UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF BASIC SCHOOL

HEADTEACHERS IN SEKONDI TAKORADI METROPOLIS

JAMES SUNNEY QUAICOE

2010

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BY

JAMES SUNNEY QUAICOE

Dissertation submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Master of Education Degree in Educational Administration

AUGUST 2010

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

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

Candidate's Signature:………………………   Date:……………………

Name: James Sunney Quaicoe

Supervisor's Declaration

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

Supervisor's Signature:……………………….   Date:……………………

Name: Prof. A.K. Amuzu-Kpeglo

ABSTRACT

In this study, efforts were made to find out the extent to which primary school Head teachers in the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis deal with conflict issues as they emerge in their administrative duties. The study established the insight, knowledge base and skills of the head teachers on conflict management issues. It also examined the attitude of the head teachers towards conflict in their schools and how their attitude is interpreted by their teachers. In all, ten (10) head teachers, one hundred (100) teachers and nine (9) circuit supervisors were used for the study. With the study controlled by pre-established research questions, questionnaires, interviews and observations were instruments used by the researcher to gather data from the field for analysis. The studies showed that majority of primary school Head teachers have not received orientation on conflict management since their appointment into office. On their own, only, a small percentage have participated in a formal conflict management workshop or training. Again, it was established that most of the head teachers are not informed on contemporary conflict management issues. Interestingly, this has not adversely affected their practical conflict management activities and the administrative practices of the head teachers.

In addition, the study revealed that most head teachers saw conflict situations as opportunities for growth and self-development, but would not entertain it in their schools. Based on the results of the study, recommendations were advanced accordingly for future consideration – which included the provision of handbooks on conflict resolution for head teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

mentioned above and in the references; I therefore accept full responsibility of any inadequacies and contents of the entire document.

DEDICATION

This work is in memory of my late parents Francis A. Quaicoe, Rose Semanyamo Amakye and Dorothy Ada Payne - May their souls rest in peace- and in honour of my adopted parents Pat and John Bevan.

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The school is seen as a formal organisation. Musaazi (1984) described formal organisations as possessing deliberately structured line of action towards specific goals. According to Amofa (1999) and Agyeman (1986), members of a formal organisation share common purposes, communicate intentions and actions willingly towards the attainment of collectively established goals, objectives and aspirations. Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) illustrates this statement with the relationship existing between school buildings, pupils, teachers and educational officers and the goal of promoting teaching and learning in the schools for the survival of communities. He looked at the willingness of the community to allow the children to go to the school and the understanding teachers have to impart specific knowledge, all these harmonised into a set of mutual and common aspirations.

Reasoning alongside Musaazi on the subject-matter, Agyarey (1991) (as cited by Amofa 1999) named the determinants of a formal organisation as follows; definite population, definite territory, authority structure, social network of relations, unique culture, clearly defined objectives and purposes of the organisation.

In school settings, the activities of the school placed in juxtapose to the formal organisation determinants of Agyarey (1991) (as cited to by Amofa 1999)

and the assertions of Musaazi (1984), shows that the school is a formal organisation - the school therefore as a formal organisation is evidenced by the following factors or indicators; (1) pupils and teachers present in the school constituting the human resource base of the organisation, (2) school's population is structured to constitute a definite population measured in pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), (3) the physical resources in the school covering the school buildings and furniture, teaching and learning materials, and all other inanimate resources for running the school, (4) the school's leadership structures which define organisational and leadership structure determining the basic framework of authority and spells out order of seniority , channels of reporting and communication, (5) presence of a network of social relationships in the form of pupil-pupil relations, pupil-teacher relations, teacher-teacher relations, Head teacher-pupil relations, staff relations and school-community relations, (6) human and material resources are set into a harmonious working relationship towards a definite objective – and this is teaching and learning - to achieve this, time management structures, materials provision and staff availability has been taken care of by educational administrators and managers, (7) sense of belongingness as demonstrated by both teachers and pupils in collaborated activities - this is evidenced by members of the school working together towards common social and educational aspirations, such as wearing of school uniforms, singing of school's anthem and living the unique culture of a school as members of the organisation.

In the school organisation Head teachers are the Chief Executives, consequently, they occupy the top position of the school's leadership structure. This signifies the authority they process over the teachers and pupils. By virtue of this authority, Head teachers are held accountable for the success or failure of the school.

In order to make the school a success, Head teachers are expected to fulfill a number of administrative tasks, which serve as bases for measuring their efficiency and competence as school managers and the climate of their schools. Campbell, Bridges and Nystrand (1977) grouped the numerous administrative tasks of school heads under six main headings, namely;

1. School-community relations,

2. Curriculum and instructions,

3. Pupil personnel,

4. Staff personnel,

5. Physical facilities,

6. Finance and business management.

In the view of Musaazi (1984) Head teachers have administrative tasks to perform and these include; interpreting policy, executing curriculum programmes, seeing to pupils welfare, equipment ,physical facilities , finances, inducting and retraining staff and finally maintaining effective school community relations (p 167) .

Musaazi, further explained that Head teachers have the professional duty of promoting discipline and controlling behaviours in school so as to create the

requisite congenial atmosphere for the attainment of educational goals - which is teaching and learning.

It is in the latter that the bone of contention lies, even though earlier discourses on the subject-matter has established the school as a formal organisation, Agyeman (1986) appreciated the presence of informal activities in the formal organisation which are not directly related to the aspirations of the formal organisations. In the case in the school, this informal organisation has the potential to either enhance or distort the performance of the school's programmes. Examples of such informal acts as cited by Agyeman (1986) include the following;

1. Individual modes of expression, activities and disposition towards issues, patterns or acts and aspiration not in line with educational aspirations.

2. Non- conformity to defined goals, objectives and aspirations of the school by individuals or groups in the school.

3. Development of cliques, attitude, and actions based on individual's behaviour, needs and relevance of action, but not officially acceptable in the school.

4. Disagreement, conflicts, and ragging amongst the human resources in the school.

Practically, educators and other stakeholders in the educational industry hold to the view that the key to successful leadership and administrative practices in schools could be linked to the ability of the Head teacher to set the human and material resources in the school into harmonious working relations.

According to Amuzu – Kpeglo (2002) Mary Parker Follet, a proponent of human relations paradigm of administration is of the view that the basic problem of any institution is developing and sustaining a dynamic and harmonious human relationship. Observing human activities in organisations it can be said that no organisation - be it simple or complex - can survive without conflict or disciplinary problems - the school is no exception in this context.

Thus, where individuals and groups come together – as it is in the case of the school organisation, there is bound to be varying opinions, oppositions, anger, rage, murmuring and disagreements. Any environment with such divergent membership traits has the possibility of experiencing conflicts. It is therefore apparent that wherever people gather, there is bound to be differences in ideas, values, standards, and levels of understanding, habits and many other things. This goes to say that conflict will always exist whenever people interact with one another.

Some schools of thought hold to the view that conflicts are necessary in organisations and that they are inevitable for change, development and growth in an organisation and should be entertained. Others however, are of the view that conflict is undesirable and disruptive and must be resolved as soon as it surfaces in an organisation and that it is not to be entertained in any way. Human relations approach to conflict shows that conflict is a natural phenomenon and should not be perceived as a negative force. Instead, it should be perceived as a positive force influencing the performance of individuals and groups. The traditionalist approach to conflict opposes the stands of the human relations approach in the

context that conflicts are dysfunctional and negative – and perceived as abnormal harmful, destructive and useless. Contemporary stands on the subject- matter is advanced by Appleby (1994) who holds the view that conflicts are not only inevitable in organisations, but are absolutely expedient for stimulating development in individuals and groups, and that modern management practices reinforce the need for negotiation and communication amongst organisational members. Based on his stands on conflict issues, he advanced the notion that the task of managers should include the management of conflicts, but not to suppress them. Pondy (1992) appealing to research works on conflict issues asserted that conflicts are desirable and should be entertained and where applicable be simulated in organisations.

Marrying the view points of the various schools of thought named above it can be said that conflicts in school possesses the potential to be either a useful tool or destructive weapon in the attainment of the educational goals – contingent on how conflict is understood by the head teacher. Many school conflicts arise out of differences amongst staff, pupils and their parents, head teachers and supervisors of the school. The differences brought into school organisation by members include ethnic background, social status, gender, mental, emotional and physical dispositions. In organisations personal and group reactions to differences assume various forms including prejudice, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, coercion and labeling; most often meted out by superiors to their subordinates.

In the light of the above, heads of institutions have the duty of providing an environment where both teachers and pupils can be physically and psychologically free from threats and dangers; create settings where diversity of school's population would be respected and make the school where civil association with one another can be learnt. To this end, Head teachers are expected to possess the technical skills relevant for the building of effective relations among teachers and pupils, the school and community - which are considered to be complex network of relations.

In this network of varying attributes and dispositions, it will not be enough for institutional heads to just reach agreements amongst institutions and individuals by way of building relations, but to determine their own attitude of how much they choose to disagree or agree with subordinates and other stakeholders of the school organisation. These traits offer bases for proper measurement of the Head teachers' attitude towards conflict management in the school, his/her capacity to inject some remedial and upgrading interventions that might create "safe school environment" and congenial working climate conducive for teaching and learning and devoid of adverse impact of conflict situations .

Statement of Problem

In the circles of organisational behaviour, leadership and management/administration, research works have shown that conflicts are inevitable in organisations. School as an organisation is characterised by network of human interactions which is associated with expressing divergent views, disagreements, differences, complains, quarrels and many other varying

behavioural   traits and attitudes. The divergent views and attitudes in the organisation will have to be harnessed for the attainment of educational objectives.   Thus, should a Head of a school fail to positively handle the differences in the organisation professionally, it might disintegrate into violent or adverse state of affairs capable of derailing the attainment of the goals of the institution.

Reviewing the disciplinary committee files of the Sekondi Takoradi Metro Education, it was observed that a number of school based conflict cases which could otherwise have been dealt with at the school find their way to the Metro Education Office for settlement. This state of affairs raises the question of the preparedness of basic school Head teachers to deal with conflicts in their respective schools.

The problem therefore was to explore how Head teachers view conflict management as part of their educational leadership experience and as an administrative task; and further find out as to how they have dealt with past conflict situations in the schools.

Thus, the study was to establish the technical readiness of Head teachers in basic schools in the context of their insight, skills and knowledge in basic conflict management practices in organisations. It was to establish the general attitude of Head teachers of basic tools towards conflicts issues as they emerge in the school administration process and how they have been prepared for this task.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to create awareness amongst educational administrators, Head teachers and prospective Head teachers on the emerging challenges in conflict management and resources available for managing conflicts in schools. It is also meant to highlight the fact that conflict management is one of the administrative tasks of Head teachers and advance the need to be given attention.

The school as a human institution is expected to function as an agent for developing tolerance amongst people from varying backgrounds, with divergent view points and attitudes. Head teachers by virtue of their position are to set the pace in this direction. The study therefore aimed at bringing to the fore the need for Educational Administrators to institute deliberate leadership preparations programmes for Head teachers - to enable them deal with school conflicts in a professional and effective manner.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. Do Head teachers have insight on conflict situations in schools?

2. What is the knowledge base of the Head teachers on techniques and issues on conflict management?

3. What is the attitude of Head teachers towards conflict situations?

Significance of the Study

The study was focused on establishing the conflict management knowledge and skills of Head teachers in basic schools and how they have managed conflicts in their schools. Cases of staff and pupils insubordination and indiscipline in schools are common in the school, Head teachers and educational administrators are saddled with the challenge of managing staff conflicts on regular bases in the school settings. Head teachers have the professional task of managing conflicts as and when they come into the school organisation. The significance of the study therefore lies in the ability of the findings to serve as a lead for further investigations into ways of handling school conflicts professionally on the part of head teachers and teachers. Thus the report of the study could be a reference material to the officers and stakeholders in educational administration at the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis Education for addressing conflict issues in schools and at the educational offices.

Further more, the study was intended to serve as a guide to both head teachers and teachers to appreciate the role and potential of conflicts in organisations or in schools and thereby harness the potentialities therein for the growth and development of the educational industry.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to the study of conflict management knowledge and practices of head teachers in ten (10) primary schools in Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis. Furthermore, it was delimited to cover conflict description, identification, methods of resolving them and basic practices associated with

schools. The scope of the study therefore was restricted to exploring how head teachers are abreast with the above-mentioned areas under conflict management and their general attitude to the concept of conflict in organisations.

Limitations

Due to time constraint the study was restricted to the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis. These limitation raises reliability and validity questions .To ensure the validity and the reliability of the study the following steps were taken in the course of the study, (a) questionnaires and test items were derived from the literature review so as to measure what the study indented to investigate – in this case explore the knowledge base of head teachers on conflict management in schools, (b) integrated sampling approach was used to selected the relevant subjects for the study with a fair representation across all the circuits in the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis, (c) the main subjects of the study were given ample time to give their responses and again their anxiety about the exercise were allayed with the assurance that they were part of an academic exercise and not under investigation,(d) using the principle of triangulation, additional information were obtained on the subjects to ensure that right data is gathered.

Organisation of Study

The report of the study is organised into five chapters, followed by references and appendices. The first chapter is the introduction and contains the background information, statement of problems, research questions, the purpose

and significance of the study. Information on limitations and delimitations of the study is also catered for in this chapter. Organisation of the study as a sub-topic closes the entire chapter.

The second chapter is dubbed literature review and looks into concepts, research findings and publications relevant to conflict management, educational administration, administrative and roles/tasks of school heads. It is followed by Chapter Three which outlines the methods that were used for the study. It describes the research design type used, population and the sample for the study; instruments used and procedures for data collection; and then ends with the methods used for analysing collected data.

Chapter Four is titled as results and discussions and comes after chapter three. It covers the results or findings of the study together with their corresponding discussions. It offers medium for inferences to be made by virtue of responses gathered from the participants of the research. This chapter is immediately followed by Chapter Five which contains the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. References and appendices are provided at the back of the report and that close the entire document.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter delves into written materials, papers and works of individuals and authorities in the field of educational administration, conflict resolutions and administrative /management thoughts. The content is arranged under the following sub headings;

1. Schools as a formal organisation,

2. Administrative tasks of school Head teachers,

3. Conflict explained,

4. Forms of conflict,

5. Styles, modes and types of conflicts,

6. Conflict theories and perceptions,

7. Conflict management strategies,

8. Causes of conflicts,

9. Response to conflict feelings,

10. Factors affecting response to conflict situations.

School as a Formal Organisational System

Organisations are social groupings consciously or unconsciously created by members who seek certain interests. These groupings are characterised by common determinants. Agyarey (as cited by Amofa, 1999) indicated that formal organisations are characterised by common determinants, namely:

1. Objectives

2. Population(members)

3. Leadership

4. Network of relationships

5. Organisational culture

Agyeman (1986), further explained that a formal organisations is not like a mob coming together accidentally to accomplish a task and thereafter disintegrate. Formal organisations are established by a policy direction, with code of ethics for members, presence of both physical and human resources which are coordinated by a leader towards the attainment of established goal.

In the works of Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) the school is described as an important organisation, he enumerate the activities that take place in the school as follows; teachers are deployed to teach students who are allocated to classes, provision of equipment and school materials for teaching and learning, proper use of time and these set into harmonious and orderly function.

Making deductions from (Amofa 1999; Agyeman, 1986; Asiedu-Akrofi 1978) the school is a formal organisation – this evidenced by the fact the

indicators that go to define an organisation as formal integration are all found in the school system.

Thus, from the review so far, the school's function as a formal organisation is undisputed, and with the presence of pupils, teachers and material resources made available by central and local governments, the school then becomes a complex organisation with an objective of providing education and training for its beneficiaries - a network of human and material resources is created. Due to its complexity, schools are subjected to inevitable internal conflicts. Head teachers therefore by virtue of their position, have the responsibility of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in the school settings towards the attainment of educational goals.

Administrative Tasks of School Head Teachers

Every officer in a leadership position has some duties to perform and goals to achieve. In a study conducted on efficiency of school administration, Atakpa and Ankomah (1998) used the under listed indicators as possible tasks school heads undertake to establish administrative efficiencies in schools; managing human resources, Maintaining discipline, Effecting communication, Managing instructional time, Managing co-curricular activities, Managing learning resources, Managing school intake and attendance, Assessing pupil performance, Assessing teacher performance, Effecting staff development and Developing school community relations.

From the above points raised, it is apparent that Head teachers have specific administrative tasks and leadership roles to undertake. Relating to the

subject under consideration, Musaazi (1985) indicated that the organisational responsibilities of school heads include the following:

1. Assessing pupil performance,

2. Assessing teacher performance,

3. Effecting staff development,

4. Developing school community relations,

5. Implementing decisions,

6. Determining climate of the school,

7. Motivate employees,

8. Influence results and set priorities.

Several authors (Campbell, Bridges & Nystrand, 1977; Asiedu-Akrofi, 1978) share similar views on the administrative tasks of Head teachers outlined so far as duties school heads are mandated to fulfill. In addition to the above, records on appointments of basic school Head teachers revealed that the process for appointing Head teachers in the metropolis is not standardised. Whiles some Educational Units take applicants through rigorous interviews and orientation, others just appoint them. This brings to the fore issues the competence of Head teachers in the basic school and their resultant output as managers.

Notwithstanding, one thing stands common amongst all the units, appointed Head teachers have duties to fulfil and examples of these duties are:

1. Responsible for the academic, social and internal organisation and conduct of the school,

2. Arrange the curriculum and syllabus of the school according to Ghana Education Service requirements,

3. Responsible for maintain of discipline in the school,

4. Responsible for fostering and maintaining high moral tone in the school,

5. Admit pupils in accordance with the admission policies of Ghana Education Service,

6. Responsible for the financial administration of school, submit financial statement at the end of each academic year to the management committee,

7. Submit annually a confidential Report on each member of staff to the Metro Director of Education. (Circuit Supervisor's Handbook (2002), p.75-83)

Based on the literature cited so far, it is apparent that in the Teaching and Learning industry, Head teachers play key roles in the success of educational delivery at the school level. It is therefore appropriate to describe the Head teacher as an Educational Administrator – this is by virtue of their position and responsibilities and not by formal management or administrative training and qualification. As educational administrators, Head teachers have the professional and statutory responsibilities of presiding over the activities of the school. They are to procure and coordinate all the resources available to the school towards the national educational goals. Head teachers are to influence behaviours in the school, and set an appropriate human relations climate in the school. They are

managers of conflicts, differences and contentions in the school. Head teachers are to work not in isolation but in harmony with staff members and the pupils. However, in practice, head teachers operate in isolation as school managers and are directly responsible for the success and failure of the school organisation they preside over. By this fact they are indirectly responsible to the Government of Ghana –regarding educational delivery in their schools through the District and Regional Directors of Education; and eventually the Director General of the Ghana Education Service who in turn is responsible to the government.

It is observed that in all the cited review materials Head teachers are tasked to maintain discipline; however the duty of handling potential conflicts which pervades in all shades of their administrative roles is toned down. In view of their positions on the school's organisational structure, Head teachers determine the level of effectiveness of the school climate in relation to rapport, teacher morale and good interpersonal relations.

Hence, the need for Head teachers to be knowledgeable enough in contemporary administrative principles with emphasis on conflict management practices and maintenance of interpersonal relations in schools; since essentially, the effectiveness of a school system in terms of quality, nature and output of pupils and teachers are directly related to the kind of leadership exhibited by the Head teacher.

Conflict Explained

Academics consider it difficult to ascribe a particular set of definition cutting across all fields of study to conflicts. This assertion is supported by Heinz–Jurgen, Milosoki and Schwarz, (2006). They remarked that reviewing of conflict as a phenomenon is a difficult task; the bases are that there are different theoretical approaches to the study of conflicts. For instance, the economist will focus on the game – theory and decision making, whereas the psychologist will look at it from the point of interpersonal conflicts and the sociologist will concentrate on status and class conflicts.

Notwithstanding, some academics and authors have attempted to define or describe conflicts as they perceive it in various settings, situations, organisations or in individuals. Webne-Behrman (1998) described conflict as disagreement amongst parties in which situation their perception regarding their needs, interest or concerns are threatened. He further explained that it is a situation where people perceive that physically, emotionally and psychologically they are threatened.

Longaretti and Wilson (2000) on their part described conflict as incompatible goals and overt opposition by one person to another person's actions. Jameson (1999) on his part described conflict as a situation where independent parties perceive incompatibility goals. March and Simon (1993) described conflict as collapse of conventional procedures for decision making resulting in difficulty in choosing an alternative action.

In a nutshell, the process of educational administration and management is characterised by conflicts. This is based on the fact interpersonal relations in the school create conditions for the emergence of various forms conflicts. These are expressed in varying forms in values, beliefs, needs, perceptions and reactions. Above views are also held by Wilmot and Hocker (1998) that as people interact in the schools or organisations differences emerge amongst them and this materialises in the form of individual wishes, aspiration, varying opinion and views against that of other staff members.

In the light of the review above, conflict is inevitable in organisations as indicated by the various authors. It is however observed that the explanations and descriptions given to the term "conflict" carry a negative picture or connotations. This assertion is argued by (Westhues 2000; Appleby 1994; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1997). They hold to the view that conflicts in organisation have the potential to stimulate expression of diversity, creation of democratic decision - making structures and offer opportunity for motivation and innovation to problem solving in the organisation.

Forms of Conflicts

Conflicts may range from personal to international dimensions, but largely in the school settings scholars acknowledge the following conflicts forms, intrapersonal, interpersonal and individual – institution conflicts. The integrated views of several authors including (Robbins, 1998; Dressler, 1998; Gordon, 1991; Wertheim, n.d) on the subject matter are outlined below under various sub titles.

Intrapersonal conflict

This conflict form occurs in the individual. It is triggered by individuals' specific needs and tendencies to function and act in specific ways desirable to him/her. It is simply exemplified by conflicting needs of an individual for which a choice needs to be made at the expense of another desires.

Typical example is the professional compulsion on a teacher to stay at school as against his/her desire to leave and engage in personal pursuits. This conflict form breeds irritation, uncertainty, hesitation stress, anxiety and depression in individuals which spills over into the organisation.

Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict form occurs between two individuals. It is considered the most common and visible type of school conflicts. Its manifestations are in the form of Head teacher-Teacher Conflict, Teacher-teacher conflict, Head teacher – Pupil conflict, Teacher-pupil conflict among others.

It is caused purely by personal reasons arising from fundamental differences in respect of attitudes, priorities, activities, policy interpretations and professional conducts.
This conflict form holds direct influence on organisational efficiencies and achievements in schools.

Individual – Institution Conflict

This conflict type occurs between an individual and the institution he or she belongs. In the context of the school, it occurs between the teacher or Head

teacher and the school or the Education Offices. It is held in view that the basic cause of this form of conflict is structural differences and specialisation as instituted in the organisation.

Styles, Modes and Types of Conflicts

Literature has shown that various authors have their unique ways of naming the conflict types and still refer to the same thing. Terms in use include conflict styles, modes of conflict, and forms of conflict and/or types of conflicts. For instance, Webne-Behrman (1998) used the term "style" whiles Wertheim (n.d) used the term "mode". Both authors listed the same items denoting the styles of conflicts as indicated below under respective sub headings.

Competitive Style

This conflict style is characterised by its actors putting their interest or needs above others. Aggressive traits are employed by actors in pursuance of their interest. Additional characteristics exhibited in this style are coercion and egocentric tendencies. Incidentally, actors found to be using this style do so in fear of loss of authority or position and feeling of being threatened. They exhibit lack the confidence to handle their position of office and so apply coercion and intimidation as tool to hold on to power.

Accommodating (Soothing) Style

Unlike the competitive style, actors in the accommodating style tend to accept the needs of others at the expense of their own needs. Here individuals allow the needs of their opponents or that of the organisation to override theirs.

Parties in conflict found using this style do so in order to maintain their position of trust or acceptance. In addition they assume this style to ensure membership in the organisation and continuity of their relationships. Practically, the parties adopting this style are mindful of their membership in the organisation or relations and may not want to be seen as the ones "steering the muddy waters".

Avoiding Style

This conflict style is best described as an indicator of negative response to conflict situation or disagreement. Generally, actors displaying this style, pretend that there is no conflict situation that is demanding a solution. The outcome is pent up feelings as views go unexpressed by the parties, and with the conflict unattended to, the resultant traits is that conflict becomes too big to ignore at the long run. Relationship between the conflicting parties collapse and each remain uncertain as to what really caused the strained relationship or the disintegration.

Compromise Style

Compromising conflict style is characterised by "trade offs" – this is done by the actor either gaining or giving out in the conflict process. In this style the actors superficially appear to be satisfied with the prevailing situation, whilst in reality or in general terms are not satisfied.

This situation results in each party continuing to retain the unique perception on how the situation should have been handled. The resultant characteristic is lack of trust in the organisation and its leadership.

Collaborative Style

This style is about devising common solutions towards problems and differences that occur in organisations and institutions. It encourages cooperation amongst the actors in contention. Collaborative style, otherwise called problem solving style is characterised by pooling individual needs and goals towards a common solution of personal and organisational challenges. The style is considered ideal for the school management and thus, has the potential to improve and harmonise school relations.

Conflict manifest in organisations in various forms and they manifest their own characteristics. Each one of the conflict styles identified in the review has its own advantages and disadvantages on the morale of the individuals in the organisation and this goes along way to affect the efficiency and out put of the organisation.

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Conflict Theories and Perceptions

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Various authorities and writers have advanced their perceptions and opinions on the concept of conflicts. The review below highlights on theories of conflicts and perceptions of authors and authorities in the field of conflict studies. Significant proponents mentioned in the work of Rose, Glazer and Glazer (1989) were Karl Max, born in 1818 and died in1883, and C. Wright Mills who lived

from 1919 to 1961. They were mentioned as fathers of Marxist Conflict theory and Modern conflict theory respectively.

Marxism Conflict Theory

Karl Max, born in 1818 and died in1883 is said to be the founder of the Marxist Conflict Theory.   It is on record that Karl Max perceived conflict as necessary and inevitable for change, growth and development in an organisation. To him, conflict must be managed as one of the resources of the organisation. He stood by the principle that, ultimately, conflict in groups produces progressive development of greater equality, democracy, autonomy and individuality.

Modern Conflict Theory

The founder of modern conflict theory is attributed to C. Wright Mills who lived from 1919 to 1961. Mills focused his idea on social imagination and the power elite. His argument with respect to social imagination was that social structures do not just happen; they are the resultant of struggles and negotiations between people with different interests and different resources. The issue at stake here is for leaders to see the interrelation between social structures and personal actions.

Traditional, Behavioural and Interactive Conflict Views

Traditional View

The traditionalist conflict proponents argue that conflict must be avoided, because it indicates problems and destruction. Thus, the traditionalist holds to the

premise that conflicts are negative and should not be entertained in any form in an organisation.

Behavioural View

Behavioural view point on other hand advances the premise that conflict is natural and it is inevitable when people work together in groups and teams. This conflict view stresses that conflicts need not be negative; rather it should be seen as having the potential to be a positive force in contributing to the performance of individual and the progression of the organisation.

Interactive View

The Interactive conflict view point is considered the most recent conflict perceptions; it advances the premise that conflict is a positive force and expedient to stimulate individuals to perform effectively. This assertion again counters the traditionalist and the classical conflict views, which labels conflict as negative. (Tjosvold, Hui, Ding, & Hu, 2003).

Reinforcing this view point, Robbins (1998) argued that to exploit the positive form of conflicts, normal processes and procedures for managing conflicts need to be established and improved to bring innovation into the system (organisation). He however, acknowledged that not all conflicts are positive; hence the need for leaders to be observant and alert to the type of conflict that is emerging in their organisation. With this point as the backdrop he classified conflicts as either functional or dysfunctional.

Functional and Dysfunctional Conflicts

Wood et al (2003) acknowledged the presence of functional and dysfunctional roles of conflicts in organisations, and further stressed on the need for leaders to look out for the indicators of these opposing conflict forms as they surface in the organisation. Functional Conflict is considered constructive, support goals of the working group and improves performance of its individuals. It is seen as medium for improving efficiency of the organisation and enhancing morale of members of the organisation.

Dysfunctional conflict, on the order hand exhibits destructive characteristics, and it is associated with traits that decrease work, productivity and job satisfaction. The resultant of this conflict perception in organisations is decrease in work attitude of team members, low productivity, low staff morale and less job satisfaction. Absenteeism and low job turn over are further indicators of this conflict perception type.

Unitary, Pluralist and Class Conflict Models

Appleby (1994) identified three conflict perceptions in organisations which he called the models of conflict. These are Model A – Unitary, Model B – Pluralist and Model C – Class Conflicts.

Model A

This model is also referred to as the unitary model. It views organisation as a team with common objective. In the unitary model, conflict is seen as differences in the interpersonal relations or leadership style.

Model B

Model B is referred to as pluralist model. This conflict view recognises the fact that many sources of constraints and many interest groups exhibit actions that oppose organisational goals and they need to be managed. The model, therefore appreciates the fact that various pressure groups from outside and within the organisation initiates interactive tensions which need to be deliberately managed on regular bases.

This model encourages the need for leaders and members of the organisation to acknowledge the existence of conflicts, which must be brought into the system and absorbed in the organisation by channeling it through the institutional conflict resolution structure for solution.

Model C

Model C is also called the class conflicts. This conflict view point strongly opposes unitary and pluralist model views. Model C stands on the premise that there are basic differences existing between conflict parties that inhibit opportunity for compromise. Thus in this context conflicts cannot be institutionalised and managed.

In practice, this view advances the argument that there is no equal power representation amongst conflict parties especially in the case of management and workers; and that it is management that defines a problem (conflict) and sets out modalities for its resolution or otherwise. The premise held by this conflict model is that, subordinates have very little bargaining power and less opportunity to be given audience in case of conflicts situation with superiors.

In the context of the theories and perceptions of conflict reviewed, the under listed observations are worth mentioning; that conflicts are inevitable in organisation so long as differences exist between individuals, the goals of an organisation, the view points and opinions of group members.

Practically, conflicts in organisations may either be functional or dysfunctional. The respective dimension of conflict therefore is related to how it is perceived and dealt with by the leader. Conflicts could bring innovation and progressive changes in organisations. As a situation, conflicts are manageable and can be used to simulate problems for better solution to be administered. It is also observed in the review that the key challenge to inhibiting meaningful conflict resolution between superiors and sub-ordinates lies in power differences; and that conflict emergence and solution have direct bearing on the leader's disposition to conflicts in the organisation.

Conflict Management Strategies

Classical organisational theory holds to the view that conflicts breed inefficiencies thus, are undesirable and detrimental to an organisation's efficiency. This assertion is countered by some specialists in the field of conflict studies. For instance, Rahim (2000) sees conflict as legitimate and inevitable in an organisation. He further noted that conflict is a positive indicator of effective organisational management.

On his part, King (1999) remarked that when conflict is dealt with in a constructive manner it encourages creative solutions, lead to unity and support people through charged stressful periods. It is acknowledged by functional

conflict stakeholders that strategies adopted in managing conflicts play a key role in making conflicts functional in the organisation or otherwise.

According to Schermerhorn (2001) two factors determine whether conflict situation would be beneficial to an organisation or not, and these are; (1) intensity of the conflict and (2) the way conflict is managed. Hence, leader competence and alertness in assessing and dealing with conflict situations appropriately can not be overlooked. Various authors and academicians have identified various strategies for handling conflicts; the few mentioned in this review include Manolescu and Deaconu (n.d), Wertheim (n.d) and Robins (1998). All of them suggest that about five strategies are available for handling conflicts. Robins (1998) for instance acknowledged and named those five strategies as; competition, collaboration, avoiding, forcing and accommodation. This view point is shared with Manolescu and Deacon (n.d). However, they outlined the strategies for managing conflicts in their works in the following manner; Strategy oriented towards avoiding, Strategy oriented towards accommodation, Strategy oriented towards competition, Strategy oriented towards compromise and Strategy oriented towards collaboration.

Referring to Ghana Education Service Circuit Supervisors Handbook (2002), conflict management strategies identified for use in dealing with school conflicts were win-lose, lose-lose and win-win.. Some similarities in the said strategies were found in the works of Wertheim (n.d), however, he identified the following strategies; competition, collaboration, compromise, avoiding and

accommodation and then linked competition strategy to win-lose situation and collaboration to win-win situation.

Managing Conflicts with Avoidance Strategy

This strategy is characterised by the fact that the conflict parties recognise the existence of the conflict, but do not want to engage each other in confrontation. Derek Torrington and Laura Hall, (as cited by Manolescu and Deaconu (n.d)) hold to the view that ignorance and neglect can be used as tools for conflict management, and this is what this strategy seeks to accomplish. Views of Hiltrop and Udall (as cited by Manolescu and Deacon (n.d)) are that this approach labels conflict as a situation that must be avoided by all means.

Merits

This strategy is capable of diminishing or reducing the stress created by the conflicts in the organisation or between parties. Thus, creating an atmosphere best described as "no war no peace" in the organisation.

Demerits

In practice, this strategy does not change the conflict situation and thus limits its capacity to effectively resolve conflicts under this strategy. This strategy has the potential of causing the conflict to resurface with the passage of time, since parties continue to live with the conflict situation, but pretend that is solved. This approach also ignores the source and conditions that gave rise to the conflict, and thus causes the situation to persist, but in latent form.

Managing conflicts with Accommodative Strategy

This strategy is applicable to conflicts situations in which the parties involved do not try to impose their own view point at the expense of others, but rather satisfy the needs of the contending party. Hiltrop and Udall(1995), (as cited by Manolescu and Deaconu (n.d)) indicated that this strategy entails sustaining the interpersonal relations without cognisance of the personal objectives of the contending parties. The approach calls on managers to co-operate and satisfy the needs of others at their own expense.

Merits

This strategy potentially reduces the felt conflict among the parties. It is also useful and efficient for addressing short term conflicts. In practice, it sustains interpersonal relations and maintains bonds in the organisation in the face of conflicts.

Demerits

Practically, it is not applicable for addressing long term conflicts as people will not always want to sacrifice for the welfare of others all the time. It limits creativity as parties gravitate to a stand that pleases their opponents. This trend of affairs inhibits the emergence of new ideas and approaches to conflict situations.

Managing Conflicts with Competitive Strategy

This strategy is described as the exact opposite of accommodation. Johns (1996), (as cited by (Manolescu and Deaconu (n.d)) described it as a strategy that put emphasis one's interests or point of view at the expense of co-operation and

needs or views of others.   It has the tendency to classify conflict parties as either winners or losers. Hiltrop and Udall (as cited by Manolescu and Deaconu (n.d)), remarked that it is an approach where conflict is oriented towards power and defending of positions.

Merits

This strategy is useful when party is to defend a position deemed absolutely correct and cannot be subjected to any alternative stands. It seems appropriate during the following conditions;

i)   where much power is involved in addressing the conflict situation,

ii)   where real facts and certainty is the cause of the conflict situation, and

iii)   where conflict situation is of the win-loss type.

Demerits

Owing to its win-loss characteristic, this strategy breeds multiple negative interpersonal relations. It seen as having the potential to undermine co-operation and develops entrenched position that inhibits the possibility of finding an amicable solution to conflicts.

Managing conflicts with Compromise Strategy

This strategy is noted for compromising position of interest and co-operating or satisfying the needs of others. It is characterised by the fact that the conflicting parties recognised the conflict but play cautious to avoid stirring up the conflict.

Hiltrop and Udall (as cited by Manolescu and Deaconu (n.d.)) remarked that, this strategy aims at win-win situation which in reality is not possible, thereby initiating the involvement of negotiations process into the conflict resolution mechanism. The strategy therefore aims at finding a mutually advantageous solution that is acceptable to both parties, and this entails provision of minimum win – minimum loss situation, and sharing of needs.

Merits

Successfully, this strategy creates opportunity for sharing of differences. It further offers room for small gain and limited loss for the conflict parties. Its usefulness for the provision of temporal acceptable balances in feuding parties is seen as significant.

Demerits

It is not able to offer a win-win situation for the conflict parties and thus continue to leave some degree of dissatisfaction amongst parties. Again, in cases where conflicts emerge from power struggles, the weaker power tends to have much less offer to the stronger party, causing the stronger party to have his/her way at the expense of the weaker contender.

Managing Conflicts with Collaborative Strategy

Johns (as cited by Manolescu and Deaconu, (n.d)) remarked that this strategy attempts to maximise both imposing of view points or interest and co-operation or satisfaction of each others needs. It utilises integrative agreement to

solve conflicts. It encourages consensus building and peaceful approach to conflict situations.

According to Hiltrop and Udall as (cited by Manolescu and Deaconu, (n.d)) this strategy addresses the conflict situation by safe - guarding the inter-personal relations between the conflict parties. It further ensures that both parties achieve their goals, and thus, promotes win-win solution. The resultant effect is building mutually shared values in the organisation and between the active conflict parties.

Merits

This strategy possess high success rate of sustaining interpersonal relations in the organisation. It offers the opportunity for a win-win solution to be attained. It improves organisational efficiency and brings innovation, high morale and efficiency into the organisation.

Demerits

This style requires time, energy and creativity to make it efficient. Practically, some cultural differences of the conflict parties may influence this strategy and render it ineffective in some situations.

From the review, various conflict situations demand specific conflict resolution strategies to address them. However, collaborative strategy has an urge over the remaining four of strategies identified .This is due to its potential to create a "win-win situation for the conflict parties. It is also observed in the review that the tendency for organisational leaders and head of institutions to

gravitate towards the use of competitive strategy is high owing to the advantages it offers them. Thus, a leader practicing autocratic or authoritarian leadership will consider competitive strategy ideal.

Notwithstanding, each strategy has some merits to offer and it is left to parties or leaders to adhere to the appropriate option for the welfare of the organisation and its members. In the school situation however, collaborative strategy appears attractive since the school require the support and contribution of all to attain its goals. Head teachers therefore need to be mindful of the multi-faceted interactions present in the school and adopt appropriate strategy to handle conflicts.

Sources of Conflicts

Conflict management has received immense attention from researchers of late. Deutsch (1973) remarked in his works that greater focus on research in conflict management had been on finding ways to lessen the destructive nature of conflicts amongst individuals, communities and organisations. The way forward in averting destructive conflicts as suggested by the findings of researchers and academicians is to have a wide repertoire of conflict styles and tactics to handle conflict situations.

Basically, the more knowledgeable leaders are on conflict issues the better will they be placed to handle conflicts efficiently. Hence, the need for leaders to be informed in causes of conflicts so as to adopt the appropriate strategies to deal with the various conflict forms.

Bodine, Crawford and Schrump (1994) hold the view that conflicts arise from incompatibility of needs, drives, wishes and demands of individuals as they function in an organisation. They further, remarked that where an individual's basic needs or that of a group is not met, there is bound to be some degree of discord. In their view, the basic needs of individuals or groups are established in the following dimensions, psychologically, limited resources available and differences in values.

Basic Psychological Needs

Glasser (1984), (as cited by Gately (n.d)) identified four basic psychological needs of individuals that motivate them to behave in whatever manner they desire. These he outlined as, feel of belonging, power, freedom and fun. Thus in his view, conflict may arise where an individual perceives threatened towards the attainment of these needs.

Limited Resources

In any organisation the availability of human and material resource makes it possible for the goals of the organisation to be met. In the situation where resources are found to be inadequate members are compelled to contest for their portion of the resources. This condition is a sure recipe for conflicts to be developed, since a platform for individuals to disagree and compete against each other for their share of the resources is created.

Differences in Values

Educational Psychologists hold to the view that each individual is uniquely moulded by congenital and environmental factors. Consequently, individuals carry with them their distinguished values, beliefs, principles and priorities into organisations.

In organisations therefore, the presence of a complex blend of varying attitudes, behaviours and working habits are experienced. With the presence of this multi- faceted social diversity, conflicts are likely to emerge -as individuals exhibit conducts that are unacceptable to the other members of the organisation and probably contrary to the goals and objectives of the institution.

Under this causative factor of conflicts, other authors attributed that poor communication is one major source of conflicts in organisations or between individuals. Billikof (n.d) cited ambiguity, lack of well defined channels and modes of communication as potential factors pre-empting conflicts in organisations.

Response to Conflict Feelings

Conflicts are responded to in various ways as measured in individuals or parties. These go with their resultant effects in the performance of organisations. Webne – Behrman (1998) indicated that conflict responses can be observed under the following dimensions; behavior, emotional, cognitive and physical responses in relation to the various strategies of conflict management.

Behavioural responses

Under Competition Strategy, responses exhibited by parties include, aggressive tendencies, disregard for others, use of coercion and display of egocentric traits. Accommodation Strategy is identified as having the following characteristics, diplomacy, consideration and sympathy as the possible responses to conflict situations.

Responses in Avoiding Strategy are considered negative and they include the following, indifference, withdrawal, non-compliance and non-complaining. Collaborative Strategy has its responses described as positive and they include co-operation, constructive and open communication and exhibition of genuine attitude towards concerns. It displays participation in collective solutions approach to conflict situations. Parties in Compromise Strategy respond with the following characteristics, lack of trust in system, with pent up feelings kept all the time and this is coupled with suspicion.

Emotional Responses

In conflict situations parties or individuals exhibiting this response display various degree or forms of emotional traits. These include fear, anger, despair, confusion, stress and delinquent or withdrawal attitudes. In practice these are negative traits carried into the organisation of which Robbins (1998), labeled them as breeding dysfunctional conflict conditions. Negative conflicts produce low organisational effectiveness.

On the other hand individuals are liable to display cheerfulness, sense of cooperation and self assertiveness as a response to a particular conflict situation.

Again, Robbins sees the presence of these traits as indicators of functional conflict condition of which the result in the organisation is high effectiveness and efficiency.

Cognitive Responses

Perception of threats and conflicts emanates in the mind. The mind does a lot of analysis and this includes the battle between exercising appropriate reactions and restraining to the perceived threats. At one's peak of mental reasoning and analysis, cognitive responses result in sudden out- burst of self-talk and raising of voice to register dissatisfaction. It also assumes the form of insults, screaming and loud exclamations among others.

Physical Responses

This aspect of conflict responses is considered essential by some academics; because they suggest that it indicates the extreme to which conflict situation has assumed and the urgency required to deal with it. It has been indentified that physical responses have indicators such as heightened stress, bodily tension, increases precipitation, shallow and accelerated breathing, rapid heart beating and nausea. At its climax the individual or parties may take to violent or destructive attitudes- which are indications that the level of tolerance and accommodation is exceeded by the individual or parties.

Factors Affecting Responses to Conflict Situations

People respond to conflicts in varying ways, it is obvious that some factors account for this trend of affairs. Each person perceives threats in a different manner and gives different interpretation to it. Webne-Behrman (1998) indentified five of such factors capable of influencing varying responses to conflict situations on the part of individuals or any group of persons. He described those factors as "Perceptual Filters" which he named as;

1. Culture, race and ethnicity,

2. Gender and Sexuality,

3. Knowledge of situation,

4. Impression of messenger,

5. Previous experience.

Culture, Race and Ethnicity

Each individual is the embodiment of his cultural background, believes and concepts about disputes in the course of his socialisation into his clan or tribe. By and large, these indicators influence the responses of persons confronted with any conflict situation.

Thus, one's willingness to partake in various modes of conflict resolution and inclination to manage conflicts are dictated by the substantive values cultivated as results of the above factor. Practically, it is suggested on the premise that an individual emerging from a competitive environment where winning is the watch word, will deploy egocentric responses to conflict situations. Whereas, an

individual brought up in   communal participatory settings will display traits of cooperation and consensus building during conflict situations.

Gender and Sexuality

Men and women do perceive situations differently based upon experiences in the direction of power, privileges, and socialisation patterns. It is generally perceive that men are more aggressive by nature and women are tender and caring. These traits and other gender based conditions will cause each of the genders to approach conflict situations with varying mindsets.

Knowledge

Parties or individuals will respond to conflicts based on the knowledge they possess about the situation. Knowledge in this context is about the general and specifics of the issue at stake. The individual transfers previous but similar situations and degree of information available to respond to prevailing conflict situation or threats. Such information or knowledge will largely determine the actors' willingness to engage in conflict resolution or not. It will also reinforce or wane his/her confidence in the conflict resolution system available; and cause one to be either flexible or take entrenched stands. Finally, using the available information the individual decides to alter stands for alternate solutions, cooperate or respond in another manner.

Impressions of the Messenger

Response to conflicts situations are greatly influenced by the messenger – where the messenger in this context is either the opponent or the authority handling the situation. For instance if one contests with a big-scary opponent in dispute, response to that situation will be quiet different from a skinny, short and calm individual raining threats on an the former. Therefore, individuals and parties will respond to a conflict situations with reference to the messenger in the following dimensions;

1. Respect for the one commanding the situation,

2. How fearful and powerful the opponent is,

3. The credibility of the individual,

4. The integrity of the messenger,

5. Previous experience with the messenger.

In sum, conflict parties make factual assessment of the messenger either by self acquired information or from second and third parties and use it for conflict response decisions.

Previous Experiences

Each individual does have vast and accumulated lives experiences that continue to influence perceptions, understandings and responses to current life's situations. Some of these experiences might have created lots of negative and positive attitudes and character traits that affect how the individual will respond to conflict situations confronting him.

For instance, some of the negative experiences might have created fear, developed lack of trust and lack of initiative in the individual. On the other hand, positive traits such as building of trust, generated confidence and willingness to take risk with out fear among others can be developed in the individual as a result of long accumulated experiences. Thus, in which ever direction the individual takes in responding to conflict situations, his/her previous experiences dictate what kind of response to be exhibited.

In a nutshell, the above named factors and others together combine to form the perceptual filters thorough which conflicts are responded to. Individuals' reactions to conflict situations are anticipated to situations of varying understanding of the issues at stake. Therefore, it is critical for leaders or head of organisations to possess a level of understanding and insight into the perception of emerging threats; and discern possibilities of addressing them realistically.

In sum, the review has revealed that conflicts are inevitable in organisations, therefore considered normal component of organisation's activities. It has been identified that as individuals interact and encounter divergence of views, opinion, objectives and behaviours in an organisation conflicts are bound to occur.

Furthermore, it has been revealed that conflicts can be functional or dysfunctional. Dysfunctional conflict was identified as having the potential to derail the progress of an organisation. Notwithstanding, functional conflicts provide numerous opportunities for growth and understanding. It challenges

individuals and organisation to initiate innovative ventures and personality development strategies for progress.

Furthermore, the materials reviewed were emphatic on the correlation between the attitude of leaders to conflict situations and the usefulness of conflicts as tools for innovation, efficiency and successful attainment of organisational objectives. Consequently, skills and knowledge base of leaders on conflict management will significantly determine to what extent conflicts would be managed, thus, leaders by virtue of the positions are obliged to;

i) Understand the true areas of disagreement and help in solving of problems and needs of individuals and parties.

ii) Understand the dimensions of the actual threats and perceived threats, and develop appropriate strategies to manage them through constructive conflict management strategies.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the procedures used for conducting the study. It describes the research design, population, sample, sampling technique, instrument used, data collection procedure and data analysis techniques adopted for the study.

Research Design

Descriptive research design type was used for the study. It was an ideal option owing to the fact that the studies looked into events related to the past and yet have effect on the present conditions on school administration and management. The choice of this research design option was informed by Best (1977), who remarked that descriptive research design deals with the question of "what is", and discusses relationships between non-manipulative variables.

Since the study was not intended to control the activities of the subjects in order to establish cause and effect situation, but to interpret what is on the ground the selection of descriptive research design type was seen as the best and appropriate option by the researcher. Though, the chosen research design type is considered relevant, it comes with its demerits. It practically lacks the mechanism to predict future events, for example by using this research approach the future attitude of Head teachers towards conflict issues cannot be deduced. The basis is

that descriptive research design concerns itself with events that have already taken place and its link with the present and not the future.

Population

The population consisted of all primary schools within the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA). Schools in the metropolis are grouped into nine (9) circuits, with the total of the first cycle public schools standing at three hundred and eight-six (386). Out of this one hundred and four (104) are primary schools, these constituted the population for the study. The primary schools are found to be a mixture of single, double and three stream schools.

Sample

With the aid of the table of random numbers, ten (10) primary schools were selected for the study. Within the selected primary schools various techniques were used to select the respective Head teacher together with class teachers for the study. In all ten (10) Head teachers were randomly sampled from stratified nine (9)circuits , one hundred (100) class teachers and nine (9) circuit supervisors participated in the research.

Sampling Technique

Three sampling types were used in order to obtain the sample size for the study. The techniques used were simple random sampling, purposive sampling and accidental sampling. (Best, 1977; Kumekpor, 2002). Simple random sampling was used to select ten (10) schools out of the nine (9) stratified circuits or administrative zones of the schools in the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis. This

approach was adopted in order to have a fair and unbiased representation of the schools.

In order to ensure that the key subjects of the study – the head teachers – are not left out owing to randomisation, purposive sampling technique was used for their selection. The same approach was used in selecting the circuit supervisors. Finally, the accidental sample technique – an idea   borrowed from Kumekpor (2002) was used in selecting teacher respondents. Kumekpor (2002) described this approach as not influenced by randomness, but purely on unpredicted conditions that bring the investigator and the prospective respondents together. The technique proved ideal for the selection of the teachers owing to the fact the schools sampled were found to be in the of ranges of single to three stream schools – mixed with both regular and shift systems. This therefore inhibited the use of all staff members of the sampled schools – hence as many as were present during the distribution of the questionnaire were captured in the one day exercise.

Going by these techniques, ten schools, one hundred teachers and nine circuit supervisors were selected for the study. Further, by virtue of the sampling technique used in selecting the schools, teachers selected offered a fair representation of the teacher population in the metropolis.

Research Instruments

The key instruments used for data collection were the following; questionnaires, test, interviews and observation. The bases for selecting these instruments lied in the opportunities available for the researcher to be actively involved in the data collection processes and further obtain additional information about the subjects through triangulation, thus using the circuit supervisor and the teachers to provide additional information about the Head teachers.

A combination of test and questionnaires were administered to Head teachers. These instruments were used in establishing the understanding and knowledge base of Head teachers on the subject – matter under study. The contents of the questionnaire provided opportunity for self assessment on the part of the Head teachers, with the test items serving as tools for assessing their comprehension and knowledge levels. It further gave opportunity for ranking Head teachers on their knowledge know-how on the conflict management by way of scores obtained in the test.

The other set of questionnaires were administered to staff members of the sampled schools, these measured the Head teacher's leadership roles in conflict resolution and the climate of the school respectively. Coupled with the above, Circuit Supervisors visited the sampled schools for observation and thereafter were interviewed by the investigator conducting the study. Finally, observations were carried out by the researcher to substantiate data obtained from the interview with the circuit supervisors. A participant observation technique was adapted and

took the form of   work inspection in sampled schools. The investigator interacted with staff and head teacher, observed their attitude towards work. In addition, their concerns and remarks regarding life in the school were noted and together with the observed general attitude of staff members to each other and to their head teacher the climate of the schools were established and compared with the views of the Circuit Supervisors.

Data Collection Procedure

Information source for the study was from the sampled schools located in the nine (9) circuits situated within the metropolis – Head teachers, the subjects for the study served as the major information source whiles teachers and circuit supervisors were brought into the study to offer additional information on the subjects. In addition information was extracted from files of the sampled schools and from other disciplinary report files at the Metropolitan Education Office, Takoradi.

Again, school visits were conducted by Circuit Supervisors, and each of the sampled schools was visited a number of times by the supervisors and the researcher at separate occasions. Significance of the visits by the researcher - both the initial and the subsequent ones – were to present head teachers with introductory letters for the formal commencement of the study. It was also used as opportunity to explain the import of the study and prepared the minds of both head teachers and teachers for the exercise. After some few days elapsing after interaction, questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to the Head teachers

and took turns to further clarify unclear issues and items; and explain the rational behind the study to alley their fears. Head teachers were allowed to use a period of one week to submit their responses.

Questionnaire to teachers were administered after all Head teachers had submitted their responses to the investigator. The responses from the teachers were retrieved the very day the administration was done to reduce the influence of Head teachers on the responses of the teachers.

Finally, Circuit Supervisors were interviewed by the investigator on their observation exercise carried out in the schools. The scope of the interview were in the dimensions of the attitude of head teachers towards conflict in schools, the general climate of the school – in terms of head teacher staff relations and a measure of head teachers' attitude towards conflict situations in the schools. These indicators served as checklist for the participant observation activity carried out by the investigator in the sampled schools.

Data Analysis Technique

Responses obtained from Head teachers were taken through predetermined ratings and schemes and then quantified to show their knowledge and skills in conflict management and its attendant issues. Responses from teachers and circuit supervisors were treated statistically and related to the responses from Head teachers for analysis. Practically, all the responses obtained were grouped and taken through statistical procedures including frequencies and percentages and then presented on tables and diagrams for discussions and inferences made on them.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study aimed at exploring the comprehension, knowledge base and practices of primary school head teachers in school conflicts. Ten (10) Head teachers were sampled for the study. Using test and questionnaires data was gathered from the main subjects of the study and from other sources. Using statistical procedures such as grading, frequencies and percentages data obtained were processed into information for discussions and making inferences.

Information in this chapter is presented in three parts with each addressing a specific research question posed for the study. The first part deals with the insight and/or understanding of head teachers on conflict issues in their schools, whiles the second part addresses issues concerned with the knowledge base of head teachers on conflict management practices. The third and final part looks at the general attitude of head teachers towards conflicts in organizations (school). To guide the study the following research questions were used;

Research Question One: Do Head teachers have insight in conflict situations in schools?

Research Question Two: What is the knowledge base of the Head teachers on techniques and issues on conflict management?

Research Question Three: What is the attitude of Head teachers towards conflict situations?

Research Question One: Do Head teachers have insight in conflict situations in their schools?

Tables 1 to 7 represent the responses of head teachers regarding how they understand some conflict issues in their schools. Table 1, presents the performance of head teachers as they indicated their understanding on conflicts forms.

Table 1

Head Teachers' Understanding on Forms of Conflict in the Schools

Score (Mark)	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	7	70
1	1	10
2	Nil	Nil
3	Nil	Nil
4	Nil	Nil
5	1	10
6	1	10
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 1, out of the ten Head teachers, 8 of them corresponding to 80% displayed less comprehension on the forms of conflict by scoring either 0 or 1 mark in the test. However, 20% of the Head teachers indicated high level of

understanding of the subject - matter by obtaining higher marks at a range of five (5) to the highest point which is six (6).

Table 2 shows the performance of head teachers as they indicated their comprehension of various causes of conflicts in schools.

Table 2

Head Teachers' Comprehension on Conflict Causes

Score (Mark)	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	Nil	Nil
1	Nil	Nil
2	Nil	Nil
3	2	20
4	3	30
5	4	40
6	1	10
Total	**10**	**100**

Table 2 above shows that 10% of the Head teachers displayed high comprehension in the causes of conflicts by obtaining the maximum mark of 6; 40% percent scored 5 marks out of the 6 marks indicating adequate understanding in causes of conflict, 50% displayed average understanding of the subject matter by scoring either 2 or 3 marks out of the maximum of 6 marks.

Table 3 shows Head teachers' comprehension in the various conflict styles.

Table 3

Head Teachers' Comprehension on Conventional Conflict Styles

Score (Mark)	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	7	70
1	1	10
2	1	10
3	Nil	Nil
4	Nil	Nil
5	Nil	Nil
6	1	10
Total	**10**	**100**

From the information on Table 3, 70% of the Head teachers had no score, indicating that they could not name any conflict style, 10% scored 1 mark and another 10% scored 2marks. One (1) Head teacher corresponding to 10% of the subjects obtained the maximum mark of six (6) signifying adequate insight into the subject - matter.

On Table 4, Head teachers' understanding on how staff members react to conflict situations in the school is shown.

Table 4

Head Teachers' Comprehension on Staff Reaction to Conflict Situations

Score (Mark)	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	2	20
1	Nil	Nil
2	4	40
3	3	30
4	Nil	Nil
5	1	10
Total	**10**	**100**

Information on Table 4 indicates that 10% of the Head teachers scored the highest mark of six (6) to depict their level of understanding in responses of staff members to conflict situations, 30% scored three (3) marks to indicate their average insight on how staff members react to conflict situations, 42% of the Head teachers scored 2 marks out of the maximum mark of 5 to show that their level of comprehension on how staff members react to conflict situations.

Information on Head teachers' understanding of factors influencing responses to conflict situations in the schools is displayed on Table 5.

Table 5

Head Teachers' Understanding on Factors Influencing Responses to Conflict Situations

Score (Mark)	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	5	50
1	1	10
2	1	10
3	2	20
4	Nil	Nil
5	1	10
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 5, 50% of Head teachers could not state any factor influencing the response to conflicts situations, 10% displayed full knowledge on the subject-matter by scoring the maximum mark of 5, and the remaining 20% scored 3 marks to indicate their average knowledge on the subject matter.

Table 6, shows how head teachers' understood the characteristics of conflict responses are shown.

Table 6

Head Teachers' Understanding of Characteristics of Conflict Responses

Score (Mark)	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	8	80
1	1	10
2	Nil	Nil
3	Nil	Nil
4	Nil	Nil
5	1	10
6	Nil	Nil
7	Nil	Nil
8	Nil	Nil
9	Nil	Nil
10	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

Information on Table 6 indicates that a total of eight (8) Head teachers corresponding to 80% lacked the comprehension on responses exhibited by individuals involved in conflicts, and 10% scored one (1) mark out of the

maximum 10 marks , only one(1) Head teacher scored 5 marks to signify average understanding on how individuals react or response to conflict situations.

Table 7, shows the extent to which Head teachers have been oriented experiences on conflict management issues and practices.

Table 7

Orientation Exercises on Conflict Management Received by Head Teachers

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Yes	1	10
No	9	90
Total	**10**	**100**

Information on Table 7 shows that, 10% of Head teachers have received some form of orientation on the subject -matter, whiles the 90% have not gained any orientation.

With reference to Tables 1 to 7, greater percentage of teachers displayed less to average comprehension on conflict issues such as forms of conflicts, causes of conflicts, basic conflict styles, conflict responses by individuals and factors influencing the responses. For instance, on Table 1, 80% of subjects displayed minimal comprehension on conflict forms with 20% displaying otherwise, whiles on Table 2, the number of the subjects displaying less understanding in conflict causes was 50%. Again, from Table 4, percentage of the

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subjects displaying understanding on responses to conflicts, as against those with some degree of understanding was relatively high was 60%.

Again, on Table 3, the number of who subjects displaying less understanding on various conflict styles is 70%. The situation is not different on Table 5 where 70% of the subjects displayed either less comprehension or adequate comprehension in values of 50% and 20% respectively on factors influencing conflict responses. On the issue of characteristics underlying conflicts responses, 80% of the subjects displayed less understanding on the matter.

Table 7 gives a clue to the factor informing the state of subjects' comprehension on the conflict issuer raise. From a self assessment data, it is observed the only 10% of the subjects is exposed to some form of conflict management orientation.

The relevance of the need for head teachers to have some degree of understanding on basic issues of conflict could be linked to the views of Wood et al (2003). They acknowledged the functional and dysfunctional nature of conflicts in organizations and that it is expedient for organizational leaders to alert and look out for the indicators of the opposing conflict forms so as not to relegate the positive roles of conflicts in the organisation. Since conflicts are inevitable in organisations as asserted by several authors including (Wethues, 2000; Appleby, 1994; Fisher, Ury & Patton 1977), organisational leaders and that much Head teachers have the responsibility of gaining some insight into basic conflict issues.

Research Question Two: What is the knowledge base of the Head teachers on techniques and issues on conflict management?

Tables 8 to 14 represent the responses of head teachers regarding their knowledge base on conflict management practices and issues. Table 8 shows the standings of the head teachers with respect to their knowledge on the term conflict.

Table 8

Head Teachers' Knowledge on Conflict Definition

Item(s)	No.	Percentage (%)
Head displayed adequate knowledge on definition.	10	100
Head lacked knowledge on conflict definition.	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 8, 100% of the subjects displayed adequate knowledge on definition of conflict as it pertains in their schools. Basic definition of the term conflict was stated by all the Head teachers.

Table 9 contains information on the knowledge of Head teachers regarding ideal conflict management style applicable in the school settings.

Table 9

Head Teachers' Knowledge on Conflict Management Style Ideal for School Organisation

Item	No.	Percentage(%)
Head shows knowledge on specific conflict style ideal for schools	1	10
Head less knowledge on specific conflict style ideal for schools	9	90
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 9, 90% of the Head teachers were uninformed on a particular conflict style that will be ideal for school organisation, 10% of Head teachers however, displayed knowledge that a particular conflict style would be good for schools.

Head teachers' knowledge on conflict management strategies is shown on Table 10.

Table 10

Knowledge of Head Teachers on Conflict Management Strategies

Mark (Score)	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	8	80
1	1	10
2	1	10
3	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

Out of the responses from the ten subjects, 80% displayed less the knowledge on conventional conflict management strategies available to them by scoring zero in the test, 10% scored 1 mark and the remaining 10% scored 2 Marks as shown on Table 10.

Knowledge of head teachers on steps to follow in addressing school conflicts is shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Display of Knowledge in Steps to follow in Addressing School Conflicts

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
0	2	20
1	3	30
2	Nil	Nil
3	1	10
4	2	20
5	1	10
6	1	10
Total	**10**	**100**

Table 11 shows that , 50% of Head teachers scored low marks on steps to follow to resolve staff conflicts, the remaining 50% displayed average knowledge on procedures to follow in addressing staff conflicts.

The responses of the head teachers on self-assessment regarding their knowledge on conflict management skills and knowledge are presented on Tables 12 – 14.

Head teachers' knowledge on specific conflict management patterns for addressing conflicts is shown on Table 12.

Table 12

Head Teachers Knowledge on Availability of Specific Conflict Management Patterns

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Yes	3	30
No	7	70
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 12, out of the 10 Head teachers, 70% indicated that they do not have knowledge of a particular pattern for dealing with conflicts in their schools, 30% however acknowledged they have a structures for dealing with conflicts.

Table 13 shows the position of the subjects regarding the need for training in conflicting management issues.

Table 13

Head Teachers' Position on Need for Conflict Management Training and Orientation

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	100
No	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

All the subjects acknowledged the need for some form of orientation or training on conflict management issues for them.

Table 14 shows how head teachers rated themselves in terms of their knowledge level in conflict management.

Table 14

Head Teachers' Self Rating on Conflict Management Knowledge

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Excellent	1	10
Good	5	50
Satisfactory	4	40
Poor knowledge	Nil	Nil
Very Poor	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

Table 14 shows that 40% of the Head teachers rated their knowledge of conflict management issues as satisfactory, 50% rated themselves good and the remaining 10% settled for excellent.

With reference to Tables 8 to 14, an attempt was made to establish the basic knowledge of head teachers on conflict management issues. Information provided by respondents as contained on the Tables shows that majority of the head teachers possessed very high knowledge on conflict definition. This is indicated by 100% correct response to a given item (see Table 8). It is however worth noting that greater percentages of the Head teachers displayed less knowledge on issues such as; (a) conflict management styles, (b) conflict management style ideal for the school organisation, (c) conflict management strategies, (d) procedures to follow in addressing conflicts, (e) conflict management patterns. Apparently, responses on Table 13 indicated that head teachers need some orientation on the subject matter under investigation; as 100% of the subjects called for formal training on conflict management.

It is however worth noting that in spite of the shortcomings of head teachers enumerated above, a self assessment rating of head teachers on their knowledge in conflict management resulted as follows; 10% rated themselves excellent in the performance, 50% said they are good, while 40% held the view that their knowledge base on the subject- matter is satisfactory.

The need for head teachers to have knowledge on conflicts is directly related to their access to the needed information will aid them to make informed decisions during conflict situations in a professional manner. March and Simon (1993) hold the view that conflict situations cause organisations to have a collapsed procedure for decision making and close the door for alternate actions. Thus, in this context the actions and inactions of the leader determine the trend of affairs in the organisational settings in times of conflicts. By and large the knowledge bases of leaders and that much head teachers should be such that it will enhance the utilisation of appropriate conflict skills and knowledge to run the school.

Again, as already indicated making right decisions stems from the availability relevant information and knowledge, and in the light of this, Hiltrop and Udall (as cited Manolescu and Deaconu), asserts that various conflict management styles are available for leaders to use to address conflicts. These options do have their merits and demerits as well as their procedures or patterns governing their application as a strategy for addressing conflicts. Deducing from the above, some conflict management styles may be ideal for the school settings and others may not. It is therefore expedient for leaders and for the sake of these discussions, head teachers to be supported to acquire in depth knowledge and skills in dealing with school conflicts. By this action various conflict management styles, their merits and demerits and patterns would be at the disposal of the head

teachers and thereby guide them to make informed decisions during conflict management situations in their schools.

Research Question Three: What is the attitude of the Head teachers towards conflict situations?

Tables 15 to 18 represent the self - evaluation responses of head teachers regarding their attitude towards conflict situations in general. Table 15, shows the response of head teachers as per whether conflicts should be entertained in organisations or not.

Table 15

Head Teachers' Response on Encouraging Conflicts in Schools

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Yes	3	30
No	7	70
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 15 information available indicates that 70% of Head teachers are of the view that conflict situation should not be entertained in the schools, however, 30% responded positive to case that conflicts should be entertained in schools.

Table 16 shows how Head teachers attitude in items of strategies to be adopted in solving school conflicts.

Table 16

Head Teachers' Response on Strategies to Address Conflicts   Non-Violent and Coercive Strategies against Violent and Coercive Strategies

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Non-violent and coercive strategies	10	100
Violent and coercive strategies	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

On Table 16, all the subjects are the view that in managing school conflicts, a Non-violent and coercive practice needs to be adopted.

Table 17 shows the perception of Head teachers regarding conflicts in schools.

Table 17

Head Teachers' Attitude towards Conflict in the School Organisation

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Conflict is destructive	6	60
Conflict is useful	4	40
Total	**10**	**100**

On Table 17, the views of the subjects regard their general perception about conflict is as follows; 60% are of the view that conflict is destructive, whiles 40% sees conflict as useful.

Tables 18 to 20 represent the summary of the observations by Circuit supervisors and presented to the investigator through interviews.

Table 18

Head Teachers Attitude towards Staff Relations in Conflict Situations

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Very Good	1	10
Good	2	20
Satisfactory	6	60
Poor	1	10
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 18, Circuit supervisors reported that about 30% of the Head teachers have high standards when it comes to building staff relations. The standards ranged from good to very good; whiles 60% attracted the rating of satisfactory. Table 18 further shows a low rating of 10% of the subjects lacking in the expected staff relations standards.

Table 19 displays information on the how circuit supervisors saw the climate in the schools, in the context of Head teachers and staff working attitudes, decision making procedures and cooperation amongst former and the latter.

Table 19 shows views of Circuit Supervisors with respect to their observation of atmosphere of schools sampled for the study.

Table 19

Circuit Supervisors' view of the school atmosphere of Head teachers

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Very Good	2	20
Good	1	10
Satisfactory	7	70
Poor	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

Responses displayed on Table 19 shows that all the school has acceptable school atmosphere. Things evidenced as follows, 20% have very good atmosphere, 10% with good atmosphere and finally 70% with satisfactory atmospheres.

Table 20, shows the stands of circuit supervisors on the general disposition of Head teachers towards conflicts.

Table 20

Circuit Supervisors' View on General Disposition of Head teachers towards Conflicts

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Very Good	4	40
Good	2	20
Satisfactory	3	30
Poor	1	10
Very Poor	Nil	Nil
Total	**10**	**100**

Table 20 indicates that the general conduct of head teachers on the issues of conflict is appropriate as evidenced by 90% of the subjects rated satisfactory to very good; with only 10% rated poor in performance.

Tables 21 to 24 shows the views expressed by teachers on the attitudes of head teachers during a conflict management situation which they witnessed or had information of it. Head teachers' respect for staff members during conflict situations as observed by teachers is present on Table 21.

Table 21

Head Teachers Respect for Staff during Conflict Situation

Responses	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Head teacher was disrespectful	Nil	Nil
Head teacher was somehow disrespectful	5	5
Head teacher was somehow respectful	35	35
Head teacher was every respectful	60	60
Total	**10**	**100**

Response on Table 21, shows that 60% of teachers indicated that full respect was accorded by Head teacher during conflict situation, 35% acknowledged receiving some degree of respect, while 5% held the view that Head teacher was somehow disrespectful. In all none of the teachers express gross disrespect on the part of Head teacher.

Head teachers' approach towards consensus building in conflict situations per the view of teachers is shown on Table 22.

Table 22

Head Teachers' Consensus Building Approach in Conflict Situations

Responses	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Head teacher accepted staff inputs	90	90
Head teacher did not accept inputs from staff	10	10
Total	**10**	**100**

Table 22 shows that out of the 100 respondents, 90% indicated that Head teachers accepted their inputs towards the resolution of conflict situation, whiles 10% indicated that their views were not accepted.

Table 23 present the views of teachers regarding the strategies Head teachers adopt in reaching compromises among contending parties.

Tables 23

Head Teachers' Method of Ensuring Compromise

Responses	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Head teacher coerced teachers into agreement	40	40
Head teacher did not coerced teachers into agreement	60	60
Total	**10**	**100**

From Table 23 records show that Head teachers adopted less coercive strategies to reach agreements. This evidenced as follows; 60% of the respondents

are of the view that coercion was the style of the head, whiles 40% say head teachers uses coercion.

Table 24, shows the level of satisfaction of teachers in the context of the role played by the head teacher in managing a conflict situation.

Table 24

Staff Satisfaction of Head Teachers' Role in Managing the Conflict Situation

Responses	No. of Head teachers	Percentage (%)
Very dissatisfied	Nil	Nil
Somehow dissatisfied	4	4
Somehow satisfied	22	22
Very satisfied	74	74
Total	**10**	**100**

Table 24 shows that 74% of teachers were very satisfied with the role of Head teacher in managing the conflict situation, 22% indicated that they were somehow satisfied; whiles 4% indicated that they were somehow dissatisfied. One of the teachers expressed that they were very dissatisfied.

Tables 15 to 24, covers the self assessed responses of head teachers on their perception, stands and attitudes towards conflict management in schools. The Tables further show the responses of teachers and circuit supervisors to substantiate or refute the stands of head teachers. Responses from head teachers as displayed on the Table 15 they see conflicts as a phenomenon that should not

be entertained in the school organisation. This point is reinforced on Table 17, as 60% of the subjects hold the view that conflict is destructive, whiles 40% thinks otherwise. In this context, Table 16 shows that 100% head teachers advocate for a non-violent and coercive approaches to conflict resolutions. The stands of the head teachers are confirmed by teachers on Table 23, where 60% indicated that Head teachers did not coerce conflict parties into agreement, whiles 40% think otherwise, Notwithstanding, the stands of Circuit supervisors' on the general attitude of head teachers as shown on Table 20, indicates that 80% of the head teachers have a general acceptable attitude towards conflict and this range from satisfactory to very good – with only 10% displaying poor general attitude.

On Table 18, again circuit Supervisors ranked 90% of head teachers as having a range of satisfactory to very good attitude on staff relations, with 10% ranked poor. Teachers' responses as indicated on Table 22, shows that 95% are of the view that head teachers showed respect to staff during a conflict situation, 5% think heads were somehow disrespectful

Again, on Table 22, 90% of the respondents indicated that head teachers accepted staff inputs during the conflict management process, 10% think otherwise. Notwithstanding, Circuit Supervisors, on Table 19, indicate that 100% of the subjects under the study have school atmospheres ranging from satisfactory to very good. However, 70% of the subjects fall under the satisfactory range whiles 20% and 10% fall under very good and good respectively. In the context of all issues raised in this paragraph, Table 24 shows that, Teachers are satisfied with the attitude of head teachers towards conflict management issues. This is

indicated by 74% of the teacher respondents saying they are very satisfied, 22% saying they are somehow satisfied, with 4% showing dissatisfaction.

From the results found on Tables discussed under the research question three, it has been established that the attitude of Head teachers in the sense of their perception of conflicts in the school organisation is that conflicts are negative and destructive and should not be entertained (see Tables 15 and 17), they however have the view that should it occur non-violent and non-coercive strategies should be used to settle it, as indicated on Table 16. This attitude of head teachers are on Table 23. In spite of the stands of head teachers on conflicts as an unpleasant practice, Circuit Supervisors observed that the general attitude of head teachers towards conflicts is   acceptable as shown on Table 20. Several authors including Pondy, (1992 and Duestsch, (1973) have indicated in the works that conflicts are inevitable in organisations and that they need not be considered always negative and destructive. Cole (as cited by Manelescu and Deaconu n.d.) is of the view that there is no organisation that is perfect and free from the difficulties of human interactions or employee relations. In view of this, Tjosvold et al (2003) and Pondy (1992) informs that conflicts do have positive functions in organisations; and that conflict is desirable and should be entertained in work places to improve the performance of both the organisation and its members. This view can be describe as the contemporary conflict view of conflict as against the tradition and behaviourist stands of conflict being dysfunctional and negative.

In order for conflict to act as a functional feature in the school organisation, school managers should be skilful and professional in dealing with

conflicts. According to Longaretti and Wilson (2000) various authors such as Deutsch, (1993), Shantz and Hobert, (1989) and Opotow, (1991) hold the view that the above named leadership roles of Head teachers entail dealing with emotional issues, self esteem of parties, handling communications , building rapport, encouraging collective decision making ,reasoning, critical thinking and evaluation of situations and building of consensus. Accordingly, head teachers' stand of adopting non-violent and coercive strategies to address conflicts is in line with contemporary conflict advocacy and very appropriate, (see Table 16).

Again, in the context of this discussion, Tables 18 and 21 shows that head teachers have acceptable practices in terms of building staff relations and showing respect for staff members in conflict situations. In sum, Table 19 shows that Circuit Supervisors consider the majority of the head teachers operating in a healthy school atmosphere. In line with this, teachers' response as indicated on Table 19 shows that teachers are satisfied with the role of head teachers in conflict management practice in the schools. Thus, in this direction, conflict will be a functional feature as indicated by Deutsch (1973), that when conflict situations attract integrative solutions doors are opened for collective decision making to address concerns to the benefit of the organisation and its members.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Head teachers have several duties to accomplish in the educational industry owing to their position in the educational leadership structure. These duties are termed administrative tasks by a number of authors including (Campbell, Bridges & Nystrand, 1977; Musaazi, 1984). Conflicts are one of such administrative tasks head teachers are expected to manage in order to create a peaceful atmosphere for teaching and learning activities. The problem at stake is whether head teachers are prepared in the dimensions of knowledge, skills and understanding of conflict management issues in order to manage them professionally. To throw more light on these issues, this study was carried with the aim of exploring the views and stands of primary school head teachers on conflict management as part of their educational leadership responsibilities and administrative task, with emphasis on conflict issues.

Thus, in the light of the above, the study was structured to establish the readiness of Head teachers in basic schools in the context of their insight / understanding, skills and knowledge in basic conflict management practices in their schools. It was to establish the general attitude of primary schools Head

teachers towards conflicts issues as they emerge in the school administration process and how they dealt with such conflict situations.

Accordingly, three research questions were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive research design type was used for the study. It was an ideal option because the studies aimed at looking into events related to the past and yet have effect on the present conditions in school administration and management. Ten (10) primary schools were selected for the study. Within the selected primary schools all ten (10) Head teachers were sampled from stratified nine (9) circuits – and served as the main subjects for the study. One hundred (100) class teachers and nine (9) circuit supervisors also participated in the research exercise – and served as additional sources of information.

Various sampling types were used in selecting the participants for the study. The techniques used were simple random sampling, purposive sampling and accidental sampling. (Best, 1977; Kumekpor, 2002). Varieties of instruments were used to gather information, these included tests, questionnaires, observation and interviews. Head teachers formed the main source of information, however class teachers and circuit supervisors were used to assess head teacher attitude towards conflicts by virtue of triangulation principle. Responses received from the subjects and other sources were scaled and then taken through statistical procedures such as percentages and averages for presentation on tables and for discussions.

In sum, the study was designed to study conflict management knowledge and practices of head teachers in ten (10) primary schools in Sekondi Takoradi

Metropolis. The scope of the study was restricted to exploring how head teachers are abreast with the above-mentioned areas under conflict management and their general attitude to the concept of conflict in school organisations.

The study revealed that most primary school head teachers do not have clear insight on the following conflict issues, forms of conflict, causes of conflict, basic conflict styles, conflict responses as shown by individuals and factors influencing the responses.

Again, on the issues of Head teachers' knowledge on conflict management issues, the study showed that most heads have not been oriented in conflict management practices formally; consequently, they displayed less knowledge in styles and procedures for conflict management in schools via their responses. Nevertheless, subjects had in-depth knowledge on what constitute a conflict situation in the schools.

Furthermore, on the attitude of head teachers towards conflict, the study showed that head teachers view conflicts as destructive and should not be entertained in the school setup, yet should they come up, a non - violent and no n-coercive strategies should be used to address it. It was further revealed that most head teaches have good interpersonal relations with staff in situations of conflict, consequently, most schools used for the study were identified as having acceptable school atmosphere. Finally, the study showed that head teachers do respect teachers and accept their inputs for resolving conflicts; hence teachers showed satisfaction on how head teachers have managed conflicts in the schools.

Conclusions

The fundamental reason for this study was to explore the knowledge, skills, attitude and comprehension of Head teachers in basic conflict management issues and practices. Responses of Head teachers, Circuit Supervisors and teachers formed the main sources of information for the study. Responses received were treated for discussions, out of which the under listed findings were acknowledged.

The first research question sought to answer the question whether head teachers Head teachers have insight on conflict situations in schools. The study revealed that most primary school head teachers do not have clear understanding on the following conflict issues, forms of conflict, causes of conflict, basic conflict styles, conflict responses as shown by individuals in conflict and factors influencing their responses. The findings therefore answer the research question one that head teachers do not have deeper insight into conventional conflict situations in schools.

Referring to research question two which sought to establish the knowledge base of head teachers on conflict management issues, findings indicated that most heads have not been through any formal orientation in conflict management practices and issues; the resultant effect is that, most head teachers displayed less knowledge in the conventional styles and procedures for conflict management in schools. Again, this goes to indicate that head teachers do not have in depth knowledge on conventional conflict management issues.

Finally, Research question three, sought to establish the attitude of head teachers towards conflicts in general. The findings indicated that head teachers see conflicts as destructive and should not be entertained in the school setup; however, they hold the view that non-violent and non-coercive strategy should be used to address conflicts in school should it crop up. The study further revealed that most head teaches have good interpersonal relations with staff in the situations of conflict. The study furthered showed that head teachers do respect teachers and accept their inputs for resolving conflicts; consequently teachers are satisfied with how head teachers have managed conflicts in the schools. The findings show that even though, head teachers see conflict as negative their general attitude and practical approach towards is appropriate, and have been able to create conducive school atmosphere.

The results of the study appropriately addressed the research questions advanced for the study. To this end, the study has addressed the problem for which answers are being sought for. The most significant revelation of the study is that most head teachers have not received any form of orientation on conflict management issues consequently, they could not express their comprehension and knowledge on basic conventional conflict management issues in their responses. Interestingly these deficiencies s have not adversely affected their leadership practices as Chief Executives of the school. This is evidenced in the good inter-personal relations head teachers have with staff and the peaceful atmosphere prevailing in the schools as revealed by the study.

In sum, the study has been successful and relevant; and had established the fact that even though head teachers showed some deficiencies in their competence on conflict management issues during the "pen and paper assessment", those deficiencies have not rendered them handicap in addressing school conflicts or running the school administrative systems–this is because the study did not have any evidence or encountered a chaotic school atmosphere adversely undermining the objectives of the school organisation. Head teachers however want some orientation on the subject under investigation. The study however, observed that head teachers in selected schools have good school atmosphere and teachers are satisfied with the role head teachers have played in managing school conflicts.

Recommendations

On the grounds of the research findings and discussions the following recommendations are offered for consideration;

1. Prior to their appointment the Sekondi Takoradi Metro Education Office give head teachers orientation on conflict management practices and knowledge. This action will help them become abreast on contemporary practices and theories for handling conflicts.

2. Head teachers Association of the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis should be given the support to run occasional seminars and workshops for its members on conflict management skills.

3. The management of the Sekondi Takoradi Metro Education Office should highlight the positive and negative functions of conflicts in the mainstream educational administration and management practices. This will reduce the

negative picture conflict portrays and pave way for its positive components to be exploited for development.

4. There is the need for head teachers to be given some instructional manual or handbook(s) on conflict resolution for quick and easy reference in times conflict situations.

5. It is recommended that further studies be conducted on conflict practices in schools from time to by the Management of the Sekondi Takoradi Metro Education Office in order to become informed   about situations at schools and design appropriate remedial actions to ensure peaceful co-existence of staff, pupils, head teachers and the school community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT OF HEAD TEACHERS

TEST ITEMS/QUESTIONS

Dear Head teacher,

Congratulations, you have been selected to be part of a survey on school conflicts, accept my commendation. In an attempt to find out the state of conflict management issues in schools, you are requested to respond to the items on this document.

Please give your candid view to the best of your ability; those items which you do not have clues should not be a problem, just leave the place blank or indicate "*no idea".*　Thank you for the attention.

1. Define/Explain the term "conflict" as it occurs in your school.

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    …………………………………………………………………………………

2. State the forms in which conflicts may assume in school settings.

    a.　………………………………………………………………

b. …………………………………………………………………………….

c. …………………………………………………………………………….

3. What are the possible causes of conflicts in your school?

   i. …………………………………………………………………………

   ii. …………………………………………………………………………

   iii. ………………………………………………………………………….

4. Name the conflict management styles available for your use.

   iv. …………………………………………………………………………

   v. …………………………………………………………………………

   vi. …………………………………………………………………………

   vii. …………………………………………………………………………

   viii. …………………………………………………………………………

5. For each style named above (Item 4), complete the table below by stating

one characteristic of the style and responses of disputants to that conflict style.

Conflict Management Style	Characteristics	Responses of disputants to the conflict style

6. Amongst the styles identified (Items 4 &5) which one do you consider more

appropriate and practicable for managing school conflicts.

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Give reasons for your answer:

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7. State the ways in which your staff members may respond to conflict situations

in your school?

i)   …………………………………………………………………

ii)   …………………………………………………………………

iii) ………………………………………………………………….

iv)   …………………………………………………………………

v)   ………………………………………………………………….

8. State factors influencing responses to conflict feelings or situations.

    i.   ………………………………………………………………..

    ii.   ………………………………………………………………..

    iii.   ………………………………………………………………..

    iv.   ………………………………………………………………..

    v.   ………………………………………………………………..

9. Should conflicts be encouraged in schools?   Yes ( )   No ( ).

10. Give reasons why conflict is good in schools (if any)

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11. State steps you will follow to deal with   a conflict situation involving two of your staff members.

    i)   …………………………………………………………………

    ii)   …………………………………………………………………

    iii)   …………………………………………………………………

    iv)   …………………………………………………………………

    v)   …………………………………………………………………

    vi)   …………………………………………………………………

    vii)…………………………………………………………………

    viii)   ……………………………………………………………….

    ix)   …………………………………………………………………

    x)   …………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX B

SELF ASSESSMENT OF HEAD TEACHERS ON PRAGMATIC

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICE ATTITUDES

Dear Head teacher,

Congratulations, you have been selected to be part of a survey on school conflicts, accept my commendation. In an attempt to find out the state of conflict management issues in schools, you are requested to respond to the items on this document.

Please give your candid view to the best of your ability; those items which you do not have clues should not be a problem, just leave the place blank or indicate "*no idea".*   Thank you for the attention.

1.   Do you have a definite way of handling conflicts in your school?

Yes ( )   No ( )

If your response is "**yes**" describe the process;

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2. Have you had some in-service or formal orientation on conflict prevention,

management and resolution since you assumed office?

<div align="center">Yes ( )   No ( )</div>

3. Have you undergone any formal training in conflict management?

<div align="center">Yes ( )   No ( )</div>

4. With reference to your responses at Numbers 2 & 3, do you consider it

relevant for you and your staff members to undergo training in conflict

management? Yes ( )   No ( )

5. How will you rate yourself in terms your knowledge and skills in dealing with

conflicts?

Excellent ( ), Good ( ), Satisfactory ( ), Poor ( ), Very Poor ( ).

 6.Presently, do you have a guide, manual or handbook of instructions

for dealing with conflicts in the school? Yes ( )   No ( )

If your answer is "*yes"* mention the materials;

    i.   ……………………………………………………

    ii. …………………………………………………….

    iii. ……………………………………………………

    iv. …………………………………………………….

    v.   …………………………………………………..

In your view describe the trend affairs in your school with respect to conflict prevention, management and resolution in your school. *(Suggest ways to improve the level conflict management in your school)*…………………………………………………………………………………

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APPENDIX C

PERSONAL/SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR HEAD TEACHERS

Dear Head teacher,

Congratulations, you have been selected to be part of a survey on school conflicts, accept my commendation. In an attempt to find out the state of conflict management issues in schools, you are requested to respond to the items on this document.

Please give your candid view to the best of your ability; those items which you do not have clues should not be a problem, just leave the place blank or indicate "***no idea".*** Thank you for the attention.

1. Do you consider yourself as having adequate knowledge and skill to handle conflicts in your school? Yes ( )   No ( )

2. Do you accept values, divergent views and different opinions from subordinate when conflict arises? Yes ( )   No ( )

3. Do you accept conflict as opportunity for growth, self assessment and development of respect for others? Yes ( )   No ( )

4. Do you share the view that conflict is inevitable in the school organisation? Yes ( )   No ( )

5. Do you hold to the view that non violent, non intimidation and non-coercive and non threatened base conflict resolution is desirable and ideal for civil societies? Yes ( )   No ( ) ; Give reasons for your response

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6. Do you see conflict as destructive in the school and must be dealt with

   once and for all. Yes ( )   No ( )

ASSESSMENT OF HEAD TEACHERS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

SKILLS BY STAFF MEMBERS

Dear Colleague,

You are requested to give your opinion on how your head teacher handled a conflict situation of which you were party or a witness. This questionnaire is to be answered from the dimension of differences that has ever occurred between you and your head teacher, staff member, pupil or parent, and how your head teacher exhibited his/her conflict management knowledge and skills as the Chief Executive of the school.

Please give your honest response to the questions below. Be assured that your responses would be treated confidentially, and in no way will your responses be linked to your identity.

Thank you for the cooperation.

1. To what extent did your head give you opportunity to relate your issues and concerns during the conflict situation?

    Had no opportunity to relate issues and concerns ( )

    Had some opportunity to relate to issues and concerns ( )

    Had full opportunity to relate issues and concerns ( )

    2. How well did your head understand your issues and concerns?

        Did not understand at all ( )

Understood partially   ( )

Understood fully ( )

3. How respectful was your head towards you during the conflict situation?

Very disrespectful ( )

Somehow disrespectful ( )

Somehow respectful ( )

Very respectful ( )

4. If you reached any agreement, do you feel you had a appropriate level of input

in determining the content and terms of those agreement?

Yes ( )   No ( )

5. Did you feel coerced by head teacher to reach an agreement?

Yes ( )   No ( )

6. When you compare the situation of conflict before and after your

Head teacher's role, how has it affected your relationship with the affected

party?

Relation has broken completely ( )

Relationship not very cordial ( )

Relationship has improved ( )

7. How productive or unproductive was your Head teacher's role   resolving the

conflict situation?

Unproductive ( )

Somehow productive ( )

Very productive ( )

8. Concerning the impartiality of your Head teacher, how did you

 feel?

        Favoured my opponent ( )

        Favoured me ( )

        Was neutral favoured neither parties ( )

9. How satisfied were you with the outcome of the role of your head in solving

the conflict?

Very dissatisfied ( )   Somehow dissatisfied ( )   Somehow satisfied ( )

Very satisfied ( )

10. Was an agreement reached between you and the party?

        Yes ( )   No ( )

If you answer is "no" what role did your Head teacher playing an attempt to deal

with the conflict situation? (*Please give detail narration*)

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11. In your view what is the general attitude of your Head teacher when it comes to. conflict management in the school

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12. As a prospective Head teacher what suggestions will you give to your Head teacher in order to improve or sharpen his/her conflict management skills or attitude?

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INTERVIEW GUIDE/SCORE SHEET FOR CIRCIUT SUPERVISORS

Introduction:

School's Name:

……….:………………………………………………………………………………

Circuit:

………………………………………………………………………………………

Name of Circuit Supervisor:

……………………………………………………………………………………….

Dates in which school was visited by the Circuit Supervisor:

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………

Date Circuit Supervisor was interviewed:

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Instructions for Interviewer:

 Scale for quantifying responses:

Very good = 4; Good = 3; Satisfactory = 2; Poor = 1; Very Poor = 0.

Interview questions and corresponding ratings for circuit supervisors.

S/No.	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	RESPONSE/VALUE (RATING)
1	How do you the attitude of Head teacher towards the development of interpersonal relationships in the school.(In terms of openness, mixing with people and as team leader)	
2	In your opinion – based on your observations - what is the climate of the school?	
3	What is your overall impression about the attitude of the Head teacher towards conflict in schools? (In terms of tolerating differences in opinion, reaction to opposition etc.)	

Any other remarks

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……………………………………………………………………………………………

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SAMPLED SCHOOLS AND NUMBER OF CONFLICT SITUATIONS

PREVOIUSLY HANDLED BY HEADTEACHERS

S/No.	Code names for school	No. of Conflict cases handled in the school
1	NKOP - 01	1
2	TSP – 02	4
3	BMP - 03	2
4	MYP - 04	7
5	AMAP - 05	3
6	NTCP - 06	8
7	WTP - 07	3
8	TAP - 08	2
9	SMAP - 09	1
10	RPP - 10	3
Total	**10**	**34**

APPENDIX G

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION RECEIVED FROM THE METRO

EDUCATION OFFICE - TAKORADI