with selected senior members of the Polytechnic on the causes of interpersonal conflict confirmed the findings of the survey questionnaire. Commonly emerging from the results of interview data were views that indicated that most of the time, “gossip” and “envy” are most prevalent causes of conflicts in the polytechnic. One Dean, for example, remarked: ‘My sister, I bet you ... conflict involving staff that take most of my time are often related to accusations of gossiping about someone or the other ..’ They also mentioned factors such as mode of awarding scholarship for further studies, claim of superiority, struggle for positions, limited resources, and emotions. Others include; jealousy among workers and lack of trust. A female registrar lamented about the selective nature of awarding study leave with pay in the Polytechnic stressing that such discriminative acts generate unnecessary tension and hatred among staff leading to conflicts: ‘Hmm, it’s a pity but I’ve got to mention it ...

there is no fairness in the polytechnic.. Whom you know is what makes study leave applications easy. If you don't know any big man ... you better keep quiet and stay as a common worker' (a female head).

This finding is in agreement with what Nelson and Quick (2000) termed as personality conflict which relate to individuals perceptions, emotions, values and ethics which they exhibit at work places. Rao et al. (1987) have also observe that the most commonly cited causes for interpersonal conflict are personality differences, clashes of values and interest, perceptions, power and status differences as well as scarce resources. Schnake (1987) also noted that interpersonal conflict may arise because of personality differences in basic beliefs and values or incompatible goals. Since Takoradi Polytechnic is made up of people from different background with different values, attitude, norms and ideologies such differences are bound to register. However, the findings from the interview conducted revealed that fighting for positions, gossip and enviness were the major causes of interpersonal conflict among the staff of the polytechnic.

Another dimension of research question one was to identify the causes of inter- group conflicts. (i.e., Conflict between junior staff and senior staff on one hand and conflict between junior staff and senior members on the other hand, and senior staff and senior members). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought issues such as limited resources, deficiencies in information flow, conflicting interest, overlapping tasks, interdependence, time pressure and collective decision-making results in conflict between junior staff and senior members, junior staff and senior staff, and senior staff and senior members. The results are presented inTtable 9.

Table 9

Causes of Inter-group Conflicts Among the Various Categories of Staff

Causes	Respondents	Number/percentage Responses									
		Very large extent		Large extent		Little extent		Very little extent		Total	
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Limited resources	SM	0	(.0)	12	(21.4)	32	(57.1)	12	(21.4)	56	(100)
	SS	16	(16.7)	28	(29.2)	40	(41.7)	12	(12.5)	96	(100)
	JS	77	(70.0)	0	(0)	0	(.0)	33	(30.0)	110	(100)
	Total	93	(35.5)	40	(15.3)	72	(27.5)	57	(21.8)	262	(100)
Deficiencies in information flow	SM	8	(14.2)	24	(42.9)	12	(21.4)	12	(21.4)	56	(100)
	SS	40	(41.7)	36	(37.5)	12	(12.5)	8	(8.3)	96	(100)
	JS	22	(20.0)	44	(40.0)	0	(.0)	44	(40.0)	110	(100)
	Total	70	(26.7)	104	(39.7)	24	(9.2)	64	(24.4)	262	(100)
Conflicting interest	SM	16	(28.6)	16	(28.6)	12	(21.4)	12	(21.4)	56	(100)
	SS	28	(29.2)	52	(54.2)	12	(12.5)	4	(4.2)	96	(100)
	JS	20	(66)	33	(30.0)	44	(40.0)	11	(10.0)	110	(100)
	Total	66	(25.2)	101	(38.5)	68	(26.0)	27	(10.3)	262	(100)

Table 9 Continued

Causes	Respondents	Number/percentage Responses									
		Very large extent		Large extent		Little extent		Very little extent		Total	
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Overlapping Tasks	SM	8	(14.3)	4	(7.1)	24	(42.9)	20	(35.7)	56	(100)
	SS	36	(37.5)	28	(29.2)	20	(20.8)	12	(12.5)	96	(100)
	JS	55	(50.0)	11	(10.0)	11	(10.0)	33	(30.0)	110	(100)
	Total	99	(37.8)	43	(16.4)	55	(21.0)	65	(24.8)	262	(100)
Interdependence	SM	20	(35.7)	8	(14.3)	20	(35.7)	8	(14.3)	56	(100)
	SS	16	(16.7)	32	(33.3)	40	(41.7)	8	(8.3)	96	(100)
	JS	33	(30.0)	22	(20.0)	11	(10.0)	44	(40.0)	110	(100)
	Total	69	(26.3)	62	(23.7)	71	(27.1)	60	(22.9)	262	(100)
Time Pressure	SM	0	(.0)	16	(28.6)	24	(42.9)	16	(28.6)	56	(100)
	SS	12	(12.5)	32	(33.3)	40	(41.7)	12	(12.5)	96	(100)
	JS	66	(60.0)	11	(10.0)	11	(10.0)	22	(20.0)	110	(100)
	Total	78	(29.8)	59	(22.5)	75	(28.6)	50	(19.1)	262	(100)
Collective	SM	16	(28.6)	0	(.0)	16	(28.6)	24	(42.9)	56	(100)
Decision-making	SS	40	(41.7)	16	(16.7)	36	(37.5)	4	(4.2)	96	(100)
	JS	55	(50.0)	33	(30.0)	0	(.0)	22	(20.0)	110	(100)
	Total	111	(42.4)	49	(18.7)	52	(19.8)	50	(19.1)	262	(100)

Key: SM- senior members SS- senior staff JS- junior staff

Looking at table 9, data on limited resources reveal that a total of 262 individuals were investigated, and of these 56 were senior members, 96 were senior staff, and 110 were junior staff. Majority of the senior members totalling 32 (57.2%) expressed the view that to a little extent limited resources is a contributing factor to inter-group conflict in their institution. None of the senior members associated themselves with the view that to a very large extent limited resources can lead to inter-group conflict in their institution. On the side of the senior staff, 40 (41.7%) constituting the simple majority also expressed the same view that to a very little extent limited resources can lead to inter-group conflict in their institution. Interestingly, 77 (70%) of the junior staff attest to the fact that to a very large extent limited resources is a contributing factor to inter-group conflict in their institution with only 33 (30%) reporting that to a very little extent limited resources can lead to inter-group conflict in their institution. But all together, 57 (21.8%) of the respondents reasoned that to a very little extent limited resources is an issue that can result in inter-group conflict especially conflict between junior staff and senior staff, and senior members and senior staff and above all among the senior members, senior staff and junior staff. This could be attributed to the fact that these groups use different resources in their activities. These findings suggest that though limited resources could lead to inter-group conflict as noted

by Kinard (1988), it depends on whether the groups involved share common resource.

In respect to deficiency in information flow, as can be seen from the table there are more respondents who were of the view that deficiency in information flow to a large extent or to a very large extent promotes inter-group conflicts in comparison with those who were of the opinion that deficiency in information flow promotes inter-group conflicts but to a little or to a very little extent. In specific terms majority 32 (57.1%) of senior members investigated, expressed the view that to a large extent or to a very large extent, deficiency in information flow results in conflict between junior staff and senior staff. The story is not different from the side of both the senior and junior staff when majority in each case also expressed the same view. Indeed, a total of 76 (79.2%) senior staff and a total of 66 (60%) of the junior staff reported that truly to a large extent or to a very large extent deficiency in information flow results in conflict between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members.

In a nut shell, this study has revealed that majority of the respondents totalling 174 (66.4%) think that the issue of deficiency in information flow to a large or to a very large extent is a source of inter-group conflict particularly between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior

staff and senior members. This finding substantiates the view of Schnake (1987) that when groups lack information about their activities in the same institution, misconception and distrust develop and this may likely lead to conflict.

In terms of conflicting interest, it can be observed from the table that there was a split decision among the senior members on the extent to which the issue of conflicting interest results in inter-group conflicts in the institution. . In particular, 32 (57.2%) of the senior members, reported that to a large extent or to a very large extent conflicting interest results in inter-group conflicts between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members, and senior staff and senior members whilst 24 (42.8%) expressed the view that even though conflicting interest is a contributory factor, it does so to a little or to a very little extent. The story is not different from that of the senior staff as 80 (83.4%) attest to the fact that to a large extent or to a very large extent conflicting interest results in inter-group conflicts between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members, and senior staff and senior members. The simple minority of senior staff even though thought that conflicting interest is a contributory factor, it does so to a little or to a very little extent. On the part of the junior staff, the story was different, for instance 33 (30.0%) reported that to a large extent conflicting interest contribute to inter-group conflict in their institution with only 11 (10.0%) associating

themselves to the fact that conflicting interest contributes to inter-group conflict to a very little extent. But in all, this study has again established that majority of respondents; totalling 167 (63.7%), believe that conflict of interest indeed is a factor that can lead to conflicts between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members.

This finding confirms Likert and Likert (1976), and Pondy's (1969) claim that groups with different interest and goals in the same institution lead to inter-group conflict. Schnake (1978) has also observed that when groups have incompatible goals they turn to work toward achieving their own goals instead of overall organizational goal.

When asked to indicate whether the issue of overlapping tasks results in inter-group conflicts, the majority of senior staff and junior staff totaling 64 (66.7%) and 66 (60%) respectively reported that they think that it results in inter-group conflict. This is to be compared with majority 44 (78.6) of senior members who think so but expressed the view that the issue of overlapping tasks results in inter-group conflict to a little or to a very little extent. However, the overall revelation from this study is that the majority of respondents admit that overlapping task results in inter-group conflict between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members. This

finding buttresses Macshane and Glinow's (2000) explanation that overlapping task leads to role ambiguity which breeds conflict since employees may not be certain about their roles and may interfere with each others role which could serve as a fertile ground for conflict.

The next dimension of inter-group conflict that was investigated by this study was the issue of interdependence. Interestingly, data on it clearly shows that there is a split decision on this issue among senior members, senior staff and among junior staff. For instance a total of 28 (50%) of the senior members agree that to a large extent or to a very large extent interdependence results in inter-group conflicts particularly between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members. This is to be compared with the other half of senior members who held a similar view but were of the view that this happens on a little or on a very little scale. The story is the same from the side of the senior and junior staff with the overall picture being that there is a split decision on the issue of interdependence as a factor in inter-group conflict between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members respectively. According to Schnake (1987), interdependence is a situation where one party cannot complete its work unless the other party does its work. He explains further that task interdependence results

in conflict for two main reasons. The first is when only one group is dependent; the independent group may not feel the need to comply with requests. The second situation where task interdependence can result in conflict is when the parties have different goals, priorities, or disagree upon the way the tasks should be performed. Thus, when two or more individuals or groups are dependent upon one another for successful job performance, the opportunity for conflict increases.

The issue of time pressure as a dimension of inter-group conflict was also investigated. The responses as shown in the table suggest that none of the senior members is associated with the fact that to a very large extent time pressure results in inter-group conflict. In other words, few of the senior members would want to believe that time pressure results in inter-group conflict to a large extent. This is to be compared with the majority of senior members who expressed the opinion that indeed time pressure could lead to inter-group conflict but that this is to a little extent or to a very little extent. From the senior staff side, their opinion on this issue is not different from that of the senior members as majority 52 (54.2%) were of the view that truly time pressure actually results in inter-group conflict but it does so to a little extent or to a very little extent. This is to be compared with 44 (45.8%) of the senior staff who indicated that time pressure results in inter-group conflict to a large or to a very large extent.

Turning to the junior staff side, it can be seen that about 77 (70%) of them clearly expressed the view that time pressure to a large or to a very large extent leads to inter-group conflict between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members respectively. Thus of the 262 respondents investigated as many as 137 (52.3%) respondents think that time pressure results in inter-group conflict between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members respectively.

The last issue concerning inter-group conflict that was investigated by this study was on the extent to which the issue of collective decision-making results in conflict between the various study groups. Results from the table demonstrate clearly that majority of each study group were of the view that collective decision-making results in conflict between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members respectively. With regard to the senior members, majority totalling 40 (71.5%) attests to the fact that to a large extent or to a very large extent the issue of collective decision-making results in inter-group conflict in comparison with those who also held the same view but think that collective decision-making results in inter-group conflict to a little or to a very little extent. In respect of the senior staff and junior staff majority 56 (58.4%) and 88 (80%) respectively reported that they believe that

collective decision-making results in inter-group conflict among the various categories of staff, this is to be compared with the minority of senior staff 40 (41.7%) junior staff 22 (20%) respectively who held the view that collective decision-making results in inter-group conflict among the various categories of staff to a little or to a very little extent. Further examination of the frequencies in Table 9 reveals that no senior member expressed the view that collective decision-making results in inter-group conflict among the various categories of staff to a large extent. Similarly, no junior staff expressed the view that collective decision-making results in inter-group conflict among the various categories of staff to a little extent. But the general picture is that majority totalling 160 (61.1%) support the idea that collective decision-making results in inter-group conflict among the various categories of staff. This suggests that even though collective decision making in itself is not bad, collective decisions may not work in all cases. This confirm Kreitner and Kinicki's (2004) assertion that the greater the number of people participating in decision making, the greater the potential for conflict.

With regard to interviews conducted, poor communication and gossip emerged as a major cause of conflict between Junior Staff and Senior Staff. On the factors that promote conflict between junior staff and senior member, salary disparities and inferiority complex among junior staff were identified as the

leading causes. On the side of senior staff and senior members “Pull him down spirit” among senior staff and “lack of proper job description” were mentioned as the key factors that lead to conflict among them.

By way of summary, all the seven issues relating to inter-group conflicts were found to be sources of inter-group conflicts but these are not occurring to the same extent between junior staff and senior staff, junior staff and senior members and senior staff and senior members respectively. However, for each of the issues of conflict investigated, the majority of the respondents clearly indicated that such issues lead to inter-group conflict and occur to a large extent or to a very large extent as compared to those who think that such issues contribute to inter-group conflict to a little or to a very large extent. Additionally, this study has revealed that the issue of limited resources and time pressure were viewed by the majority of senior members and senior staff as resulting in inter-group conflict to a little or to a very little extent. Next, the issue of overlapping tasks and collective decision-making were seen by the majority of the senior members as resulting in inter-group conflict to a little or to a very little extent. Another observation is that there was a split in decision among the junior staff on the issue of conflict of interest regarding the extent to which it results in inter-group conflict. Again, there was another split decision regarding the extent to which interdependence results in

inter-group conflict. Indeed, this trend of response was observed among the senior members, senior staff and junior staff.

Causes of Conflicts Among Various Schools in the Takoradi Polytechnic

Another dimension of inter-group conflict that the study considered hinges on the various schools in the Polytechnic. Table 10 reveals the staff responses on conflicts among various schools as a result of the following causes; limited resources, deficiencies in information flow, conflicting interest, overlapping tasks, interdependence, time pressure, collective decision making.

Table 10

Causes of Conflicts Among Various Schools in the Polytechnic

Causes	Respondents	Frequency/percentage Responses									
		Very large extent		Large extent		Little extent		Very little extent		Total	
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Limited resources	SM	8	(14.3)	32	(57.1)	16	(28.6)	0	(.0)	56	(100)
	SS	48	(50.0)	40	(41.7)	4	(4.0)	4	(4.2)	96	(100)
	JS	88	(80.0)	0	(.0)	0	(.0)	22	(20.0)	110	(100)
	Total	144	(55.0)	72	(27.5)	20	(7.6)	26	(9.9)	262	(100)
Deficiencies in information flow	SM	12	(21.4)	28	(50.0)	8	(14.3)	8	(14.3)	56	(100)
	SS	24	(25.0)	56	(58.3)	12	(12.5)	4	(4.2)	96	(100)
	JS	11	(10.0)	77	(70.0)	11	(10.0)	11	(10.0)	110	(100)
	Total	27	(17.9)	161	(61.5)	31	(11.8)	23	(8.8)	262	(100)
Conflicting interest	SM	20	(35.7)	12	(21.4)	4	(7.1)	20	(35.7)	56	(100)
	SS	20	(20.8)	44	(45.8)	28	(29.2)	4	(4.2)	96	(100)
	JS	22	(20.0)	44	(40.0)	33	(30.0)	11	(10.0)	110	(100)
	Total	62	(23.7)	100	(38.2)	65	(24.8)	35	(13.4)	262	(100)

Table 10 continued

Causes	Respondents	Number/percentage Responses									
		Very large extent		Large extent		Little extent		Very little extent		Total	
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Overlap-ping Tasks	SM	12	(21.4)	24	(42.9)	16	(28.6)	4	(7.1)	56	(100)
	SS	24	(25.0)	44	(45.8)	20	(20.8)	8	(8.3)	96	(100)
	JS	22	(20.0)	55	(50.0)	11	(10.0)	22	(20.0)	110	(100)
	Total	58	(22.1)	123	(46.9)	47	(17.9)	34	(13.0)	262	(100)
Interdependence	SM	8	(14.3)	16	(28.6)	8	(14.3)	24	(42.9)	56	(100)
	SS	12	(12.5)	24	(25.5)	40	(41.7)	20	(20.8)	96	(100)
	JS	11	(10.0)	22	(20.0)	0	(.0)	77	(70.0)	110	(100)
	Total	31	(11.8)	62	(23.7)	48	(18.3)	121	(46.2)	262	(100)
Time Pressure	SM	8	(14.3)	24	(42.9)	8	(14.3)	16	(28.6)	56	(100)
	SS	36	(37.5)	28	(29.2)	28	(29.2)	4	(4.2)	96	(100)
	JS	77	(70.0)	11	(10.0)	0	(.0)	22	(20.0)	110	(100)
	Total	121	(46.2)	63	(24.0)	36	(13.7)	42	(16.0)	262	(100)
Collective Decision-making	SM	12	(21.4)	20	(35.7)	16	(28.6)	8	(14.3)	56	(100)
	SS	24	(25.0)	40	(41.7)	32	(33.3)	0	(.0)	96	(100)
	JS	22	(20.0)	55	(50.0)	0	(.0)	33	(30.0)	110	(100)
	Total	58	(22.1)	115	(43.9)	48	(18.3)	41	(15.6)	262	(100)

Key: SM - senior members SS - senior staff JS - junior

Results from table 10 demonstrate clearly that the majority of the senior members totalling 32 (57.1%) attest to the fact that to a large extent limited resource is an issue that leads to conflict among various schools at the Polytechnic. None of the senior members agreed to the fact that limited resources to a very little extent contribute to conflict among various schools at the Polytechnic. In respect of the senior staff 48 (50.0%), attest to the fact that to a very large extent limited resources contribute to conflict among various schools at the Polytechnic with only 8 (8.4%) , agreeing to the fact that to a very little extent or to a little extent limited resources contributes to conflict among various schools at the Polytechnic. Turning to the junior staff side, as much as 88 (80%), attest to the fact that to a very large extent limited resource is an issue that leads to conflict among various schools at the Polytechnic with only 22 (20%) agreeing to the fact that it does so to a very little extent. None of them supported the idea that limited resources contributes to conflict among various schools at the Polytechnic to a large extent or little extent.

The study has revealed that the majority of the staff indicated that to a very large extent or to a large extent the suggestion that conflicts among various schools is as a result of limited resources is one of the sources of conflict. In particular, most junior staff 88 (80%) attested to this issue in comparison with the senior members and senior staff. In all, 144 (55%) of the respondents reported that they were of the opinion that to a very large extent or to a large extent, conflicts among various schools is attributable to limited resources in the system.

This is an indication of the need to ensure that adequate resources are to be provided and distributed fairly among staff of the various schools. According to Stoner (1978), if every unit in an institution has access to unlimited resources, the problem of how to share it would hardly arise. Nelson and Quick (2000) share the same view that limited resources are potential for conflict in institutions especially where these resources become scarce and need to be shared.

Next, the extent to which deficiencies in information flow results in conflict among the various schools was investigated. Table 10 reveals the staff responses on this issue. Critical study of the table shows that half of the number of the senior members investigated expressed the opinion that to large extent deficiencies in information flow contributes to conflict among the various schools with only 16 (28.6%) agreeing to the fact that to a very little extent or to a little extent deficiencies in information flow lead to conflict among the various schools in the Polytechnic. The interview data also confirmed the inefficiencies in information flow. This is exemplified by a comment by one senior member:

Even though the polytechnic is a tertiary institution and has structures for ensuring that staffs are informed about events that affect them, it appears these structures don't function. You'll be there and you'll hear about an event going on at times from people outside the Polytechnic when staffs have not been given prior information. To be honest such a situation creates tension and makes some of us feel not belonging' (An academic head).

The story is not different on the side of the senior staff and the junior staff. For instance, as many as 77 (70%) of the junior staff expressed the same view. Indeed, about 188 (79.4%) of the staff expressed this opinion. This suggests that information flow is a very important ingredient if cooperation and co-ordination of activities among the various schools are to be effective and efficient. Schnake (1987) writes that absence of information flow in institutions leads to suspicion; misconception and distrust which he stressed are typical promoters of conflict.

In response to the issue of conflicting interest as a cause of conflict among the various schools, the story is not different from the two previous responses given. Data in the table demonstrate that most respondents also view conflicting of interest resulting in conflicts among the various schools. For instance, in relative terms, majority 66 (66.6%) of the senior staff responded by saying that to a very large extent or to a large extent conflicting interest is a cause of conflicts among the various schools. In all, however, about 162 (62%) of respondents expressed this view. The Polytechnic is made up of working groups such as department, schools etc. It could be that these groups experience what is termed in management as 'we feeling' which binds group members together. According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2004), in-group thinking in institutions guarantee conflict since the desire to get along pushes aside critical thinking.

The next cause of conflict considered under the various schools was on overlapping task. Responses given depict that the majority of the respondents totalling 181(69%) of the respondents reported that overlapping task to a very

large extent or to a large extent leads to conflict among the various schools. A case in point from the table is that 68 (66.6%) of the senior staff has viewed this factor as a source of conflict. This finding support the explanation of Kreitner (1998) that the term role ambiguity as overlapping jurisdiction leads to unclear job boundaries which often create competition for resources and control. For the majority of the respondents to believe that overlapping tasks contribute to conflict among the schools suggest the need to ensure that tasks sharing should be a concerted effort and not based on the individual schools.

With regard to the issue of interdependence, the responses took a different dimension as depicted in the table. As many as 169 (64.5%) of the respondents with most of them being junior staff 77 (70%) think that conflict among the various schools as a result of interdependence can be described as to a very little or little extent. This suggests how useful respondents perceive the issue of interdependence in minimizing conflict among the various schools. It could also be that the schools are autonomous; hence they operate independently creating little room for conflict.

Another issue that this study looked at as a possible source of conflict among the various schools was time pressure. Results of the findings on this issue suggest that most respondent 184 (70.2%) perceived time pressure to be a cause of conflict with the majority of the respondents being the junior staff 88 (80%) who perceived time pressure as resulting in conflict among the various schools. This is an indication of the need for effective and efficient time

management practices to be considered if time pressure is to be reduced. Also, for the majority of respondents to reason that time pressure results in conflicts among the schools suggests the need for the authorities to regularly remind staff on the importance of time management.

The last issue on the causes of conflict among various schools had to do with collective decision-making. The story here is that majority of the respondents think that collective decision-making to a very large extent or to a large extent is also responsible for conflicts among the various schools. Indeed, most of the junior staff 77 (70%) in comparison with the senior members and the senior staff are aligned to the view that collective decision-making to a very large extent or to a large extent is also responsible for conflicts among the various schools. This suggests that even though collective decision making in itself is not bad, collective decisions may not work in all cases. This confirms Kreitner and Kinicki's (2004) assertion that, the greater the number of people participating in decision making, the greater the potential for conflict.

The result from interview sessions reveal that improper allocation of resources especially money, discrimination and favouritism by management were the causes of departmental and school conflict. The interview sessions sought to find out the extent to which conflict occur among various groups of staff, departments and schools. The result indicated that with the exception of conflict between junior staff and senior staff where the extent of it is to some extent. The extent to which conflict occur among junior staff and senior members, senior staff

and senior members, various departments and schools can be said to occur to a little or very little extent. This can be a sign of peaceful co-existence and good development, yet, conflict by nature starts from petty conflict to very serious one. However, the extent of occurrence plays a very important role in the determination of what strategies to adopt in managing a particular kind of conflict.

Another area that the interview gathered information on was the extent to which conflicts are encountered with regard to motivation and incentives to staff issues such as allowances, staff development, staff accommodation, annual leave and staff promotion were ascertained. The result revealed that conflict is encountered with regard to staff allowances and staff accommodation to a very large extent while conflict is encountered with regard to staff development, annual leave and staff promoting to some extent, very little extent and little extent respectively. Commonly held view among the senior members who were interviewed may, perhaps, be summed up in the words of one of them as follows:

As for this polytechnic, rules governing the allocation of accommodation are not observed. You can be in the polytechnic for fifteen years but some one comes in for just three years and before you are aware, he has been allocated a bungalow. This practice brings about conflict (An Assistant Registrar).

The views of senior members on the causes of conflict in general in the interview were no different from the causes enumerated above. Results from the interview indicated that “fighting for positions and favours” and “non- payment or delay in allowances were the highest causes of conflict in the institution. The other causes mentioned included; role conflict, problems with job placement, lack of motivation, lack of cooperation, lack of coordination, poor communication structure among staff, cultural and religious differences and use of lecture halls. It can be realized that most of the causes indicate by the selected senior members are not different from what were gathered under the questionnaire.

Effects of Conflicts on Staff Performance in Takoradi Polytechnic

Research question three states: “How do conflicts affect staff performance in the Polytechnic?” The objective of this research question was of two folds; first to examine the positive effects on staff performance and second to examine the negative effects of conflicts on staff performance. To this end, a list of both possible positive and negative effects were included in the study questionnaire to ascertain respondents perceived effects of conflict on staff performance. This means that multiple responses were allowed. Therefore, analysis and discussions are based on the responses provided by each group responding and not the respondents. Table 11 presents the positive effects of conflicts on staff performance by respondents.

Table 11

Positive Effects of Conflicts on Staff Performance

Positive Effects	Senior members		Senior Staff		Junior Staff		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	High performance among staff	4	4.2	24	10.2	22	28.6	50
High student achievement	0	.0	16	6.8	22	28.6	38	9.3
Encouragement of positive change and innovation in the polytechnic	24	25.0	52	22.0	11	14.3	87	21.3
Increased participation in decision-making in the polytechnic	12	12.5	32	13.6	0	.0	44	10.8
Encourages regularity and punctuality of staff attendance to work	28	29.2	48	20.3	11	14.3	87	21.3
Emergence of new communication methods in the polytechnic	20	20.8	24	10.2	0	.0	44	10.8
Promote conducive atmosphere in the polytechnic	8	8.3	40	16.9	11	14.3	59	14.4
Total	96	100	236	100.0	77	100.0	409	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

Inspection of Table 11 reveals that a total of 409 responses were reported in respect of positive effects of conflict on staff performance, and of these 96 of the responses were reported by senior members, 236 responses came from senior staff side, and 77 responses were mentioned by the junior staff. Still on Table11, it is also very clear that of the 96 responses reported by the senior members there was more frequent mention of “Encourages regularity and punctuality of staff attendance to work” 28 (29.2%) with “High performance among staff” 4 (4.2%) being the least mention positive effect of conflict on staff performance. From the senior staff side, of the 236 responses, “Encouragement of positive change and innovation in the polytechnic” 52 (22%) was more frequently reported compared to the rest of the positive effects of conflict on staff performance. The least reported positive effect of conflict on staff performance among the senior staff was “High student achievement”16 (6.8%).

From the junior staff side, it can be seen that two different positive effects of conflicts on staff performance given most were “High performance among staff” 22 (28.6%) and “High student achievement” 22 (28.6%), compared to the rest of the positive effects, while the least reported positive effect were “Encourages regularity and punctuality of staff attendance to work” 11 (14.3%). These observations aside, it is also worthy to note that no senior member mentioned “High student achievement”, and no junior staff mentioned “Increased participation in decision-making in the polytechnic”, as well as “Emergence of

new communication methods in the polytechnic” as positive effects of conflict on staff performance.

This is to be contrasted with the senior staff that recognized all the seven positive effects of conflicts on staff performance. Therefore, not all the positive effects of conflicts are associated with staff performance at least from the perspective of senior members and junior staff. Furthermore, of the 409 responses reported by the respondents, a greater number was linked to two positive effects including “Encouragement of positive change and innovation in the polytechnic” 87 (21.3%) and “Encourages regularity and punctuality of staff attendance to work” 87 (21.3%) while the least number 38 (9.3%) of the overall responses was associated with “High student achievement”. The rest of the responses ranging between 50 and 59 were related to “High performance among staff”, “Increased participation in decision-making in the polytechnic”, “Emergence of new communication methods in the polytechnic”, and “Promote conducive atmosphere in the Polytechnic”. Table 11 further suggests that the respondents have a clear perception of the positive effects of conflict on staff performance in that order. This high perception reflects the extent to which some issues were rated by respondents as influencing conflict.

Results from the interview sessions reveal the following as the positive effect of conflict:

1. It helps to identify problems and find solutions.
2. It helps to promote equal rights among staff,

3. It helps the institution to develop,
4. Conflict enables the institution to identify its weaknesses and tries to correct them,
5. Conflict helps to improve performances
6. Conflict helps to share resources equally

Comments such as the following illustrate how the interviewees saw the positive side of conflicts:

‘Ah, we cannot do away with conflicts ... it’s part of social activity. Without conflicts we cannot learn from our mistakes. As for me, conflicts should be allowed in the polytechnic’ (one of the registrars).

‘Actually, when there is conflict, I initially get disturbed. But later when I think about it well, I’m able to identify my fault and it helps me to take steps to make amends. Without the conflict, I’ll have thought I was perfect but the conflict helped me to know my shortcoming so at times conflict is good’ (a male head).

The findings confirm the explanations given by Mensah and Effah (2000), Huczynski and Buchanan (2001) and Robbins (1997) about the functionality or positive impact of conflict on the organizations as well as the individuals in the organizations. According to them, conflict if handled well brings about among other benefits innovations, unity among employees and development of new ideas.

The second aspect of research question two sought to examine the negative effects of conflicts on staff performance. From a list of nine negative

effects included in the questionnaire, a total of 1074 responses were reported by the respondents. Again, multiple responses were allowed and therefore the analysis is based on the responses and not the respondents. Table 12 presents the negative effects of conflicts on staff performance by respondents.

Table 12

Negative Effects of Conflicts on Staff Performance

Negative Effects	Senior members		Senior Staff		Junior Staff		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Poor performance of work	24	12.2	68	14.8	77	18.4	169
Low job satisfaction	24	12.2	84	18.3	66	15.8	174	16.2
Loss of interest in their job	16	8.2	44	9.6	55	13.2	115	10.7
Indifference/Apathy	36	18.4	52	11.3	33	7.9	121	11.3
Low commitment level	36	18.4	68	14.8	33	7.9	137	12.8
Unnecessary tension	24	12.2	44	9.6	66	15.8	134	12.5
Suspicion	28	14.3	52	11.3	55	13.2	135	12.6
Blackmailing	8	4.1	48	10.4	33	7.9	89	8.3
Total	196	100.0	460	100.0	418	100.0	1074	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2008

From Table 12, it is clear that a total of 196, 460, and 418 responses were reported by senior members, senior staff, and junior staff respectively. Among the senior members there was more frequent mention of “Indifference/apathy” 36 (18.4%) and “Low commitment level” 36 (18.4%), while the least mentioned negative effect of conflict on staff performance was “Blackmailing” 8 (4.1%). As for the senior staff, there was more frequent mention of “Low job satisfaction” 84 (18.3%) with the least reported negative effects being “Loss of interest in their job” 44 (9.6%), and “Unnecessary tension” 44 (9.6%). In respect of responses from the junior staff side, there was more frequent mention of “Poor performance of work among staff of the polytechnic” 77 (18.4%), while the least reported were; “Indifference/Apathy” 33 (7.9%), “Low commitment level” 33 (7.9%), “Blackmailing” 33 (7.9%). The highest number of the overall responses was in respect of “Low job satisfaction” 174 (16.2) with the least overall responses being associated with “Blackmailing” 89 (8.3).

Report from the interviews conducted with selected senior members indicated the following as the negative effect of conflict:

1. Tension among staff members,
2. Retrogression in development,
3. Lack of interest in work
4. Late submission of examination results.

When asked what negative effects of these conflicts have been experienced by the polytechnic, the following responses were given:

1. “poor attendance at meetings”
2. “In fighting among departments and schools”
3. Insubordination and high labour turnover

In sum, this study has revealed that conflict has both positive and negative effects on staff performance and institutional development in general. The findings are in support of Huczynski and Buchanan (2001), Robbins (1997) and Nelson and Quick (2000) assertion that conflicts that are not handled well impact negatively on the organizations as well as its members. According to them, dysfunctional conflict takes employees focus from work to be done and places it on the parties involved in the conflict. It breeds discontent, dissolves common ties, brings about fear and stress and eventually leads to destruction of groups.

The positive effects suggest that through conflict there can be not only improvement in staff performance, but also there would be peaceful co-existence and positive development, while the negative effects suggest that conflict is a catalyst to finding solutions to the weaknesses inherent in the system. Indeed, the negative effects as reported by the senior members also point to the fact that conflict if managed well would lead to a holistic approach to solving problems of the staff and the institution as a whole.

Conflict Handling Structures in the Polytechnic

The fourth research question explores how conflicts are handled by staff of the Takoradi polytechnic. The objective of this research question was to explore structures through which conflict among staff of the polytechnic are managed effectively. In exploring this research question, a list of 15 statements relating to conflict handling structures was included in the survey questionnaire, on a five point likert scale with 1 being “Rarely” and 5 as “Always”, respondents were to respond by indicating how often they rely on each of the conflict handling approaches. For ease of analysis, response categories 3, 4 and 5 representing “often”, “very often” and “always” on the five point likert scale were collapsed into one response category and labelled “often”, while the 15 conflict handling structures were grouped into five broad areas of primary conflict management approaches. These broad classifications are: competition, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise with each broad area consisting of three components. Tables 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 present analysis of each classification:

Table 13 present the results of the respondents on competition as a conflict handling approach.

Table 13

Competition as a Conflict Handling Approach

Statement	Respondents	Responses						Total	
		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		N	%
		N	%	N	%	N	%		
Arguing case with co-workers	SM	12	21.4	16	28.6	29	50.0	57	100.0
	SS	8	8.3	44	45.8	44	45.8	96	100.0
	JS	11	10.0	65	60.0	33	30.0	109	100.0
	Total	31	11.8	125	48.1	106	40.1	262	100.0
I'm Firm in pursuing issues	SM	4	7.1	20	35.7	33	57.1	57	100.0
	SS	0	0.0	12	12.5	84	87.5	96	100.0
	JS	22	20.0	55	50.0	33	30.0	109	100.0
	Total	26	9.9	87	33.2	150	56.9	262	100.0
I hold on to my solution to a problem	SM	8	14.3	24	42.9	24	42.9	57	100.0
	SS	16	16.7	28	29.2	52	54.2	96	100.0
	JS	11	10.0	65	60.0	33	30.0	109	100.0
	Total	35	13.4	117	45.0	109	41.6	262	100.0

Key:SM-senior members SS-senior staff JS-junior staff

The first three statements relate to competition as a conflict handling approach and how often respondents rely on such statements in managing conflicts in the Polytechnic. The three statements are: "I argue my case with my

co-workers to show the merits of my position”, “I am firm in pursuing my side of the issue”, and “I hold on to my solution to a problem”.

The result indicates that majority of respondents 125 (48.1%) reported that they sometimes rely on the first statement that is arguing their case with their co-workers to show the merits of their position. In particular, the majority of junior staff 65 (60%) reported relying on this competitive conflict approach. This is to be compared with about 44 (45.8%) of the senior staff and 16 (28.6%) of the senior members who also rely on such conflict handling approach. To promote competitiveness among polytechnic staff as a way of handling conflict, the Polytechnic has in place structures such as committees and statutory meetings which create platform for deans and others to exchange arguments as a way of clarifying issues and solving conflicts. Besides, available structures which provide avenues for inter- departmental games, student performance awards and others tend to reduce conflicts indirectly through healthy competition.

Table 14 presents three statements relating to collaboration as a conflict handling approach and how often respondents rely on such statements in managing conflicts in the Polytechnic. The three statements include: “I negotiate with my co-workers so that a compromise can be reached”, “I exchange accurate information with my co-workers to solve a problem together”, and “I try to bring

all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way”.

Table14

Collaboration as a Conflict Handling Approach

Statement	Respondents	Responses						Total	
		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		N	%
		N	%	N	%	N	%		
Negotiate with my co-workers	SM	4	7.1	12	21.4	41	71.4	57	100.0
	SS	12	12.5	16	16.7	68	70.8	96	100.0
	JS	0	0.0	11	10.0	98	90.0	109	100.0
	Total	17	6.1	39	14.9	217	79.0	262	100.0
Exchange accurate info with co-workers	SM	4	7.1	8	14.3	45	78.6	57	100.0
	SS	6	6.3	6	6.3	84	87.5	96	100.0
	JS	22	20.0	21	20.0	76	70.0	109	100.0
	Total	32	5.7	36	17.6	194	76.7	262	100.0
Try to bring all concerns out	SM	8	14.3	12	21.4	37	64.3	57	100.0
	SS	0	0.0	36	37.5	60	62.5	96	100.0
	JS	21	20.0	22	20.0	65	60.0	109	100.0
	Total	30	11.5	70	26.7	162	61.8	262	100.0

In respect of the three collaborative conflicts handling approaches in Table 14, majority of respondents reported that they often rely on these collaborative conflict approaches to manage conflicts in their institutions. For instance 217 (79%) of the respondents makes use of statement: “I negotiate with my co-workers so that a compromise can be reached” with the majority being junior staff 98 (90%), followed by senior members 41 (71.4%) and senior staff 68 (70.8%) in that order.

Next, statement, “I exchange accurate information with my co-workers to solve a problem together” also had the highest proportion or percentage of respondents 194 (76.7%) who often rely on it as a collaborative conflict management approach with majority this time being the senior staff 84 (87.5%) when compared to 45 (78.6%) of the senior members and 76 (70%) of the junior staff who also often rely on this approach. With regard to statement, “I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way” it can be seen that again majority of the respondents 162 (61.8%) employ it as a collaborative approach to manage conflicts in their institution. Indeed majority of senior members 37 (64.3%), followed by majority of senior staff 60 (62.5%) and junior staff 65 (60%) respectively often rely on statement “I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way” to handle conflict collaboratively. By way of summary, of the three collaborative conflict approaches, “I negotiate with my co-workers so

that a compromise can be reached” is more often relied on by the staff of the Polytechnic to manage conflict collaboratively.

The next broad area of conflict handling approach that was investigated is avoidance. Table 15 shows three statements associated with avoidance as a conflict handling approach and how often respondents rely on these statements in managing conflicts in the Polytechnic. The three statements include: “I try to satisfy the expectations of my co-workers”; “I attempt to avoid being put on the spot and try to keep my conflict with my co-workers to myself”; “I avoid open discussion of my differences with my co-workers”

Table 15

Avoidance as a Conflict Handling Approach

Statement	Respondents	Responses						Total	
		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		N	%
		N	%	N	%	N	%		
Satisfy	SM	12	21.4	16	28.6	29	50.0	57	100.0
expectation of	SS	8	8.3	44	45.8	44	45.8	96	100.0
my co-workers	JS	11	10.0	65	60.0	33	30.0	109	100.0
	Total	31	11.8	126	48.1	105	40.1	262	100.0

Table 15 Continued

Keeping conflict	SM	12	21.4	20	35.7	25	44.0	57	100.0
to myself	SS	24	25.0	43	45.0	29	30.0	96	100.0
	JS	44	44.0	33	30.0	32	29.0	109	100.0
	Total	80	26.3	96	42.7	86	30.9	262	100.0
Avoid open	SM	12	21.4	8	14.3	37	64.3	57	100.0
discussion.	SS	20	20.8	52	54.2	24	25.0	96	100.0
	JS	11	10.0	44	40.0	55	50.0	109	100.0
	Total	43	16.4	104	39.7	115	43.9	262	100.0

As regard avoidance as a conflict handling approach, majority of respondents reported that they sometimes rely on statement “I try to satisfy the expectations of my co-workers’ 126 (48.1%) and statement “I attempt to avoid being put on the spot and try to keep my conflict with my co-workers to myself” 96 (42.7%) respectively. In the case of statement “I try to satisfy the expectations of my co-workers’ majority of junior staff 65 (60%) and that of the senior staff 44 (48.5%) claimed they sometimes use this approach to manage or avoid conflict in their institution. This is to be compared with 16 (28.6%) of the senior members who also adapt the same approach in managing conflict in their institution. On the statement “I attempt to avoid being put on the spot and try to keep my conflict with my co-workers to myself’ it is majority of senior staff 43 (45%) and senior members 20 (35.7%) who use it as a conflict handling approach, while about 33

(30%) of the junior staff would rely on this conflict handling approach to resolve conflict in their institution. Next, for statement, “I avoid open discussion of my differences with my co-workers” about 104 (44%) of the respondents indicated that they often rely on this conflict approach with majority of the senior members 37 (64.3%) and junior staff 55 (50%) relying on this conflict handling approach to manage conflicts. This is to be compared with 24 (25%) of the senior staff who often rely on the same conflict management approach.

Table 16 present three statements associated with accommodation as a conflict handling approach and how often respondents rely on these statements in managing conflicts in the Polytechnic. The three statements include: “I try to investigate an issue with my co-workers to find a solution acceptable to us”; “I accommodate the wishes of my co-workers”; and “I propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks”.

Table 16

Accommodation as a Conflict Handling Approach

Statement	Respondents	Responses						Total	
		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		N	%
		N	%	N	%	N	%		
Try to investigate an issue with co- workers.	SM	4	7.1	20	35.7	33	57.1	57	100.0
	SS	0	0.0	12	12.5	84	87.5	96	100.0
	JS	22	20.0	56	50.0	33	30.0	109	100.0
	Total	26	9.9	87	33.2	149	56.9	262	100.0
Accommodate the wishes of my co-workers	SM	8	14.3	12	21.4	37	64.3	57	100.0
	SS	8	8.3	32	33.3	56	58.3	96	100.0
	JS	11	10.0	76	70.0	22	20.0	109	100.0
	Total	27	10.3	120	46.2	114	43.5	262	100.0
Propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks	SM	25	4.4	7	12.0	25	44.0	57	100.0
	SS	29	30.0	29	30.0	38	40.0	96	100.0
	JS	33	30.0	55	48.0	24	22.0	109	100.0
	Total	87	4.6	91	27.5	84	67.9	262	100.0

It can be observed from Table 16 that most respondents about 150 (57%) often rely on trying to investigate an issue with their co-workers to find a solution acceptable to all. Also, about 120 (46%) of respondents being the majority reported that they sometimes rely on accommodating the wishes of their co-

workers, while most respondents 84 (68%) often rely on proposing a middle ground for breaking deadlocks in managing conflicts in their Institution. In particular, most senior staff 84 (87.5%) often relies on trying to investigate an issue with their co-workers to find a solution acceptable to all as compared to senior members and junior staff. Secondly, majority of junior staff 76 (70%) reported that they sometimes rely on accommodating the wishes of their co-workers in comparison with senior members and senior staff, while in the third instance; most senior staff (75%) often employs proposing a middle ground for breaking deadlocks when compared with senior members and junior staff.

Table 17 shows three statements relating to compromise as a conflict handling approach and how often respondents rely on these statements in managing conflicts in the Polytechnic. The three statements include: “I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made”; I go along with suggestions for my co-workers’; and “I try to keep my disagreements with my co-workers to myself in order to avoid hard feelings”.

Table 17

Compromise as a Conflict Handling Approach

Statement	Respondents	Responses						Total	
		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		N	%
		N	%	N	%	N	%		
Using give and take to reach compromise.	SM	12	21.4	24	42.9	20	35.7	57	100.0
	SS	36	37.5	36	37.5	24	25.0	96	100.0
	JS	0	0.0	65	60.0	44	40.0	109	100.0
	Total	48	18.3	126	48.1	88	33.6	262	100.0
I go along with suggestions	SM	4	7.1	12	21.4	41	71.4	57	100.0
	SS	4	4.2	44	45.8	48	50.0	96	100.0
	JS	0	0.0	54	49.5	56	50.0	109	100.0
	Total	8	3.1	111	42.4	143	54.6	262	100.0
Try to keep my disagreements	SM	4	7.1	12	20.8	41	72.0	57	100.0
	SS	25	26.0	34	35.0	37	39.0	96	100.0
	JS	44	40.0	38	35.0	27	25.0	109	100.0
	Total	73	28.0	84	32.0	105	37.0	262	100.0

Table 17 shows that most respondent (48%) often employ the "give and take" so that a compromise can be made". This was reported by the majority of senior members (42.9%) when compared with senior and junior staff. Next, it can

be seen that about (55%) of respondents indicated that they often go along with suggestions of their co-workers' and this was more pronounced by most of the senior members in comparison with senior and junior staff. Furthermore, the table suggests that about (54%) of the respondents who form the majority indicated that they rely on trying to keep their disagreements with their co-workers to themselves in order to avoid hard feelings" with most of the junior staff reporting that they make use of this approach to manage conflict.

Respondents were asked about the possible ways by which conflict could be managed. Some of the suggestions given were proper flow of information, respecting each others views, negotiations and compromise. All these possible ways reflect the various conflict management strategies including conflict prevention and conflict resolution strategies that are necessary for peaceful co-existence in every institution including Takoradi Polytechnics.

The interview with senior members of the polytechnic also sought their opinion on the assessment of the existing mechanisms used in managing conflict among staff of the polytechnic. Majority of the respondents rated it as satisfactory while others said it was working to some extent. Respondents were asked to suggest ways to improve the mechanisms that can be used to manage conflict well. The suggestions they gave among other things were; the use of disciplinary committees and meetings to discuss conflict and build bridges, guidance and counselling units, organisation of seminars to educate staff on the consequences of such conflicts, as well as, enforcement of rules and regulations of the school.

Suggestions toward Improving Effective use of Conflict Management Practices

With regard to suggestions toward improving conflict management practices in the Polytechnic, these were suggestions given:

1. There should be free flow of information including respect for everybody's views.
2. The school statute must be followed.
3. Appropriate committees should be set to deal with various levels of conflict
4. Representatives of council meetings should always, meet their staff members to brief them;
5. All should be seen to be working towards mutual co-existence

These suggestions were expected since they correspond to what pertains to most situations in many institutions similar to Takoradi Polytechnic and therefore can be described as realistic, practicable or workable given the types of conflict, causes and frequency of occurrence.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter comprises three main sections. The first section provides a summary of the study while the second section dwells on conclusions drawn from the study. The third section makes recommendations to be considered by the staff of Takoradi Polytechnic to enhance their conflict management practices.

Summary of the Study

Educational institutions are established and mandated among other objectives to train and equip people to cater for the manpower needs of a country. These objectives cannot be achieved in isolation; people will have to team-up to work in harmony to bring those objectives into fruition. It is the process of interacting and teaming-up to work towards institutional goal that conflict emerges.

Conflict is inevitable in institutions as people compete for jobs, resources, power, acknowledgement and security among others. As long as there is a human element present, conflict is certain. Hence, workplace conflicts need not to be ignored; it has to be addressed since unaddressed conflicts will fester and get worse. It is therefore imperative for management and individuals in an institution to be equipped with skills and knowledge on how to manage conflict as competently as possible when the inevitable conflict surfaces. The way conflict is handled would reflect the nature of the conflict, that is, either it become beneficial

or destructive. It is with this vision that the study seeks to explore the conflict situations among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic and probe further into the conflict management practices they employ to manage conflict.

Summary of Research Process

The study which was descriptive in nature focused on staff-related conflict management practices in Takoradi Polytechnic. It was guided by five main research questions. The research questions sought information on the nature of staff related conflicts in Takoradi Polytechnic; factors that lead to staff conflicts, how conflicts affect performance in the Polytechnic; structures available for managing staff-related conflicts and ways of enhancing the management of staff-related conflicts in the Polytechnic. The research participants were selected from various groups of staff at the Polytechnic. These were senior members, senior staff and junior staff. Instruments used for the collection of data were questionnaire and interview guide and the instruments were pilot-tested at Cape Coast Polytechnic. The data was analyzed using the statistical package for service solutions version 15.0.

Summary of Key Findings

The following were the key findings of the study:

1. The causes of conflict in Takoradi Polytechnic could be grouped into three broad areas namely intra-personal, interpersonal and inter-group.

2. Under the intra-personal conflict, conflicts emerged when a staff member was faced with the challenge of making a choice among a set of options that had good or bad outcomes. Issues related to unclear roles related to their job also created intra-personal conflicts.
3. The promoters of inter-personal conflict in Takoradi Polytechnic are: competing for limited resources, recognition, power struggle, differences in behaviour, and differences in perception among individual staff.
4. Issues such as limited resources, deficiencies in information flow, conflicting interest, overlapping tasks, time pressure and collective decision making led to inter-group conflict in Takoradi Polytechnic.
5. The positive effects of conflict on staff performance in Takoradi Polytechnic include encouragement of positive change and innovation in the polytechnic as well as regularity and punctuality of staff attendance to work.
6. Staff of Takoradi Polytechnic perceived apathy, low commitment level, low job satisfaction, loss of interest and poor performance of work as negative effects of conflict on staff performance.
7. Takoradi Polytechnic encounters conflicts in relation to motivational issues such as allowances, staff development staff accommodation and annual leave. These conflict contexts cut across intrapersonal; inter-personal and intergroup conflict perspectives.

8. Takoradi Polytechnic is aware of and uses the various primary conflict management approaches, which include competition, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation and compromise.
9. In addition to the use of primary conflict management approaches in handling conflict among staff at the Polytechnic, management makes use of disciplinary committee, meetings to resolve conflicts to build bridges, guidance and counselling units, organizing seminars and enforcement of rules and regulation of the institutions as well as inter-departmental games as other approaches of handling conflict among staff.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, a number of conclusions can be drawn. Conflict at all levels exists among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic. These are intra-personal, inter-personal and inter-group. The various causes of these levels of conflict have been established. Conflicts among staff of Takoradi Polytechnic impact positively and negatively on staff performance as well as the overall objective of the polytechnic. Staffs employ the primary conflict management approach in handling conflict among them. However, there are significant differences in the use of those approaches by individuals and among the various groups of staff at the polytechnic.

As indicated earlier, conflict is inevitable in all human institution; successful organizations encourage mild forms of conflict without having it

escalate into an emotional battle between employees or corporate divisions. The secret is to keep conflict task related and to prevent it from escalating to a socio-emotional state. When conflict is task related, the parties view the conflict experience as something separate from them. This conflict is potentially healthy and valuable because it makes people rethink their perspectives of reality. As long as the conflict remains focused on issues, new ideas may emerge and the conflict remains controlled. It is therefore paramount for individual as well as management to apply the most effective conflict management style to minimize the dysfunctional aspect of conflict and maximize the functional aspect for the growth and development of both parties involved and the organization as a whole.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Management of Takoradi Polytechnic should educate the staff that due to differences in cultural orientations, educational background, social status, age and other such considerations, there are bound to be misunderstandings and disagreements at the work place. Such situations should be taken in good faith and dealt with, for peaceful co-existence and healthy organizational climate.
2. Management of Takoradi Polytechnic should as a matter of urgency search for other avenues to generate funds to beef up

infrastructural and logistical resources of the polytechnic. Part time lectures, 'sandwich' programmes, renting of facilities during recess; fairs and exhibitions could be considered. These will help address some of the challenges that lead to intra-personal and group conflicts among staff.

3. Management should also spell out clearly, the Polytechnic rules and regulations in their constitution regarding promotions and elections of people to hold key positions in the institution.
4. Favourable atmosphere must be created by management where all the staff of Takoradi Polytechnic will have the opportunity to unearth their potentials and compete with one another in order to realize their ambitions.
5. Management of Takoradi Polytechnic must ensure that schools and departments objectives are harnessed to the best interest of the Polytechnic.

Management of Takoradi Polytechnic should ensure equitable distribution of scarce resources to all the schools and departments.

6. The human resource department should organize seminars periodically on topics that will increase the confidence level of the staff of Takoradi Polytechnic especially the junior staff. This will help them to believe in themselves and inspire them to learn to attain higher positions in future.

7. Dysfunctional conflicts at the Polytechnic must be kept at a minimal level management. This could be achieved by designing schemes such as emphasizing subordinate goals, reducing task differentiation and interdependence and clarifying rules and procedures as noted earlier in the literature.
8. Complains and suggestions of the staff should be addressed at council meetings and feedback given to them through their representatives. This will promote we feeling” in the organization.
9. Favouritism should be done away with; management should deal fairly with its entire staff irrespective of their positions in the organization.
10. Management must periodically review the various communication channels and modify them where necessary. Appropriate committees should be set to deal with various levels of conflict.

The above recommendations when adopted could in no small way help Takoradi Polytechnic achieve the best in terms of staff-related conflict management practices.

Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher proposes the following areas for future researchers who are interested in researching conflicts in tertiary education institutions:

1. Conflict management practices among management staff and student unions.

2. Conflicts emanating from the use of one resource/facility by many staff and mechanism employed as intervention.
3. Conflicts emanating from ethnicity and mechanism employed as intervention.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire on Conflict Management Practices for Staff in Takoradi

Polytechnic

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am conducting a research on “Conflict Management Practices in institutions. The research is for the purpose of writing a thesis as part of the requirement for the award of M.Phil in Administration in Higher Education. I would appreciate if you could provide candid responses to the items in the questionnaire. Confidentiality in respect of whatever information you give is fully assured.

Thanks for your cooperation

Personal Data on Respondent

Please respond by ticking the appropriate box or provide information.

1. Sex: Male [] Female []
2. Category of staff: Teaching [] Non-Teaching []
3. Department/Section/Unit. Please indicate:.....
4. Highest qualification attained:
SSSCE [] ‘O’ Level [] ‘A’ Level []
Specialist [] Diploma [] B.A/B.Ed []
M.A/M.Ed/M.Sc. [] M.Phil [] Ph.D []
Others, please specify:.....
5. How long have you worked in this institution?
1 to 5 years [] 6 to 10years [] 11 to 15years []

16 to 20years [] 21years and above []

Causes of Intrapersonal Conflicts

6. Which of the following factors can you identify as some of the causes of conflict within you as an individual member of staff in your polytechnic?

Please tick as many as are applicable.

- a. When you have to make a choice between equally good alternatives []
- b. When you have to make a choice between two equally bad alternatives []
- c. When you have to make a choice among a set of options that have good and bad outcomes. []
- d. When you are not quite clear about your role as a staff of the polytechnic []
- e. When you have different expectations about your job (not clear as to which set of expectations to follow). []
- f. Others, please specify:

Causes of Interpersonal Conflicts

7. Which of the following factors do you think promote interpersonal conflict (conflict between two or more individuals) among staff in your institution?

Please tick as many as are applicable.

- a. Differences in behaviour among individual staff in your institution []
- b. Relationship between superior and subordinate such as heads of department and lecturers under them. []

- c. Power struggle such as individual struggling for positions in the institution []
- d. Competing for limited resources or recognition []
- e. Gossiping []
- f. Differences in perception []
- g. Feeling of superiority of some staff members []
- h. Others, please specify

Causes of Intergroup Conflicts

8. To what extent does each of the following issues result in conflict between junior staff and senior staff? Please tick the appropriate box.

Issues		Very large extent	Large extent	Little extent	Very little extent
I	Limited resources				
Ii	Deficiencies in information flow				
iii	Conflicting interests				
iv	Overlapping tasks				
V	Interdependence				
vi	Time pressure				
vii	Collective decision-making				

9. To what extent does each of the following issues result in conflict between junior staff and senior members? Please tick the appropriate box.

Issues		Very large extent	Large extent	Little extent	Very little extent
I	Limited resources				
Ii	Deficiencies in information flow				
iii	Conflicting interests				
iv	Overlapping tasks				
V	Interdependence				
vi	Time pressure				
vii	Collective decision-making				

10. To what extent does each of the following issues result in conflict between senior staff and senior members? Please tick the appropriate box.

Issues		Very large extent	Large extent	Little extent	Very little extent
I	Limited resources				
Ii	Deficiencies in information flow				
iii	Conflicting interests				
iv	Overlapping tasks				
V	Interdependence				
vi	Time pressure				
vii	Collective decision-making				

Issues		Very large extent	Large extent	Little extent	Very little extent
i	Limited resources				
ii	Deficiencies in information flow				
iii	Conflicting interests				
iv	Overlapping tasks				
v	Interdependence				
vi	Time pressure				
vii	Collective decision-making				

11. To what extent does each of the following issues result in conflict among various departments in the Polytechnic? Please tick the appropriate box.

12. To what extent does each of the following issues result in conflict among various schools in the Polytechnic? Please tick the appropriate box.

Issues		Very large extent	Large extent	Little extent	Very little extent
I	Limited resources				
Ii	Deficiencies in information flow				
iii	Conflicting interests				
iv	Overlapping tasks				
V	Interdependence				
vi	Time pressure				
vii	Collective decision-making				

Effects of Conflicts on staff performance in your institution

13. To what extent does each of the following issues result in conflict between senior staff and senior members? Please tick the appropriate box.

- a. High performance among staff []
- b. High student achievement []
- c. Encouragement of positive change and innovation in the polytechnic []
- d. Increased participation in decision-making in the polytechnic []
- e. Encourages regularity and punctuality of staff attendance to work []
- f. Emergence of new communication methods in the polytechnic []
- g. Promote conducive atmosphere in the polytechnic []
- h. Experience of emotional and physical stress by individual staff members of the polytechnic []
- i. Poor performance of work among staff of the polytechnic []
- j. Low job satisfaction []
- k. Loss of interest in their job []
- l. Indifference/Apathy []
- m. Low commitment level []
- n. Unnecessary tension []
- o. Suspicion []
- p. Blackmailing []
- q. Others, please specify:

Conflict Handling Approaches in the Polytechnic

Please indicate how often you rely on each of the following conflict handling approaches by circling the number that you consider most appropriate.

No	Conflict-handling Approach	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
15	I argue my case with my co-workers to show the merits of my position.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I negotiate with my co-workers so that a compromise can be reached.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I try to satisfy the expectations of my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I try to investigate an issue with my co-workers to find a solution acceptable to us.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I am firm in pursuing my side of the issue.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I attempt to avoid being “put on the spot” and try to keep my conflict with my co-workers to myself.	1	2	3	4	5
21	I hold on to my solution to a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I use “give and take” so that a compromise can be made.	1	2	3	4	5
23	I exchange accurate information with my co-workers to solve a problem together.	1	2	3	4	5
24	I avoid open discussion of my differences with my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5

Table Continued

25	I accommodate the wishes of my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.	1	2	3	4	5
27	I propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.	1	2	3	4	5
28	I go along with suggestions of my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
29	I try to keep my disagreements with my co-workers to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.	1	2	3	4	5

30. What are possible ways by which conflict could be managed in your institution?

- a.
.....
- b.
.....
- c.
.....

APPENDIX B

**Interview Guide for Selected Senior Members of Takoradi
Polytechnic**

**(Rector, Vice Rector, Finance officer, Registrar(s), Public Relation Officer,
Librarian, President of Polytechnic Teacher Association of Ghana, Deans)**

Introduction:

Create a friendly atmosphere by introducing yourself and outlining the purpose of the interview meeting. Encourage interviewee to introduce him/herself as well. Thereafter seek his/her consent about the mode of recording the interview.

The interview

1. Kindly tell me how you see the nature of conflicts in your polytechnic? (Probe: what do you think are some of the causes of conflict among members of staff)?
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.....
2. In what ways will you say conflicts occur between junior and senior staff in your polytechnic? (Probe: can you think of any causes? What about senior members – do you experience conflict between them and the junior staff etc)?
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.....
3. Will you say conflicts occur between senior staff and senior members) (Why do you say so? Are there any causes you can think of)?

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4. Thank you. Now let's turn to departmental conflicts. What will you say are the causes of inter-departmental conflicts, if any, in your polytechnic? (Does the same kind of conflict occur among the schools as well etc)?

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5. Generally, what negative effects do you think conflicts have on the performance of staff?

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.....

6. In what ways do you think conflicts have positive effects on the performance of staff?

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7. How does your institution manage interpersonal conflicts among staff? (Probe: what about inter-departmental conflicts? Which of them do you find challenging managing? Why Etc)?

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8. What are the mechanisms put in place to manage conflict among staff in your polytechnic? (How do you assess the mechanisms put in place to manage conflict among staff in your polytechnic)?

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9. What suggestion would you make toward improving the effective use of conflict management practices among staff in your polytechnic?

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10. Are there any other ideas you have about conflict management in your institution?

.....
.....

Thank you.

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

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Ghana

July 18, 2008

Our Ref. EP/90/2/216

The Rector
Takoradi Polytechnic
Takoradi
.....

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter, Sarah Morrison is a graduate student of the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the University of Cape Coast. She requires some information from your outfit for the purpose of writing a thesis as a requirement of M.Phil degree programme.

I should be grateful if you would kindly give her the necessary assistance to enable her collect the information she requires from your outfit.

While anticipating your cooperation, I thank you for any help that you may be able to give.



Dr. A. L. Dare
for Director