

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS
IN THE ASHANTI REGION**

By

Ellen Toku, (BA. Industrial Art)

KNUST

A thesis submitted to the Department of Managerial Science, Kwame Nkrumah
University of Science and Technology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (HRM OPTION)

School of Business, KNUST

College of Arts and Social Sciences

August, 2014

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Business Administration (Human Resource Management Option) Degree and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

..... KNUST

Ellen Toku

Signature

Date

(PG 7645412)

Certified by:

.....

Dr. Mrs. Florence Ellis

Signature

Date

Certified by:

.....

Mr. J. K. Tuckson

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

Conflict has always been an inseparable part of all organizations due to the fact that there are differences in the behavior of the various workers within the organization. However, conflict in spite of its negative effects has its own positive outcomes. This has therefore given rise to the theory of conflict management which ensures that the positive aspect of conflict is maximized while the negative aspect is minimized as much as possible. This study therefore looked at the concept of conflict management in institutional growth. The main objective of the study was to explore conflict management in basic schools in Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study reviewed literature on the concept of conflict management in organizations. Face-to-face interviews were used to solicit responses from teachers alongside participant observation. The sampling technique used by the researcher which aided in the collection of data was the purposive sampling technique. Content analysis was used in analyzing the data collected. The study discovered that the integrating style of managing conflict was the most widely used conflict management style in basic schools in the region. This style placed more emphasis on high concern for self and others as well. It was also discovered that of all the challenges encountered in managing conflicts, lack of cooperation on the part of the two parties was considered the most striking challenge. Furthermore, it was also discovered that conflict management played a major role in strengthening the bond between management and workers. The study concluded on the note that the most influencing factor in managing conflict in organizations was organizational culture. The study also recommended that organizations should organize training and educational programs for their members to enable them accommodate and deal effectively with the issue of individual differences in the workplace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My profound gratitude goes to the Almighty God who gave me the knowledge, strength and ability to make this research a reality. I wish to acknowledge the immerse help given to me by numerous lecturers in this institution whose contributions shaped this study. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Mrs. Ellis, a lecturer at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology for her constructive and useful supervision throughout the research period.



DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my lovely husband, Mr. James Cosmos Appiah and my parents for their help and prayers. And also to all my friends who supported me in diverse ways. May the good Lord richly bless them all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Abbreviations	xii
 CHAPTER ONE	 1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 Background of the Study	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	3
1.2 Objectives of the Research	4
1.2.1 General Objective	4
1.2.2 Specific Objectives	4
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Significance of the Study	5
1.5 Methodology	6
1.6 Scope of the Study	7
1.7 Limitations of the Study	7
1.8 Organization of the Study	8

CHAPTER TWO	9
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.0 Introduction	9
2.1 Conflict and its Management as an Organizational Phenomenon.....	9
2.1.1 <i>Definitions of Conflict Management</i>	12
2.2 Conflict Management Styles	13
2.2.1 <i>Integrating Style</i>	18
2.2.2 <i>Obliging Style</i>	18
2.2.3 <i>Dominating Style</i>	19
2.2.4 <i>Avoiding Style</i>	20
2.2.5 <i>Compromising Style</i>	20
2.3 Factors that influence Conflict Management	23
2.3.1 <i>Leadership and Management Style</i>	23
2.3.2 <i>Organizational Culture</i>	24
2.3.3 <i>Organizational Structure</i>	25
2.3.4 <i>Organizational Policies and Procedures</i>	26
2.3.5 <i>Time and Venue</i>	26
2.4 Challenges in Managing Conflicts	27
2.5 Roles of Conflict Management in Institutional Growth	29
2.6 Conceptual Framework of the Study	32
2.7 Conclusion	33
CHAPTER THREE	35
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE	35
3.0 Introduction	35

3.1.0 Research Methodology	35
3.1.1 Research Design	36
3.1.2 Research Strategy	37
3.2 Sources of Data	38
3.2.1 Primary Data	38
3.2.2 Secondary Data.....	38
3.3 Population.....	39
3.4 Sampling Techniques	40
3.5 Data Collection.....	40
3.5.1 Interview	41
3.5.2 Interview Guide.....	41
3.5.3 Interviewees	42
3.5.4 Observation.....	42
3.6 Data Analysis Techniques	42
3.7 Organizational Profile	43
3.7.1 Development of Education in Ghana.....	46
3.8 Conclusion.....	49
CHAPTER FOUR.....	50
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	50
4.0 Introduction	50
4.1 Interviewees Background	50
4.2 Findings and Analysis	51
4.3 Conflict Management Styles	52
4.4 Factors that influence Conflict Management Practices	55
4.5 Challenges in Managing Conflicts	59

4.6 Roles of Conflict Management in Institutional Growth	63
4.7 Conclusion	66
CHAPTER FIVE.....	67
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	67
5.0 Introduction	67
5.1 Summary of Major Findings	67
5.1.1 Conflict Management Practices in Basic Schools	67
5.1.2 Factors influencing Conflict Management	68
5.1.3 Challenges encountered in Managing Conflicts.....	68
5.1.4 Roles of Conflict Management in Institutional Growth.....	69
5.2 Conclusion.....	69
5.3 Recommendations	70
5.3.1 Training Programs	70
5.3.2 Education on Conflict Management	70
5.3.3 Flexibility of Organizational Structure.....	71
5.3.4 Flexibility of Organizational Culture	71
5.3.5 Leadership Style.....	72
5.3.6 Time and Venue	72
REFERENCES.....	73
APPENDIX	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Managing Interpersonal Conflict	21
Table 3.1 Sex of Respondents	39

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LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1 <i>Source: Adapted from Rahim (2002)</i>	17
Fig. 2.2 <i>Source: Field Survey (2014)</i>	33
Fig. 3.1 <i>Source: Google.com</i>	44
Fig. 3.2 <i>Source: Google.com</i>	44
Figure 4.1 <i>Source: Field Survey, (2014)</i>	53
Fig. 4.2 <i>Factors influencing Conflict Management</i>	59
Fig. 4.3 <i>Source: Field Survey, (2014)</i>	62
Figure 4.4 <i>Roles of Conflict Management</i>	66



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KNUST - Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

GNAT - Ghana National Association of Teachers

CTA- Concerned Teachers Association

JHS - Junior High School

R/C - Roman Catholic

D/A - District Assembly

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Conflict has gradually become an unavoidable situation in every institution including educational institutions in Ghana. The dynamic nature of the society in which we reside may bring about incompatibilities which may eventually lead to conflicts. According to Rahim (2002), conflict generally refers to differences in opinions and perceptions concerning a particular issue at a particular period of time. It usually arises when issues and interests change over time due to social, political and economic dynamisms in the society in which we live in, (Tjosvold, 1993). Because of the unavoidable nature of conflicts in all institutions, there is therefore the need for institutions to learn to deal with them effectively to minimize their negative impact and maximize their positive impact on institutions (Almost, 2006). The incompatibilities which lead to conflict could bring about both negative and positive outcomes. However, the positive or negative impact of conflict on the individual and institution would basically depend on how it is managed. Managing conflict may require the adaptation of certain practices known as conflict management practices.

Conflict management practices have become one of the major areas of concern to many human resource managers over time. They are simply the activities or remedies put in place to manage disagreements and incompatibilities in institutions in order to maintain peace, stability and also achieve greater output (Kantek and Gezer, 2009). In spite of the fact that conflict management practices have been in use for many years, these practices and styles were continually modified as the nature of conflicts

change. According to Simmon and Peterson (2000), conflict management does not necessarily mean the total elimination of conflict as it is in the case of conflict resolution, but rather, the effective management of conflicts to achieve a positive outcome out of the conflict situation while reducing the negative outcome of the conflict to the minimum. In other words, it is the process of capitalizing on the positive outcomes of conflicts and eliminating the negative outcomes. According to Cox (2003), conflict management minimizes the negative impact of conflict and promotes the positive outcome of conflicts. The author further commented that conflict resolution amounts to throwing out the baby together with the bath water. In the attempt to manage conflict effectively, some approaches have been identified by some authors in this field.

Earlier researchers such as Follett (1940) found conflict managed by individuals as dominating, compromising or integrating. However, some institutions adapt methods such as coercion and negotiation in managing their conflicts. Coercion is where force is used in dealing with conflicts while negotiation takes the form of mutual agreement between the two parties in managing the conflict situations. Most researchers in this field of study are of the notion that in order to gain the best from conflicts and reduce the negative outcome of conflicts, diagnosis and intervention of the problem would be necessary (Gordon, 2003; Maccoby and Studder, 1998).

According to Gordon (2003), diagnosis is the stage where the actual cause of the conflict is detected while the intervention stage is when appropriate solutions are identified to manage the problem. The author further commented that the dependency of intervention on proper diagnosis gives rise to an interrelationship

between these two processes. The author again added that proper diagnosis of the nature and cause of conflicts could lead to the adaptation of appropriate interventions to facilitate effective management of conflict. This research therefore sought to dive deep into the concept of conflict management and its influence on the overall performance of the organizations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Education is very important for the successful development of every nation. The education can either be formal or informal. The formal educational systems in Ghana have been put into categories depending on the age of the child. In Ghana, basic school comprises of Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary School and Junior High School. Ashanti Region currently has between 67.7% and 86.9% of its population in primary school and a range between 16.1 % and 22.4 % of the population in the Junior High School. This basic education equips the individual with the required skills to deal with basic problems they might encounter in their respective environments. Education enables individuals to acquire adequate knowledge on how to manage the various departments of their lives like their marital life. Furthermore, education enlightens individuals in making decisions concerning their jobs and other aspects of their lives. However, conflict which is an unavoidable phenomenon in all organizations is also present in basic schools in the Ashanti Region. Conflict being it organizational or interpersonal when not managed well may breed low morale and lack of cooperation among employees which at the long run could bring about poor organizational performance (Rahim, 2002). There is therefore the need to manage conflicts in educational institutions in order to capitalize on the constructive aspect of conflict.

The main objective of this study is basically to explore conflict management in basic schools in the Ashanti Region. This would be achieved by exploring conflict management strategies and their impact on organizational performance. The study also aims to examine the challenges and factors that influence conflict management in basic schools.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

The objective of the study has been divided into general objective and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to explore conflict management practices in selected basic schools in Ashanti Region.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. to identify conflict management practices (if any) adapted by basic schools in Ashanti Region.
2. to determine the factors that influence conflict management in basic schools in Ashanti Region.
3. to determine the challenges encountered in managing conflict in basic schools in Ashanti Region.
4. to identify the roles played by conflict management in achieving institutional performance in basic schools in Ashanti Region.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the objectives set above, the following questions needed to be answered:

1. which conflict management practices have been adapted in basic schools in Ashanti Region?
2. what are the factors that influence conflict management in basic schools in Ashanti Region?
3. what are the challenges faced by basic schools in Ashanti Region in managing conflicts?
4. what roles do conflict management play in achieving institutional performance in basic schools in Ashanti Region?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Education in general could be a vital tool in achieving the goals of any nation in the world. The same is with education in Ghana. Children in Ghana usually turn up to become more responsible when they are able to acquire the needed knowledge and skills through formal education in schools. Through education, the children learn to be independent in accomplishing certain tasks such as taking leadership positions. They learn to work on their own without the help of a third party in accomplishing their responsibilities. When conflict which is an unavoidable phenomenon is well managed, teachers working in educational institutions would gain high morale and would always be willing to put up their best in fulfilling their responsibilities as mentors to the pupils. This also helps to improve the overall performance of the teachers which could be evident in the performance of the pupils. Through education, the pupils could acquire skills in dealing with conflicts of all forms as they carry on

with their day-to-day activities. Cooperation among staff could easily be attained when there is effective management of conflict in institutions. This could be achieved when the problems and conflicts within the organization are resolved amicably ensuring unity and understanding among the workers. Individuals in their various homes could adapt the conflict management styles described in this study in managing their interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. For instance, resolving conflict within one's own self. Also, other stakeholders of education such as parents and government would benefit from this study because some of the conflict management styles discussed in this study could be adapted by these stakeholders in managing conflicts. For example, in a case where a teacher punishes a child severely, some form of tension or misunderstanding could arise between the teacher and the parent of the ward but through conflict management, mutual understanding could be achieved.

1.5 Methodology

The research was based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data were used because they gave firsthand information about the subject matter. The primary sources of data were obtained through face-to-face interviews and observations. The interviews comprised of nineteen (19) questions and a total of fifty two (52) respondents were interviewed. Content analysis approaches was used to analyze the data gathered because the questions for the interview sought to explore conflict management in basic schools and also establish relationships among concepts. Content analysis was used because it also provided insight into complex models of human thought and behaviors. Secondary sources of data were also

obtained from institutional reports, magazines and journals. This source of data was used because it gave additional information about the subject matter.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was to capture some selected educational institutions in Ashanti Region, precisely in the Bosome Freho District. This district was chosen because it is a new district and it has been realised that it easily encounters conflicts and difficulties in managing conflicts. Also, this scope was used because it enabled the researcher to have easy access to information needed and also easy access to the respondents who were mainly teachers. This study was therefore intended to explore conflict management in basic schools in the district and its role in institutional growth in the entire region. The study included the following concepts in an attempt to understand conflict management: the various conflict management styles, challenges in managing conflicts, factors that influence conflict management and the roles of conflict management in institutions growth in Ashanti Region.

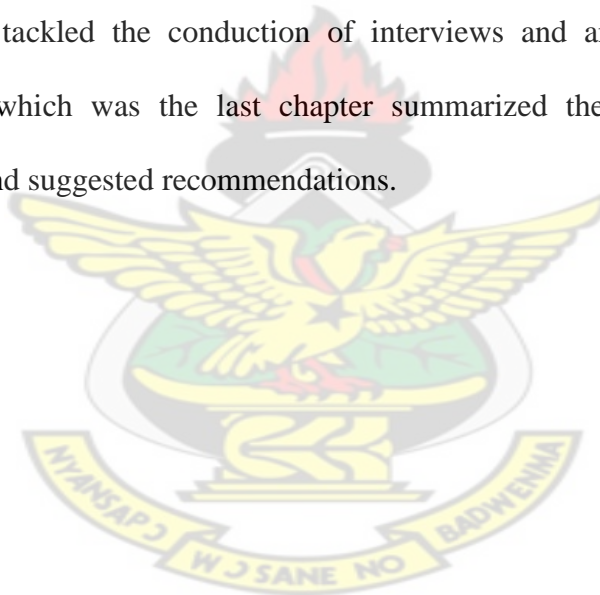
1.7 Limitations of the Study

Some challenges were encountered in this study especially in the data collection stage. The first limitation encountered in this study was the difficulty in obtaining data for the research work. Due to the fact that most of the respondents were in remote villages, it was quite difficult getting in touch with them. Another limitation was that, most of the respondents were reluctant in responding to the questions posed to them. This was due to the fact that some of the respondents were trying to be

secretive and concealed some vital information with the intention of protecting the image of their institution.

1.8 Organization of the Study

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the entire project was structured into five different chapters. Chapter one comprised of a number of items ranging from introduction of the project to organization of the study. Related literature on the topic was reviewed in chapter two while chapter three dealt with the methodology which entailed the methods used and the data analysis techniques used for the study. Chapter four tackled the conduction of interviews and analyzing of data while chapter five which was the last chapter summarized the major findings, drew conclusions and suggested recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Chapter one outlined the context within which the research was undertaken and set out the research objectives, research questions, the research methodologies and the scope of the research. This chapter does a critical review of literature done on conflict management. It begins with a discussion on conflict management as an important issue educational institutions have to deal with. This was then followed by discussion on various conflict management styles and the challenges encountered in managing conflicts. The chapter then further examined the factors which influence conflict management in basic schools and the role of conflict management in institutional growth. The chapter concludes with the development of a conceptual framework of the relationship between conflict management and institutional performance.

2.1 Conflict and its Management as an Organizational Phenomenon

Conflict in organizations may occur among colleagues at the workplace, between superiors and subordinates among others. Generally, conflict to the ordinary person is differences in opinions and perceptions concerning a particular issue at a particular time. Conflict has been defined by various authors in diverse ways. According to Roloff (1987 p. 496), “organizational conflict occurs when members engage in activities that are incompatible with those of their colleagues within their network, members of other collectivities, or unaffiliated individuals who utilize the services or products of the organization”. Mullins (2005) perceived conflict as a behavior that

obstructs the achievements of some other person's goals. In his definition, more emphasis was laid on conflict as an obstruction or hindrance to goals achievement while the earlier definition emphasizes on incompatibilities among members. Wall and Callister (1995, p.517) also viewed conflict as a process where one party perceives its interests are negatively influenced by another party. However, Mason and Mayer (1990) viewed conflict as the use of coercive power to get things done. Moreover conflict always arises when there are certain conditions. There should always be the existence of opposing forces as was suggested by Baron (1990). These opposing forces which lead to conflict may arise when issues and interest of parties change due to social, political and economic dynamisms in the environment (Trudel and Reio, 2011). Basically, there are some inconsistencies concerning the amount of conflict to be encouraged in institutions as suggested by various scholars in this field.

Several researchers who include Assael (1969) and Evans (1965) have suggested that some amount of conflict is always necessary for the success and the effectiveness of organizations. Also among these researchers was Pfeffer (1981) and Sportsman and Hamilton (2007) who strongly supported this notion when they commented that some degree of intra conflict and inter group conflict is always necessary in maintaining and achieving a self-critical and a creative edge among employees in an organization. Moreover, Jehn (1995) also showed consistency with the comment of the two authors above. However, Wall and Callister (1995) had a different opinion. They rather argued that conflict should not be encouraged at all in institutions as a means of achieving organizational goals. Past studies have shown that only few scholars have shown consistencies with the view of Wall and Callister (1995). One of such scholars included Mitroff (1995). According to Rahim (2002), organizations

should reward failures else employees would do what is safe and avoid taking risk. Schein (1993) acknowledged this when he emphasized the use of carrot instead of stick; rewarding failures instead of discouraging them to encourage risk taking. Conflicts are unavoidable and since they are very difficult to eliminate, institutions have to adapt appropriate ways of managing them in order to minimize their devastating effects on the institution.

According to Kolb and Putman (1992), conflict management is the process of organizing to resolve conflicts and planning to avoid conflict where possible. Conflict management however doesn't imply total avoidance or elimination of conflict but rather minimizing the destructive consequences of conflict and maximizing the constructive aspect of it. Studies have identified some useful approaches to managing conflicts. Some of them are to be empathic and have a good listening ear as a manager, have good communication skills, choosing the right time to resolve the conflict, avoiding judging of the parties, giving the parties equal chances to speak and an equal weight for their arguments. Some authors consider the use of power as a means of managing conflicts (Mason and Mayer, 1990).

Morgan (1986), is one of such authors who suggested that, power is a medium through which conflicts of interest are resolved. He also came up with three perspectives to issues associated with interest, power and conflict. They were: unitary perspective; which viewed the organization as a collaborative body which has a common goal, the pluralist perspective; which viewed the organization as a loose coalition of a range of different interest groups and the radical perspective; where conflict was unavoidable and the organization was seen as composed of opposing

forces of a class nature. Cole (1998) was consistent with the view of Morgan (1986) when he suggested the use of power to resolve conflicts. He further explained that pluralist managers tend to be proactive and defensive and political too. Such managers always ensure they win in competitions and always prefer to compromise and accommodate when dealing with conflicts. They also try to choose the right conflict management styles that best suit their purposes and power position at any point in time. Different authors have diverse views on what conflict management actually is.

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2.1.1 Definitions of Conflict Management

Conflict management has been defined differently by different authors. However, there is a common idea that runs through all the definitions given by these authors. Some of the diverse definitions of conflict management given by different authors have been stated below:

- a. Rahim (2002) defined conflict management as “.....*the process of maximizing the positive aspect of conflict while minimizing the negative aspect of conflict in order to enhance learning and improve organizational effectiveness.*”The author also considered good communication and problem solving as vital tools in managing conflicts.
- b. Conflict management was also defined by Burton (1998) as “*the process of identifying the main causes of tension in relationships being it interpersonal or intra-personal and dealing with them.....*” This definition implied that,

effective management of conflict required the identification of the main causes of the problem.

- c. According to Swanstom and Weissmann (2005), “..... *conflict management is seen as a requirement that is needed to initiate preventive measures to conflicts.*” The author further added that managing conflict required putting down appropriate measures to prevent the problem from reoccurring.
- d. Girard and Koch (1996) viewed conflict management as “.....*the act of putting in place measures to prevent a person from becoming ineffective.....*” These authors further explained that anytime there is conflict, the person involved is considered ineffective.

All the above definitions of conflict management helped the researcher to attain a deeper insight into the concept of conflict management. The definitions emphasized how to attain the best out of conflict situations in order to make the individual more effective. Therefore, in order to achieve these targets, some practices or styles would have to be adapted. These practices are known as conflict management practices or styles.

2.2 Conflict Management Styles

A lot of studies have been conducted in this area of conflict management. However, scholars have not been able to identify the one best style for managing conflict. These scholars maintained that the appropriateness of any given style depends on factors such as the situation and the nature of the conflict. Also, they considered a conflict management style as appropriate for a particular situation if only it was able

to provide effective solution to the problem. Rahim (2002), who is a renowned scholar in the field of conflict management, further acknowledged that, there is no one best approach to managing conflict. However, Likert and Likert (1976) suggested the problem solving style or the integrating style of managing conflict as the most appropriate in most situations. Many authors have come out with some diverse styles and mechanisms for managing conflicts. Among these authors was Follett (1940) who came up with three distinct ways of handling interpersonal conflicts; domination, compromise and integration. She also identified avoidance and suppression as other ways of dealing with conflicts in organizations. Blake and Mouton (1964) also proposed a conflict management model consisting of five distinct conflict management styles. These included forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising and problem solving. This conceptual scheme of conflict management by Blake and Mouton (1964) was later remolded by Thomas (1976) into five different styles based on “concern for others and concern for one’s own self”. Concern for one’s own self placed more emphasis on satisfying the interest of one’s own self at the expense of others’ interest. While concern for others placed more emphasis on satisfying the interest of other people at the expense of one’s own self. He called the concern for others, “cooperativeness” and the concern for one’s own self, “assertiveness”.

Assertiveness is the strength with which one party would like to maximize their goals and interests in relation to the other party’s goals. One party may maximize their total concerns (assertiveness) to the total disadvantage of the other party’s needs and objectives (uncooperativeness) amounting to a “competitive” position. Also, neglecting personal needs (assertiveness) as contributing to the achievement of the

other party's needs (cooperativeness) could result in an "accommodative" relationship. "Compromise" behavior is neither accommodating nor competitiveness because it satisfies only a portion of both parties' interests. Moreover, fulfilling one's expectations (assertiveness) and that of another's (cooperativeness) simultaneously portrays a "collaborative" behavior. However, when individuals show no concern for their own goals, conflict situations could be avoided (Rahim, 2002; Euwema et. al., 2003).

Pruitt (1983) also came up with a similar model of conflict management styles which was called "The Dual-Concern Model". It was also based on the degree of cooperativeness and assertiveness just like Thomas's (1977) model. Pruitt called the style where there is low assertiveness and high cooperativeness as "the yielding style". The author called the style where there is both high assertiveness and cooperativeness, "the problem solving". Then the style where there is low assertiveness and low cooperativeness, he called, "the inaction style". And lastly, "the contending style", where there is high assertiveness and low cooperativeness. The author further suggested problem solving style as the most appropriate style where mutually beneficial options are required. He did not consider compromising as a distinct conflict management style like some other authors did but rather, yielding style which has a similar explanation like the compromising style. However, other models identified by scholars classified these styles into five and places more emphasis on compromise as a distinct style of managing conflict. Other authors in this field also classified the conflict management styles into two distinct styles. One of such authors was Kantek and Gezer (2009).

Deutsch and Coleman (2000) are one of such authors who came up with “integrative” and “distributive” models of managing conflict. The distributive style of managing conflict focused on the distribution of a fixed quantity of positive outcomes where one party ends up winning and the other party losing. The integrative style focused on integrating the concerns of both parties to obtain the best possible outcome. Recent authors such as Swanson and Weissmann (2005) came up with a meta-taxonomy for managing conflict which they considered to be encompassing all other styles based on the amount of “activeness” and “agreeableness”.

Agreeableness at the highest level was associated with the attempt to satisfy all parties involved while activeness was associated with open discussions of different opinions while still pursuing their own interest. In the authors’ studies, they also discovered that activeness doesn’t necessarily have any significant effect on the effectiveness of conflict resolution but agreeableness, on the other hand, had a positive effect on conflict resolution because it impacted positively on how groups felt about how conflict was managed irrespective of the outcome. The authors also discovered in their studies that the integrative model led to consistency in better task related outcomes than the distributive model. In a research done by Rahim and Bonoma (1979), the two authors came up with two dimensions of the styles of managing conflicts called the Dual Concern Model which was quite similar to that of Pruitt’s (1983) Model. The first dimension dealt with the degree to which a person would want to satisfy his/ her own concerns. While the other dimension dealt with the degree to which a person attempts to satisfy the concerns of others. Further studies conducted by other scholars such as Ruble and Thomas (1976) and also Van

de Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) supported the two dimensions proposed by Rahim and Bonoma (1979). These two dimensions were later combined into five distinct styles of handling interpersonal conflict. These five styles were integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. The Dual Model of Rahim is shown in Figure 2.1.

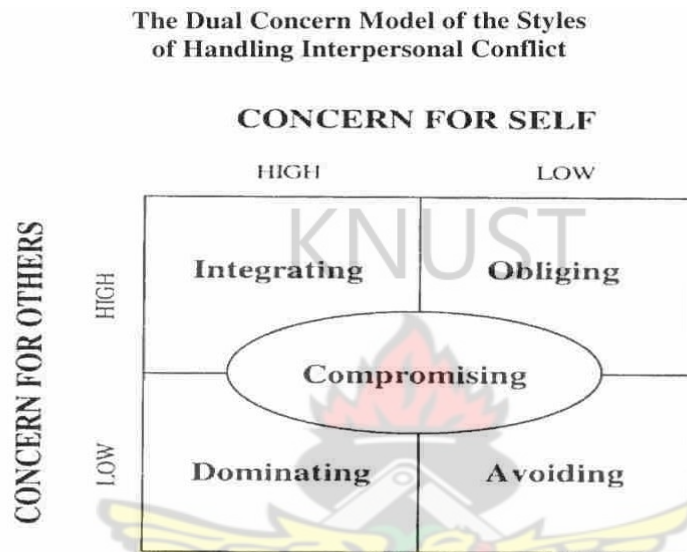


Fig. 2.1 The Dual Concern Model of Handling Interpersonal Conflict

Source: Adapted from Rahim, (2002)

A contingency theory of leadership propounded by Fiedlers (1967) led to the development of a contingency approach to conflict management. Recent studies have shown that integrating and compromising styles are more ideal for dealing with issues that are strategic in nature while the other styles are more appropriate for managing day – to – day problems in the organization. The five distinct styles have been described in detail in the section below.

2.2.1 Integrating Style

The integrating style of managing conflict placed more emphasis on high concern for both self and others (high assertiveness and high cooperativeness). This style also used problem solving through diagnosis of the problem and then finding of appropriate interventions for the right problems. Rahim (2002) acknowledged that the use of this style involved important variables such as, openness and information exchange, obtaining alternatives and the examination of differences to reach an effective solution which was acceptable to both parties. Here, the parties were expected to open up and exchange ideas, because this style involved exchange of ideas between the parties. According to De Church and Marks (2002), this style was commonly used when the problem in question was a complex one. A complex problem as explained by the above author was one that required synthesis of ideas in order to come out with an appropriate solution. Studies conducted by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), discovered integrating style as more appropriate if integration of activities in different subsystems within an institution was required. This style easily integrated groups within the institution to ensure effective coordination. Most researchers including Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) were of the view that problem solving which were also known as integrating style by Rahim (2002) was more appropriate when it came to dealing with social conflicts. Issues which were strategic in nature also yield positive results when integrating style was used.

2.2.2 Obliging Style

Almost (2006), this style is where a person is more concerned about the interest of others rather than his/her own interest (high cooperativeness and low assertiveness).

In this style, the party believes he/she may be wrong and thinks that the other party is rather right. This usually puts the party at the weaker position. This style is most applicable where one party gives something of value to the other party in exchange of something in future when he/she needs help. This style is usually used when the issue in question is of great importance to the other party and the party also wants to preserve the relationship. Here, because the party is interested in preserving the relationship and the issue is also of more importance to the other party, the party then offers something of value to the other party in hope of getting help in future (Brooks, 2009).

2.2.3 Dominating Style

This is where a party is more concerned about his/her own interest and neglects the interest of others (high assertiveness and low cooperativeness). This style is associated with being competitive. A dominating person according to Back and Back (1994) has the objective of wanting to win so he/she would do anything possible to achieve his/her objectives by so doing, neglecting the interest of others. Some scholars have argued that this style was selfish in nature. Unlike obliging where the issue is of much importance to the other party, here the issue is of importance to the party so he/she would do whatever it takes to win. In situations where quick decisions are to be made and the people involved are unskilled, the manager could adapt this style. However, subordinates who are skilled may see their superiors as being autocratic. This style was also considered appropriate where the issues involved are less complex. It is not appropriate to use this style in situations where both parties are powerful.

2.2.4 Avoiding Style

This is where the party has low concern for both self and others too (low assertiveness and low cooperativeness). A manager who uses this style always fails to meet his needs and that of others too. Here the party thinks it is not worth confronting the other party. In situations where the issue is important to one party and there is responsibility on the party to make decisions, this style may not be useful. This style requires patience on the part of the two parties. This style is non-confrontational in nature and it is used for minor issues. Avoiding is always associated with negative conflicts (De Dreu, 1997). This is true because the real cause of the problem may not be tackled and the issues may pile up.

2.2.5 Compromising Style

This is where there is an intermediate between concern for self and others (moderate assertiveness and moderate cooperativeness). This is a kind of “give and take” and here, both parties give something in order to get something in return. The goals of the two parties should be mutually exclusive for this style to be effective. Protracted conflicts could be handled effectively using this style. However, according to Rahim (2002), this style is not suitable for handling complex problems that require problem solving. But some managers still use it and they end up getting the wrong results. This style also, may not be appropriate in situations where one party is more powerful than the other. This style is most appropriate where integrating or dominating style cannot be used. Managing conflicts in general come along with some challenges that institutions face and the institutions should learn to deal with

these challenges effectively (Brooks, 2009). The Table 2.1 depicts the conflict management styles and their appropriateness and inappropriateness.

Table 2.1 Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict

Source: Adapted from Rahim, (2002)



Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict and the Situations Where They Are Appropriate or Inappropriate

Conflict style	Situations where appropriate	Situations where inappropriate
Integrating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issues are complex. 2. Synthesis of ideas is needed to come up with better solutions. 3. Commitment is needed from other parties for successful implementation. 4. Time is available for problem solving. 5. One party alone cannot solve the problem. 6. Resources possessed by different parties are needed to solve their common problems. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Task or problem is simple. 2. Immediate decision is required. 3. Other parties are unconcerned about outcome. 4. Other parties do not have problem-solving skills.
Obliging	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You believe that you may be wrong. 2. Issue is more important to the other party. 3. You are willing to give up something in exchange for something from the other party in the future. 4. You are dealing from a position of weakness. 5. Preserving relationship is important. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue is important to you. 2. You believe that you are right. 3. The other party is wrong or unethical.
Dominating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue is trivial. 2. Speedy decision is needed. 3. Unpopular course of action is implemented. 4. Necessary to overcome assertive subordinates. 5. Unfavorable decision by the other party may be costly to you. 6. Subordinates lack expertise to make technical decisions. 7. Issue is important to you. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue is complex. 2. Issue is not important to you. 3. Both parties are equally powerful. 4. Decision does not have to be made quickly. 5. Subordinates possess high degree of competence.
Avoiding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue is trivial. 2. Potential dysfunctional effect of confronting the other party outweighs benefits of resolution. 3. Cooling off period is needed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue is important to you. 2. It is your responsibility to make decision. 3. Parties are unwilling to defer, issue must be resolved. 4. Prompt attention is needed.
Compromising	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goals of parties are mutually exclusive. 2. Parties are equally powerful. 3. Consensus cannot be reached. 4. Integrating or dominating style is not successful. 5. Temporary solution to a complex problem is needed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One party is more powerful. 2. Problem is complex enough needing problem-solving approach.

2.3 Factors that influence Conflict Management

Effective conflict management involves making vital changes at the macro-level within the organization so that affective conflict could greatly be minimized while increasing substantive conflict. Essential dynamisms in certain areas like leadership, culture and the organization's structural design influence conflict management in organizations.

2.3.1 Leadership and Management Style

The style of leadership could influence conflict management. Some institutions may have leaders with particular leadership styles that may motivate or demotivate conflict management in the institution. Basically, leaders may be either transformational or transitional. According to Bass (1985) and Deutsch and Coleman (2000), transformational leaders tend to be more charismatic and they can use this quality to influence effective conflict management. In the same way, in organizations where leaders are transitional leaders, conflict management may also be influenced because of the lack of vital qualities on the part of the leaders in managing conflicts. Basically, no leadership style is considered good or bad.

According to Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision theory and House's (1971) path-goal theory of leadership, there is no one best style for dealing with different issues but it all depends on the situation. According to the decision theory by Vroom, all the styles of leadership could be appropriate at any point in time depending on the nature of the problem and the situation. Therefore, the appropriateness of any leadership style would depend on the situation. Whenever there is a mismatch between the

leadership style and the conflict situation, effective conflict management may not be achieved. Choosing a leadership style that does not suit a particular conflict situation may be compared to putting a square peg in a round hole. The most suitable style of leadership or management to be used could be determined after proper diagnosis has been effectively done (Cronin and Weingart, 2007). There could be some form of conflicts that could best be handled by adopting a more autocratic style of leadership. In the same way, there could be other situations where a democratic style may be more appropriate. This confirms the findings of the earlier scholars who suggested that there is no one best style of leadership but it all depends on the situation.

2.3.2 Organizational Culture

Effective conflict management is largely influenced positively by an organizational culture that encourages openness and risk taking and also sharing of useful information; a kind of learning where carrot is given instead of a stick to enhance voluntary learning through positive reinforcement (Schein, 1993). On the other hand, in situations where the kind of culture discourages employees from challenging the status quo, employees may not fully cooperate in the conflict management process and they would keep their opinions to themselves. In such cultures, employees are not able to bring on board their opinions and suggestions during decision making in the organization leading to a large pool of untapped ideas.

The culture of reinforcement could also be used effectively by managers to motivate conflict management behaviors in their respective organizations. This form of reinforcement could be used to achieve effective performance and creativity as well as improving long-term performance through rewards. Abrams (2009) affirmed the

above statement when he commented that, in organizations where desired behaviors were encouraged through rewards, expected outcomes were easily achieved. Managers are therefore encouraged to acknowledge these reinforcement mechanisms and their influence on conflict management in their organizations.

2.3.3 Organizational Structure

Organizations may have structures which may be hierarchical or flat in nature. No one structure could be said to be good or bad but its appropriateness would depend on the situation. According to Rahim (2002), the structure of an organization includes the hierarchy, procedures, reward systems and many others. In certain situations, alteration of the structure of the organization may positively or negatively influence the conflict management practices in the organization. The author also suggested that the appropriateness of any structure would depend on the organizational environment. According to him, the structure could either be mechanistic which is also called bureaucratic or organic which is also called organismic. Researchers like Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) came up with the findings that, mechanistic structures were more convenient for departments which responded to stable environments. On the other hand, organic structures were more suitable for departments which were responsible for unstable environments. It could be deduced that the more the congruence between the structure and environment, the more effective the management of conflict would be. Organizations may alter their structures based on certain factors.

According to Ducan and Weiss (1979), most organizations responded to conflict and pressure by changing their organizational structures into more flat, decentralized

forms. In recent studies, Stone and Patton (1999) commented that, the changes in organizational structures to influence conflict management within the organization was reflected in new organizational forms like the modular organization, virtual corporation and horizontal organizations.

2.3.4 Organizational Policies and Procedures

The organizational policies have a great influence on the conflict management practices of organizations. Some policies in the organization may influence the practices positively or negatively. Some of the policies that positively influence conflict management include policies that are flexible enough and allow employees to participate effectively in the conflict management process. Organizational policies that may influence conflict management negatively include strict rules that do not allow employees to express themselves and actively participate in the conflict management process (Euwema et, al., 2007).

2.3.5 Time and Venue

Conflict management may be influenced by the time and venue chosen. VanSant (2003) commented that if the venue is not suitable for dealing with conflict, the expected outcome may not be achieved. The author further recommended a serene environment and a time when all tempers are down as appropriate in order to achieve a positive response from both parties and generally achieve a successful outcome. Trying to deal with the problem immediately the problem occurs may worsen the situation (Cronin and Weingart, 2007).

2.4 Challenges in Managing Conflicts

Conflict management in spite of its importance, still has some challenges. These challenges cut across from the individual level to the organizational level. One of the major challenges of conflict management is that, some of the conflict management styles usually turn out to be time consuming and this may cost the institution so much. In choosing the appropriate style for a particular conflict situation, a time consuming approach may be required and much of productive time would have to be forfeited in order to effectively employ a particular conflict management style. De Drue and Weingart (2003) also showed consistency with this argument on conflict management style. Also, managers may get carried away by the conflict management process such that, they may not realize it is eating into normal working hours.

According to Mitroff and Featheringham (1974), one of the challenges that could be encountered in managing conflict is the occurrence of some form of errors. One of such errors is the probability of solving a wrong problem. The authors further commented that, this error usually occurred when there is lack of proper diagnosis of the problem and where there is inadequate understanding of the nature and cause of the conflict leading to the application of the wrong intervention to the problem.

Another challenge that could be encountered is lack of cooperation on the part of the two parties involved in the conflict. When either of the parties or both parties are reluctant to take active part in the conflict management process, the success of the entire style may not be achieved. One of the parties or both parties may refuse to take part in the conflict management process when they probably feel so hurt about the problem. According to French and Bell (1999), for a conflict management practice to

succeed, the parties involved should be willing to take active part in the entire conflict management process. Back and Back (1994) were also consistent with the statement made by French and Bell (1999).

According to Cronin and Weingart (2007), conflict between or among people is associated with emotions. When the person handling the conflict does not have the professional skills needed to deal with the problem, he/she may end up worsening the situation. Conflict cannot just be managed by anybody. There are some technicalities required in managing conflicts. Choosing the appropriate conflict management style could be very challenging as suggested by Euwema et, al. (2007). But managers still need to jump this heddle and manage the problem. When a wrong approach to handling a particular problem is adopted, the end results could be disastrous (Brooks, 2009). It takes a professional to identify and choose the appropriate conflict management style to solve the right problem.

Another challenge in handling conflict has to do with the two dimensions of conflicts, namely; affective and substantive conflict. According to De Drue (1997), affective conflict which is also known as relationship conflict deals with incompatibilities relating to interpersonal relationships while substantive conflict also known as task conflict deals with incompatibilities associated with group members. Substantive conflict was considered as good conflict while affective conflict was considered as bad conflict (De Church and Marks, 2002). Rahim (2002) in his studies drew a conclusion that, there was a positive correlation between the two dimensions of conflict and this is considered as a challenge. Simmons and Petersons (2000) in their studies also drew a conclusion similar to Rahim's

conclusion when they reported a positive correlation between the two dimensions of conflict which were around 0.34 and 0.88. However, some few researchers concluded in their studies that there was rather a negative correlation between affective and substantive conflict. In managing conflicts, there are some factors that influence conflict management in most institutions in the country.

2.5 Roles of Conflict Management in Institutional Growth

Every institution in the nation needs to grow so that the entire nation could benefit from it. Conflict management plays an important role in enhancing institutional growth. Conflict management enhances organizational effectiveness (Rahim, 2002). When conflicts occur in organizations, they slow down the activities of the organization and could lead to unproductivity if not properly managed. When the needed attention is given to every conflict in the institution, no matter how unimportant they may be, proper diagnosis could be made and appropriate interventions could be employed so that higher performance could be achieved. According to Maccoby and Studder (1998), in situations where the conflict type was destructive rather than constructive, the appropriate conflict management strategy should be employed if not, organizational effectiveness may not be achieved. In the same way, if the conflict is constructive and the appropriate conflict management mechanism is not employed, organizational effectiveness may lack.

Conflict management also plays the role of enhancing organizational learning, according to Rahim (2002). It helps employees and managers to obtain deeper understanding of problems and apportion the appropriate measures to deal with them effectively. For example, the conflict management process gives managers the

opportunity to learn new things such as the new causes of conflicts, the nature of conflicts and the appropriate remedies to deal with them. Organizational learning comprises of acquisition and distribution as well as preservation of information for future use. Argyris and Schon (1996) defined learning as detection and correction of errors. They also identified single-loop and double-loop learning as two main types of learning. Single-loop learning was the type that brought about cognitive and behavioral changes within the existing paradigm through the diagnosis and intervention of the problem without changing the underlying policies. On the other hand, double-loop learning leads to cognitive and behavioral changes outside the existing paradigm through the diagnosis and intervention of the problem by changing the underlying policies. According to Bateson (1972), double-loop learning was also known as deuterio-learning. The author also maintained that every effective conflict management practice promoted double-loop learning rather, than single-loop learning. Managers learn a lot of new things as they manage conflicts in their institutions. Through experience, they could acquire new ideas about the nature of the problem, the type of conflict it may lead to (substantive and affective) and the appropriate measures to be taken to manage the conflict effectively.

Conflict management also ensures that the constructive aspect of conflict is maximized while the destructive aspect is minimized as much as possible (Peters, 1988). The constructive aspect of conflict is very essential in achieving higher productivity thereby leading to institutional growth. This affirms the comments made by Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) when they stated that substantive conflict should be maximized as much as possible while minimizing affective conflict. Conflict management as suggested by most scholars ensures a competitive working

environment which motivates employees to put in their best. Also, tension among employees is reduced to a lower level to ensure employees have sound minds to work (Cox, 2003).

According to Roloff (1987), conflict management helps to improve and strengthen the bond between employees and management. He was of the view that, when conflicts are properly managed, employees could learn to appreciate their individual differences and work cordially for the betterment of the organization. Through conflict management, peace and stability could also be achieved.

Conflict management also plays an ethic advocator role. This could be seen when subordinates and stakeholders are encouraged to speak against the decisions of their superiors when those decisions may lead to unpleasant outcomes. Mitroff (1998) who is a very strong ethics management advocator commented that, problems should always be defined to benefit humans. Furthermore, Rahim (2002) also suggested that, for organizations to manage conflicts ethically, organizations should institutionalize some key positions. These positions are the customer advocate, employee advocate, supplier advocate, environmental and stockholders advocates. According to Rahim et, al. (1992), proper attention should be given to these advocates in order to achieve an ethically managed institution. This at the long-run would help in the growth of the institution.

2.6 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework which explained the influence of conflict management on organizational performance was developed (see Figure 2.3 on the next page). Conflict management styles and other factors such as leadership style, institutional culture and institutional structure all influence the general performance of organizations. When managing conflict, conflict management styles are used. In choosing a particular style of managing conflict, there are some factors that need to be considered. Some of these factors include the organizational structure and policies among others. The conflict management style adapted and the influencing factors go a long way to affect the general performance of the organization. When the appropriate conflict management style is adapted putting into consideration the influencing factors, a positive outcome could be achieved leading to organizational growth. On the other hand, when a particular style of managing conflict is adapted without considering the influencing factors, the positive results expected could not be achieved leading to poor organizational performance.

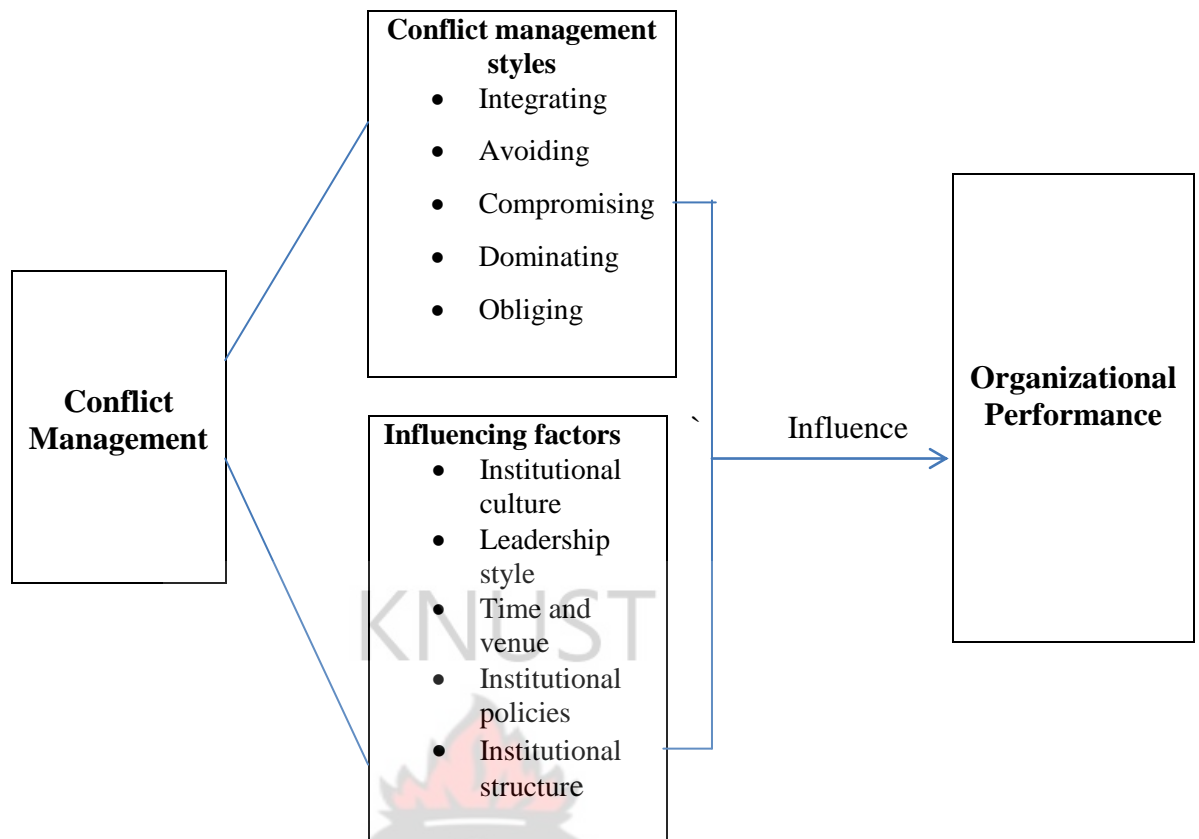


Fig. 2.2 Conceptual framework of conflict management and its influence on organizational performance

Source: Field Survey (2014)

2.7 Conclusion

Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon that confronts all organizations and organizations should therefore learn to deal with them using the appropriate measures. Conflicts in organizations have both positive and negative impact on the individual and organization as a whole. The positive aspect could greatly be achieved when conflicts are properly managed using the appropriate conflict management styles. However, in adapting any style of managing conflict, some important factors

such as the culture of the organization are to be considered. This goes a long way to affect the overall performance of the organization at any particular point in time.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

3.0 Introduction

Chapter two presented a review of related literature on conflict management which was central to the study. This chapter is in two sections. The first section focuses on the research methodology which includes the research strategy, research design, data collection, sampling technique and data analysis method. The second section focuses on the organizational profile of the study area and this involves selected basic schools in Ashanti Region of Ghana.

3.1.0 Research Methodology

Research methodology according to Kumar (2005) deals with the research population, the sample, the sampling techniques, the research instruments and the procedures for administering the research instruments. The author further maintained that the research methodology for any research work depended mainly on the problem and purpose of the study. Research methodology portrays the exact idea the researcher is carrying out (Walliman, 2001). It also involves considering the methods of collecting data and the theories and concepts underpinning the research topic (Silverman and Atkinson, 1997). The methodology therefore gives the researcher a sense of direction in carrying out the study. There are different types of research methodologies which include qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative methodology requires numerical measurement and mathematical assessment of variables while qualitative methodology focuses on understanding through verbal narratives and observations (Neuman, 2000).

3.1.1 Research Design

The research design is the framework for the entire research. The research purpose was to explore conflict management. The time horizon used for the research was cross-sectional method. Cross-sectional data entails measuring different variables at a particular point in time. In this method, data is usually dispersed. This method was used because it offered an easier way of gathering and assessing data. Also, it is less expensive in relation to the other methods (Adentwi and Amartei, 2012). Some of the research designs included descriptive, exploratory and explanatory methods. According to Alder and Alder (1994), descriptive research was concerned with the conditions or relationships that exist, such as determining the nature of prevailing conditions, practices and attitudes; opinions that are held; processes that are going on; or trends that are developed.

Glass and Hopkins (1984) also maintained that in descriptive research, accurate description of activities, objects, processes and persons was the main aim. Usually, visual aids such as graphs and charts are used to aid the reader in understanding the distribution of the data. Exploratory research, is more concerned with finding out what is happening on the grounds. It may require seeking new understanding, asking questions and assessing phenomenon. Explanatory research seeks to know 'why', and to 'explain' phenomenon. It capitalizes on exploratory and descriptive research and goes further to identify the reasons for the occurrence of an action. This type of research method basically seeks for causes and reasons (Peil, 1982). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used exploratory method because the researcher sought to explore and gather data on conflict management and also obtain a deeper understanding of the concept.

3.1.2 Research Strategy

There are two major research strategies that could be adapted in any research work. They are qualitative and quantitative strategies. Qualitative research involves a range of philosophies, designs and specific techniques including in-depth interviews, participant and non-participant observation, focus groups, document analyses, and a number of other methods of data collection (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). On the other hand, quantitative research according to Burns & Groove (2005) is a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are used to obtain information. Quantitative research has a disadvantage of being expensive in relation to qualitative research and also, there may also be inconsistencies in the numbers used. According to Turner (2013), quantitative data has an advantage of being easily drawn into graphs because of its numerical nature which could be more useful for statistical purposes.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used qualitative approach because the researcher wanted to gain a deeper understanding of what the targeted population thinks about the topic. Furthermore, in adopting the qualitative approach, the study proposed that organizations exist as social entities and so the overall dynamics that influence individual and organizational conflict management needed to be explored. Also, qualitative research presents a wide range of different techniques for data collection to produce insight into the sensitive nature of conflict management. Qualitative data is often derived from field notes, observations, interviews and organizational records and therefore in the case of this study, the qualitative data was from interviews and some observed activities.

3.2 Sources of Data

The researcher adapted two main sources of data in this study. The two main sources of data used were from primary and secondary sources.

3.2.1 Primary Data

The primary data the researcher used were semi structured interviews and observation. According to Adentwi and Amartei (2012), interview is the act of asking questions in connection with the research topic. The interviews were between two people and sometimes among groups of people for the purpose of gathering useful data on the research topic. In order to facilitate the interview process, the researcher designed an interview guide. An interview guide is a set of questions designed to help direct the researcher in gathering data on the research topic (Peil, 1982). The researcher used face-to-face interviews because it had the advantage of being flexible in its administration and also provided an opportunity for the researcher to observe the respondents' formal and informal gestures. Observation was also used because it had the advantage of helping the researcher to confirm some of the responses given by respondents.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data are data which are already in existence and might have been used before. Some of the secondary data were collected from secondary sources such as institutional records such as books, journals, magazines and reports. These records were obtained from the Ministry of Education, Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the Concern Teachers Association (CTA).

3.3 Population

The term population in research simply refers to all the members and individuals targeted for the research (Walliman, 2001). The author further maintained that the population for any research work depended on the purpose of the study. With regards to this study, the population was teachers in basic schools in Ashanti Region precisely in the Bosome Freho District. The sample size was (52) staff from some selected basic schools in the region. These basic schools were selected because of their location. The sample size of (52) was used because the researcher wanted to have a wholistic understanding of the research topic. The sample was categorized into the following groups; heads and teachers (male and female).

Table 3.2 Sex of Respondents

Source: Field Survey (2014)

Position	Male	Female	Total
Heads	3	0	3
Teachers	38	11	49
Total	41	11	52
Percent	78.85	21.15	100

3.4 Sampling Techniques

According to Trochim (2006), sampling is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying the sample a generalized conclusion could be drawn. Adentwi and Amartei (2012) maintained that, sampling was a process of selecting a part of a given population to represent the whole population. There are two main sampling techniques; probability and non-probability sampling techniques. In the probability sampling technique, all members of the population have equal chances of being selected. However, according to Glass and Hopkins (1984), non-probability sampling presents a situation where selection is made based on other factors aside probability. One of such non probability sampling techniques is purposive sampling technique which was used in this study. Purposive or judgmental sampling is where researcher uses his/her own judgment to select population members whom he thinks will give him the needed results. The rationale behind the use of purposive sampling technique was because it enabled the researcher to select the required category of people for the research (teachers). It also helped the researcher to obtain the needed responses.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection tools used for the study were interview and observation. According to Patton (1990), the choice of data collection instrument would depend on an overall judgment on which type of data is needed for a particular problem. But for the purpose of this study, semi structured interviews and observations were used.

3.5.1 Interview

According to Maccoby and Studder (1998), interview is a face-to-face verbal exchange of information in which one person, the reviewer attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions and/or belief from another person or persons. The researcher engaged respondents in a face-to-face interview using a well-designed interview guide to give the interviewer a sense of direction. The face-to-face semi-structured interview was appropriate because it gave the researcher the opportunity to probe further the opinions expressed by respondents. To ensure and promote validity and reliability of the data collected; interviewees were briefed on the subject matter of the interview before the actual interview began. This was to allow them to gain better understanding of the information being requested from them.

3.5.2 Interview Guide

According to Silverman and Atkinson (1997), there was extensive use of interview as a major technique for acquiring information using a well-designed document called an interview guide. The interview guide gave the interviewer a sense of direction in soliciting responses from the interviewees so that the interviewer would not lose track of the appropriate questions to be asked. The interview guide was derived mostly from the literature review and consisted of issues relating to the concept of conflict management. Specifically, the interview covered a range of literature review themes including conflict management styles, influencing factors, challenges and the roles conflict management play in organizational growth. The interview guide used for the interview is shown in the appendix.

3.5.3 Interviewees

The interviews in qualitative research are conducted to describe, understand and clarify human experiences and therefore, the selection of interviewees is an important component in obtaining the needed data. Since in this interview the study sought to gather and draw upon practical knowledge, interviewees with divergent forms of experiences and knowledge in education were selected. The “purposive strategy” allowed for the creation of a diverse pool of participants who were purposely selected and interviewed. This was done to reduce bias. In total, fifty two (52) interviews were conducted. The respondents had an average age between twenty four (24) and thirty nine (39) years. They had an average working experience of three years and their positions included headmasters of basic schools.

3.5.4 Observation

Observation is described as the fundamental base of all research methods in social science. Observation enables the interviewer to obtain a complete picture of the situation (Alder & Alder, 1994). Also, Peil (1982) asserted that, observation involved noting points down on the subject matter. The study adopted the participant observation method because it allowed focus on observable behaviors among respondents occurring during all aspects of formal and informal interactions.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data collected through interviews and observations were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts (Silverman and

Atkinson, 1997). This method considers communication through texts and gets to the core of social interactions and identifies relationships among concepts. Data was prepared and organized through editing by correcting mistakes and deleting some responses. Data was then grouped based on responses given by respondents.

3.7 Organizational Profile

This section of the chapter focuses on the development of education in Ghana, precisely in the Bosome Freho District of the Ashanti Region. Ashanti Region is one of the ten regions of Ghana. The region lies between longitudes 0.15W and 2.25W, and latitudes 5.50N and 7.46N and it shares boundaries with four of the ten political regions; Brong-Ahafo in the north, Eastern region in the east, Central region in the south and Western Region in the South west. Ashanti Region is divided into twenty seven (27) districts of which Bosome Freho District is one. The region currently has a population between 51.3% and 73.0% in the primary school and a population between 16.1% and 22.4% currently in the Junior High School (google.com). A diagram of Ghana and the Ashanti Region has been showed in Figure 3.1 & Figure 3.2 respectively.



Fig. 3.1 Ghana Map

Source: Google.com



Fig. 3.2 Map indicating Ashanti Region

Source: Google.com

Three different schools in the Bosome Freho District of the Ashanti Region were used as the case study schools. These schools were Tebeso I R/C Basic School, Fereso R/C Basic School and Tebeso II D/A Basic School. These three schools were named after the village in which the school is. These three schools have a common objective; that is to equip the people in the village with the appropriate skills and education to enable the people to solve some basic problems they would encounter in their lives. These three schools have always resorted to the use of corporal punishment as a way of disciplining their pupils. The schools also have extra-curricular activities such as games which help to develop the pupils holistically.

Tebeso I R/C Basic School has about 960 pupils enrolled in the school. The school was named after the village. The natives of the village organized and built a six classroom block and a kindergarten. It was initially from the kindergarten to primary six. Some years later, the Junior High School was also established in the village to avoid the inconvenience of moving to a different school for further studies. The school has an average number of twenty five teachers including national service persons and some youth employment teachers. About fifty percent of the teachers in the school are trained teachers with the remaining fifty percent being pupil teachers and non-professional teachers. The school has a computer laboratory and a library well equipped with books and two computers. Evening classes are organized for the pupils to engage them in the evenings. The entire school, both primary and JHS is headed by one headmaster with an appointed nominal heads for the JHS and the kindergarten. The school is on the school feeding program.

Fereso R/C Basic School is located in the village of Fereso in the Bosome Freho District. The school has a total enrolment of about 964 pupils for both primary and JHS and the kindergarten too. The school has twenty six teachers including national service persons. About sixty percent of the teachers are trained teachers with the other forty percent being pupil teachers. The school is headed by one headmaster with nominal heads appointed for the various departments. The school is on the school feeding program for the primary and kindergarten pupils. The school also organizes extra classes for the pupils to help boost their academic performance.

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Tebeso II D/A Basic School is located in the village of Tebeso II in the Bosome Freho District. The school has a total enrollment of about 925 pupils. The school has twenty two teachers and about sixty percent of these teachers are males. A greater percentage of these teachers are trained teachers. The school is headed by one head with nominal heads appointed for the other departments. The school is on the school feeding program which encourages the pupils to come to school more often. The teachers in the JHS organize extra classes for the pupils early in the morning before normal classes begin.

3.7.1 Development of Education in Ghana

According to Agbodeka (1971), the introduction of Western formal education in Ghana was linked to the coming of the European merchants to the Guinea Coast from the middle of the fifteenth (15th) century. The Portuguese were the first merchants who provided formal education to the indigenous people of Ghana as a means to smooth commercial activities. Other Europeans who contributed to the

development of formal education in Ghana included the Dutch, Danes and the British. These merchants lived in castles along the coast of Ghana and they established a school called “the castle school” at Cape Coast. However, a solid foundation and rapid spread of formal education into the interior parts of the country was credited to the Christian missionaries who arrived from 1828 onwards. These missionaries were the Basel, Roman Catholic, Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Bremen), Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and the Wesleyan missionaries (Oti-Agyen, 2007).

The Portuguese first arrived in Ghana, the then Gold Coast, in January 1482. They established the first school in Ghana at the Elmina Castle in 1482. This first school in the Gold Coast taught the African child how to read and write and also the Christian religion using the Portuguese language as a medium of instruction. The Dutch West Indian Company also came to establish another school purposely to teach the mulatto children how to read and write and also religion using the Dutch language as a medium of instruction, after driving the Portuguese away. The Dutch granted scholarships to some of the boys in their schools to study in Holland. Among these students was Jacobus Capitein. In 1682, the British had already arrived in the Gold Coast and they established another school at the Cape Coast Castle where they were residing under John Chilton. This school was called the Cape Coast Castle School. The curriculum in the school were; reading, writing, arithmetic and religious knowledge. The medium of instruction used by the British was English Language. They also gave scholarship to some of their students to study in England. Among these students was Philip Quaque who later returned to Gold Coast after his studies in England and re-opened the Cape Coast Castle School after it was closed down.

The students were provided with uniforms, badges and money for books under the administration of Philip Quaque. The school was renamed “Cape Coast Colonial School” after the death of Quaque in 1821. The Danes also came to Gold Coast and established schools along the coast eastward of Accra in 1722. The pupils in their schools were provided with skirts and caps to wear and soldiers were employed to teach the students. They also gave scholarships to their students like the other merchants did. Among these students given scholarships was Christian Protten. The missionaries also contributed significantly to the development of education in Ghana (Foster, 1965).

The Basel missionaries were the first missionaries to arrive in Ghana in 1825. Between the periods of 1843-1899, they had established forty five (45) schools in the country. These schools were situated in areas like Abokobi and Nkoranza and they studied reading, writing, arithmetic, Akuapim Twi, Ga and Bible Study. They also promoted the study of agriculture in their schools and their education stressed on trade instructions. The Wesleyan missionaries by 1880 had established 80 schools in Kumasi and its environs. The Breman missionaries settled among the Ewes in Ghana. They established Amedzofe Seminary and also, their education stressed on trade instructions. The Roman Catholic missionaries’ first school was the Cape Coast Castle School by the Portuguese in Elmina in 1529. This was as a result of the fact that, the Portuguese who established the first school in the country were Catholics. The Catholic missionaries also established the Cape Coast Catholic School in 1901 with an enrolment of five thousand students (5000). In March 1884, the first girls’ school was established in Ghana. Also, the first kindergarten was later established in Elmina. Another school was opened at Keta and others were established at Kumasi.

According to Babaloala (1988), the Seventh Day Adventist missionaries also contributed to the development of formal education through the reestablishment of schools in places like Asante Bekwai, Asamang and Agona. Eventually, formal education spread throughout the Ashanti Region and all over the entire country.

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, education has always played a vital role in the development of Ghana. However, the presence of conflicts in educational institutions which are inevitable needed to be managed properly in order not to affect the overall performance of educational institutions in the region. In an attempt to explore the concept of conflict management in basic schools in Ghana, data was collected using semi-structured interviews and observation. Furthermore, the sources of data were primary data and secondary sources which were obtained from journals and articles. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the sample size and content analysis was used to analyze the data gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

Chapter three dealt with the research methodology, data collection instruments, the sources of data and the methods for analyzing the data. This chapter focuses on the results obtained after analyzing the data collected and also discussion of the results, indicating whether the objectives for the study were met or not. The objectives for the study were, to identify conflict management practices adapted by basic schools, determine the challenges in managing conflict and determine the factors that influence conflict management and finally identify the roles of conflict management in achieving institutional performance in basic schools in Ashanti Region. The data were collected from three basic schools in the region using face-to-face interviews with a sample size of fifty two (52) teachers.

4.1 Interviewees Background

In-depth interviews were used to collect data from the respondents on conflict management. The interviewees were teachers from some selected basic schools in the Ashanti Region. Out of the total number of teachers interviewed, forty one (41) were males and eleven (11) were females. Twenty three (23) of them were between the ages of 18-35 years and twenty nine (29) of them were 35 years upwards. Also, out of the fifty two (52) teachers interviewed, only twelve (12) of them were degree holders. The remaining teachers were SHS and Diploma holders.

4.2 Findings and Analysis

The semi structured interviews yielded some interesting findings. In analyzing the information, each tape – recorded interview was transcribed. The notes taken at the interviews were also analyzed as part of the interview evidence. In order to examine and explore data, the transcribed data and notes were categorized into broad themes and sub-themes in line with the research objectives and the interview guide. This allowed the data to be coded into four main headings:

- (1) issues of conflict management practices in basic schools,
- (2) factors influencing conflict management,
- (3) challenges encountered in managing conflict and
- (4) the roles of conflict management in organizational growth.

Issues of conflict management practices in basic schools covered responses that related to issues associated with conflict management styles. The factors influencing conflict management were restricted to responses that related to the factors that influenced the dynamics of conflict management in basic schools. The challenges encountered in managing conflict referred to responses on conflict management and the difficulties associated with the management of conflicts. The roles conflict management played in organizational growth referred to the various contributions of conflict management in ensuring greater output and productivity in organizations.

4.3 Conflict Management Styles

In considering the adaptability of the various conflict management styles, the integrating style (high assertiveness and cooperativeness) scored the greatest point which suggested that, it was considered as the most commonly adapted and style according to the responses given by the respondents. This was closely followed by the compromising style, the obliging style, the avoiding style and finally the dominating style which scored the least points. The integrating style was preferred by most of the respondents because it allowed for the achievement of greater self-interest and the interest of others as well. This was in line with the assertion of Rahim (2002) and Brooks (2009). In response to some of the questions asked, a range of views were expressed by the interviewees. For instance,

A female teacher noted that:

“.....in as much as we all want the best for ourselves, we should also try at the same time to consider the interest of others too.”

A male teacher also commented that:

“.....we can sometimes be a little religious when it gets to issues like this. We should learn to care for others and not be selfish all because we want to satisfy our interest.”

The diagram in Fig. 4.1 represents the five distinct styles of managing conflict as proposed by the respondents.



Figure 4.1 Conflict Management Styles

Source: Field survey, (2014)

There were some teachers who also strongly advocated for the compromising style. This was because this style also expressed concern for both self and others and it required giving something in order to obtain something in return. However, this style did not require high concern for one's own self and others as compared to the integrating style. Some of the respondents were of the view that managing conflict required giving something in order to obtain something in return therefore, justifying their reason for choosing the compromising style. Some of the teachers shared their views on this. For example,

A male teacher confirmed that:

“.....the parties involved in conflict should be ready to give something in order to obtain something in return.”

From the responses provided by the teachers, obliging style scored few points in terms of its adaptability in achieving the set targets of the school. This was basically because most of the respondents thought that this style was difficult to implement. On the same issue, some teachers also expressed their opinions. For example,

According to one female teacher:

“.....I am not ready to stoop low for the other party especially when I know the other party is at fault; that would be an insult to my personality.”

The dominating style was considered to be selfish in nature by respondents since it did not care about the interest of others. Here, the party seeks is to satisfy his/her own interest neglecting the interest of the other party. Moreover, respondents considered managing conflict without thinking about the other party's interest may lead to a situation where the destructive aspect of conflict is greatly maximized at the expense of the constructive aspect. Some teachers expressed their views on why they do not prefer this style. For example, a male teacher commented:

“In order to settle the problem amicably, you also have to be receptive to the interest of the other party too.....”

The avoiding style was also considered efficient by a number of respondents. Most of these respondents were of the assertion that, conflicts could best be avoided when

certain problems and disagreements are ignored. Some teachers expressed their opinions on this. For instance, a male teacher commented that:

“.....sometimes, the best way to deal with conflict is to ignore.....”

This assertion of the above respondent was strongly confirmed by VanSant (2003) when the author commented that the ideal way to avoid conflict is to overlook the problem. However, Thomas (1976) strongly denied this assertion and rather thinks that the ideal way of dealing with any conflict situation was to actually acknowledge the problem and deal with it.

4.4 Factors that influence Conflict Management Practices

The interviewees were asked to identify the factors that influence conflict management practices. They identified culture as one of the factors. It was clear from the responses of the interviewees that culture played a crucial role in the management of conflict in schools. The interviews pointed out that majority of the respondents considered organizational culture as the major factor that influenced conflict management because, they considered the culture of the institution as a major tool for promoting or affecting negatively conflict management practices as noted by Swanstom and Weissmann (2005). Some of the teachers affirmed this statement by their comments. For instance,

A male teacher commented that:

“.....the culture in my institution is such that, when there is a misunderstanding between two parties, it becomes very difficult to get these parties on a common platform to handle the problem.”

The above quotation points to the notion that an organization's beliefs, values, norms and practices could be associated with conflict management in the organization because the culture of the organization may hinder or promote the management of conflicts. This respondent confirmed that the nature of organization's culture may or may not promote the effective management of conflicts. This was consistent with the theoretical argument made by Simmon and Peterson (2000). However, another teacher also commented that:

“.....the culture in my school makes it very easy for conflicts to be managed since it is less formal and flexible in nature.”

Contrast to the first quotation on culture above, the immediate quotation above implied that the values, norms and practices of an organization could help to promote conflict management in the organization. This notion is in line with the theological assertion made by Rahim et, al. (1992).

Another issue that interviewees identified as a factor that influenced conflict management in basic schools was time and venue. A considerable number of teachers commented that:

“.....desirable results of conflict management might not be achieved if a suitable time and venue is not chosen to address the conflict. And also, trying to manage conflicts when tempers of both parties are still very high, is considered as wrong timing.....”

The quotation above points to the fact that the time and venue for managing conflict is also associated with conflict management. It implied that some periods could be considered as wrong timing while other periods are considered as more appropriate when it comes to managing conflicts.

In addition to organizational culture and time and venue, interviewees also attributed conflict management to leadership styles. Leadership style was seen as an important factor by some of the respondents. Some respondents commented that the leadership style practiced by the leaders of institutions may sometimes make it very difficult to manage conflicts. For instance, a male teacher asserted that:

“..... a leader may be so paternalistic or democratic such that he is able to play the role of a mediator effectively in managing the problem and also encourage the parties to open up. In the same way, some of the leaders may be so strict and autocratic such that it discourages the parties from opening up.”

The quotation above is consistent with the theoretical assertion made by Rahim et, al. (1992). The assertion stated that the leadership style adapted by leaders in any given institution may go a long way to influence the management of conflict in the institution.

Apart from organizational culture, leadership style, time and venue, organizational policies and procedures were also identified by the interviewees as one of the factors that influence conflict management in organizations. It was clear from the responses gathered from the interviews that the policies and procedures of organizations play important role in conflict management in basic schools. For instance, a male teacher made an assertion that:

“..... The policies and procedures in institution may hinders effective management of conflict through the creation of a kind of tension and formality among employees”

The diagram shown in Fig. 4.2 indicates the factors that influence conflict management in organizations. From Fig. 4.2, it could be seen clearly that conflict management in schools is influenced by a number of factors that could be classified similar to the conceptual frame work developed for this study. These factors were, time and venue, organizational culture, organizational structure, organizational policies and leadership style.

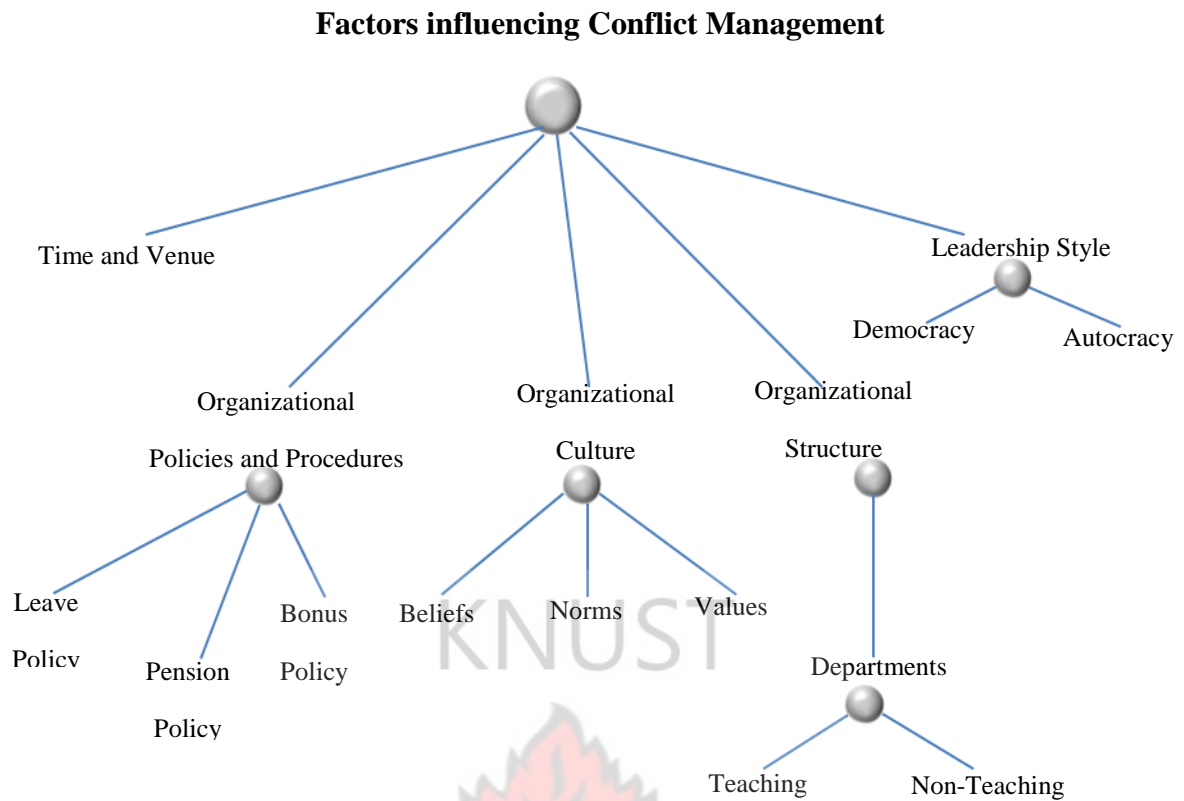


Fig. 4.2 Factors influencing Conflict Management

Source: Field Survey (2014)

All the factors analyzed above influence conflict management practices in one way or the other. But the major factor that influences conflict management practice as noted by the interviewees was the culture of the educational institution.

4.5 Challenges in Managing Conflicts

The respondents were asked to identify some of the challenges encountered in managing conflicts. They identified the lack of cooperation as one of the challenges. It was visible from the responses gathered by the interviewees that cooperation on the part of the parties involved in the conflict was very essential for the successful

management of conflicts in educational institutions. The interview noted that a greater percentage of the targeted population considered lack of cooperation as the commonest challenge encountered in managing conflict in basic schools. A considerable number of the respondents commented that, the parties involved in the conflict may not be willing to let go of the issue and this could make it very difficult to manage such issues. Some of the teachers shared their personal experiences on this. For example,

A female teacher commented:

“.....to cooperate is like letting the cat loose which I may not be willing to do depending on what I think about the situation.”

The quotation above brings to bear the notion that, the cooperation of the parties involved in any conflict situation is always vital in the management of conflicts. This implied that parties involved in conflicts are required to open up and be ready to make peace. This assertion was consistent with the theoretical argument made by Putman and Poole (1987) that, lack of cooperation was considered the most pressing challenge among all other challenges encountered in managing conflicts in organizations. However, Van De Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) expressed strong inconsistencies with this theoretical argument.

Another challenge interviewees identified was lack of professional skills in handling conflict situations. It was evident from the interviews conducted that some level of professionalism and skills were required to manage conflicts effectively. This

implied that some level of training would be needed in order to equip leaders and managers of educational institutions to effectively manage conflict situations in their schools. Some teachers expressed their views on this statement. For example,

According to one female teacher:

“Conflict management is a technical activity and it requires some technicalities. Managing conflict is not as easy as it may seem; it requires a great deal of skills.....”

The quotation above made by a respondent clearly affirms the notion that skills and professionalism is crucial in managing conflicts. This is consistent with the argument made by Mason and Mayer (1990). The interviews further pointed out that if leaders lack the right skills to manage conflicts, they may end up worsening the problem. Some teachers expressed their views. For instance,

According to a male teacher:

“.....in my institution, the need to manage conflict effectively has led to the development of certain programs which aim at educating employees to deal with individual differences among themselves and diversity of opinions.”

In addition to lack of cooperation and professional skills, interviewees also considered conflict management as being time demanding. Implementing a particular conflict management style may demand a lot of time such that the institution in their attempt to manage conflicts may compromise their productive hours. This was

consistent with the theoretical argument made by Sportsman and Hamilton (2007). Also, a male teacher gave his comment on this statement:

“.....sometimes, impromptu meetings are organized in attempt to deal with certain conflict situations and this has had devastating effects on the institution at the long run.”

The quotation above clearly implies that the entire conflict management styles and process could contribute to low productivity to some extent. The Fig. 4.3 illustrates the challenges encountered in managing conflicts.



Fig. 4.3 Some Challenges in Managing Conflict

Source: Field Survey, (2014)

Lack of professional skills, time consumption and lack of cooperation are all challenges that could be encountered in managing conflict. But from the responses gathered from the interviews, lack of cooperation between the parties was considered by interviewees as the most common and pressing challenge encountered in managing conflict. However, in spite of the difficulties encountered in managing conflict, the roles of conflict management cannot be underestimated.

4.6 Roles of Conflict Management in Institutional Growth

The interviewees were asked to identify the various roles conflict management play in institutional growth. They came up with enhancement of organizational learning as one of the roles. It was evident from the responses of the interviewees that conflict management greatly enhances organizational learning. The interview pointed out that, as conflicts occur and they are managed, the workers acquire new knowledge and experiences. This is consistent with the argument made by Kantek and Gezer (2009) that, conflict management helps individuals to acquire new experiences in dealing with problem. A respondent also commented that:

“Even the entire conflict management process gives room for the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in dealing with diverse issues.”

Another role of conflict management that was identified by the interviewees was the enhancement of organizational growth. The interviewees' responses pointed out that conflict management play important role in growing educational institutions. Also, the interviews pointed out that, when there is conflict in organizations, it brings about some kind of competition among the workers and this competition when properly managed could lead to greater output because the workers are challenged to put up their best. According to Trudel and Reio (2011), when competitions arises among employees as a result of conflict, appropriate conflict management style needs to be adopted. Most interviewees expressed consistency with this theoretical argument by this author. Some of the interviewees commented that:

“Managing conflict helps to promote competition among workers thereby, encouraging employees to put up their best.....Also, general output of

the institution will be improved if conflicts are well managed because employees will have sound minds to work to increase productivity.”

The quotation above clearly points out to the notion that, good management of conflict could bring about higher productivity leading to organizational growth. The quotation further points out that some level of competition is always necessary for the achievement of organizational growth. However, when such competitions are not managed properly, they could lead to hostility and bitterness leading to low productivity. This was consistent with the theoretical argument made by Gordon (2003).

Another issue interviewees identified as a role played by conflict management was strengthening of the bond between employees and management in basic schools. The responses gathered from the interviews disclosed that conflict management was essential to the achievement of stronger bonds among employees in any given organization. This notion was consistent with the comment made by a male teacher that:

“.....when conflicts are properly managed in the institution, it strengthens the bond that exists among the people in the institution in general, because some level of cordiality is established.”

The quotation given by the above respondent pointed out to the view that, stronger bonds could be attained through conflict management creating cordiality among employees. This was consistent with the view expressed by Kolb and Putman (1992)

that conflict management generates cordiality and unity. Also, Cox (2003) asserted that managing conflict strengthens the interpersonal relationships among groups.

In addition to enhancement of organizational growth and learning and strengthening of the bond among employees, interviewees also considered maximization of constructive aspect of conflict as a vital role played by conflict management. The interviews conducted disclosed that conflict had both its constructive and destructive aspect. Therefore, in order to achieve the maximum out of every conflict situation, the conflict needs to be managed by adopting appropriate conflict management styles. An interviewee commented that:

“.....I believe every conflict comes along with some positive aspects. The task for our various schools is to identify these positive aspects of conflict and capitalize on them through good conflict management techniques. This will help our educational institutions to progress more rapidly”

Conflict management could enable basic schools to achieve the best out of every conflict situation as noted by the quotation above. This implied that, when conflicts are not managed with the appropriate mechanisms, the constructive aspect of the conflict may not be achieved. Almost (2006) showed consistency with this theoretical argument when she maintained that, conflict management plays the role of ensuring that the negative impact of conflict is minimized while the positive impact is maximized. The diagram below illustrates the roles played by conflict management as suggested by the interviewees. From the responses gathered, the respondents identified four main roles of conflict management in institutional growth. They were, maximization of constructive conflict, enhancing institutional

effectiveness, enhancing institutional learning and strengthening of the bond between management and employees.

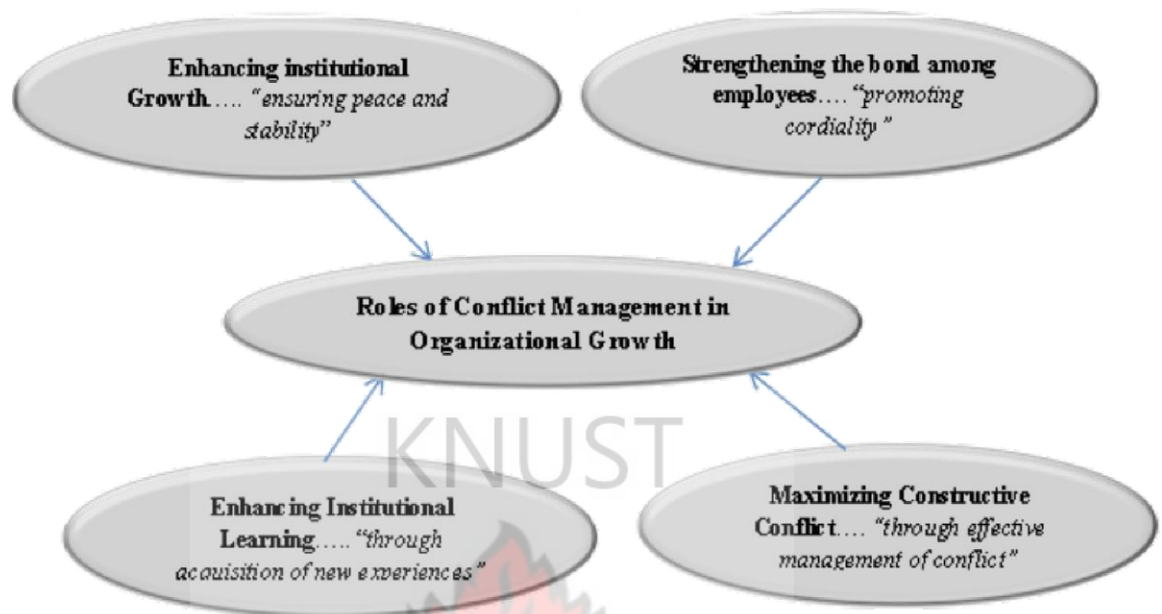


Fig. 4.4 *Roles of Conflict Management*

Source: Field Survey, (2014)

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher found out that the most adapted conflict management style was integrating style and the least adapted style was the dominating style. Also, the researcher observed that the most influencing factor in managing conflict was organizational culture. Furthermore, the lack of professional skills was considered one of the major challenges in managing conflict. The roles played by conflict management in the growth of the organization included, enhancing organizational learning through the acquisition of new experiences. Organizational learning is also attained as well as the strengthening of bond between employees and management. Conflict management also ensures the constructive aspect of conflict is attained.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the entire study. The chapter highlights the findings in line with the research questions and objectives. It also gives recommendations to help managers of educational institution manage conflict effectively.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

The study adopted a qualitative research approach comprising of a series of semi-structured interviews. The major findings under this section are the key issues that have been identified from data analyzed. The summary of findings that were found from the analysis have been presented under the specific objectives of the study.

5.1.1 Conflict Management Practices in Basic Schools

Among the different conflict management styles practiced in basic schools, the researcher found out that majority of basic schools in the Ashanti Region usually adapt the integrating style of managing conflict while only a few basic schools adapted the dominating style. The compromising style was the next most preferred style after the integrating style. It was then closely followed by the obliging style and then the avoiding style with the dominating style being the least preferred. The results of the findings further revealed that most basic schools frown on the dominating style because majority of the respondents considered this style as being

too selfish in nature and respondents also claimed it does not usually lead to a peaceful management of the conflict but rather, breeds bitterness and hatred between the parties involved.

5.1.2 Factors influencing Conflict Management

The research findings revealed that, of all the factors influencing conflict management, organizational culture stood out as the most influencing factor. This was closely followed by time and venue. The least influencing factor according to the findings was organizational policies and procedures. Most of the teachers considered organizational culture as the most pressing influence because they believed the kind of culture and relationships within the institution greatly affects the style of conflict management to be used. The teachers also considered the time and venue as another important factor after institutional culture. This was due to the fact that the time and venue, depending on its appropriateness, could either make the management of conflict a success or a failure. Also, a considerable number of teachers also considered leadership style as an important influencing factor.

5.1.3 Challenges encountered in Managing Conflicts

From this study conducted, several conflict management challenges were identified by interviewees. Some of them were lack of professional skills in handling conflict, lack of cooperation and time demanding. Of all these challenges identified, lack of cooperation was considered to be the most prominent followed by lack of professional skills on the part of the leader. A greater number of the teachers interviewed established that lack of cooperation is the major challenge in managing

conflict because cooperation on the part of the parties is always needed for a successful management of conflict. They also established that without some level of professionalism, managing conflict may become a very difficult task for heads of educational institutions.

5.1.4 Roles of Conflict Management in Institutional Growth

The findings gathered by the researcher revealed that conflict management plays vital roles in the growth of educational institutions. Some of these roles given by the respondents included; enhancing institutional learning, strengthening the bond between management and the workers and also, maximizing constructive conflict in the institution. The teachers established that managing conflict helps managers to improve upon the institutional learning and also ensure a more cordial relationship between the management and workers. The interviewees further established that through conflict management, the positive aspect of conflict could be achieved effectively.

5.2 Conclusion

The study assessed conflict management in basic schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It basically focused on areas like the factors influencing conflict management, the different conflict management styles, the challenges in managing conflict and the role played by conflict management in institutional growth. The study concluded that the most influencing factor in ensuring effective management of conflict is the culture of the organization or institution and the most commonly adopted conflict management style is the integrating style. The findings gathered

therefore support the point that, for conflict to be managed effectively within educational institutions, there may be the need to alter the culture of the institution. Moreover, the study also concluded that the major challenge encountered in managing conflict is lack of cooperation from the parties involved. For further studies, more research could be done on the basic principles in managing conflicts in organizations.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were aimed at overcoming the difficulties associated with the management of conflicts in educational institutions in Ashanti Region of Ghana precisely in the Bosome Freho District.

5.3.1 Training Programs

The research revealed that some of the teachers did not have adequate knowledge in managing conflict. The management of educational institutions could therefore organize workshops for the teachers to enlighten them on the concept of conflict management. This would broaden their understanding on the need to manage conflict and the right approaches to managing them. Also, through the workshops, the teachers would learn to appreciate the need to manage conflict both in and out of the work place.

5.3.2 Education on Conflict Management

The findings of this study revealed that managing conflict may require some basic skills which without them managing of conflict may be ineffective. Teachers in

educational institutions could therefore be given special education on the appropriate ways of managing conflict through the organization of internal meetings and seminars. Through workshops, the workers could be educated to acquire good listening skill which is essential in conflict management. The workers could further be educated to accommodate each other's behaviors and differences.

5.3.3 Flexibility of Organizational Structure

The findings indicated that the organizational structure could influence the effective management of conflict. The structure of the institution could therefore be made flexible enough to ensure effective management of conflicts. Some of the structures of some organizations are so rigid that they do not give room for effective handling of conflicts. Certain situations may require modification of the existing organizational structure to suit the conflict management style to be adopted.

5.3.4 Flexibility of Organizational Culture

The research findings revealed that the culture of the organization could influence the management of conflict. The culture of the institution could therefore be developed in such a way that it exhibits some form of flexibility and dynamism. Sometimes, the kind of culture practiced within the institution may go a long way to impede effective management of conflicts. Therefore, the culture of the institution should be adjusted in a way that would favor the effective management of conflict such as encouraging some level of openness and cordiality among the workers.

5.3.5 Leadership Style

The research findings further revealed that the style of leadership has an influence on conflict management. It was recommended that managers could vary their leadership approaches based on the problem they would be dealing with. Managers may be required in certain situations to adopt a more paternalistic and democratic leadership style when dealing with sensitive issues. On the other hand, an autocratic style may also be recommended in dealing with certain situations.

5.3.6 Time and Venue

It was recommended that managers should pay particular attention to the time and venue when managing conflicts since the research findings revealed that time and venue influence conflict management. The time chosen for managing the conflict may either lead to an expected outcome or worsen the situation. It would therefore be appropriate if managers could deal with conflicts when tempers are down.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

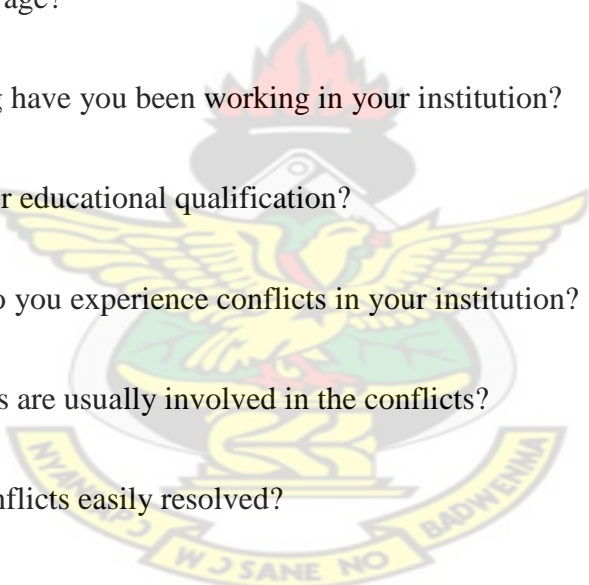
KNUST School of Business, Kumasi, Ghana

Executive Masters in Business Administration (EMBA)

Project Topic: Conflict Management Practices in Selected Basic Schools in the

Ashanti Region

Date: June, 2014.

- 
1. What is your age?
2. For how long have you been working in your institution?
3. What is your educational qualification?
4. How often do you experience conflicts in your institution?
5. Which parties are usually involved in the conflicts?
6. Are these conflicts easily resolved?
7. Does conflict have any positive impact on institutional performance?
8. If yes, what are some of them?
9. What motivates you to manage these conflicts?
10. Which initiative do you take to manage these conflicts?
11. Do you face any challenges in trying to manage the conflicts?
12. If yes, what are some of these challenges?

13. What do you think can be done to overcome these challenges?

14. Which factors influence conflict management in your institution?

15. Does conflict management have any positive impact on overall performance of the institution?

16. If yes, what are some of them?

17. Which conflict management style would you recommend for heads of educational institutions?

18. Why would you recommend this style of managing conflict?

19. Any other comment?

Thank You.

