

CONFLICT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHING AND
LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF EJISU-JUABEN DISTRICT

BY

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THE THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES,
KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF ARTS (ART EDUCATION)

FACULTY OF FINE ART

COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL ART STUDIES

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the M.A Art Education) 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.

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: CONFLICT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF EJISU-JUABEN DISTRICT-ASHANTI REGION, GHANA.

SUPERVISOR: NANA AFUA OPOKU ASARE (MRS.)

Human beings form groups through voluntary means (clubs, societies) and involuntary means (families, ethnic groups). Conflict is basically the misunderstanding between two or more persons or a group of people. Conflict can therefore be grouped under four categories – intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, intragroup conflict and intergroup conflict. It is obvious that people understand quality education to be how efficient teachers are, availability of teaching and learning resources, infrastructure and the ability of the pupils to absorb lessons and reproduce when needed.

Conflict in the basic schools affects teaching and learning especially when it occurs between a teacher and a pupil. It is in the interest of the researcher to identify types of conflict in the basic schools, their causes and how to mitigate their effect on teaching and learning and suggest measures to reduce conflict in the primary schools in Ejisu- Juaben district in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

The researcher employed qualitative method through out this work. A number of libraries were also visited to review literature related to the study. Because the population was wide, the researcher sampled thirty- three percent (33%) of the total number of

primary schools in the district. Three research tools (questionnaire, interview and observation) were used to solicit information from the field.

The outcome of the study revealed that conflict among pupils were rampant and occurred almost everyday in the basic schools in the Ejisu- Juaben district. It was also found that, teacher- parent conflict was mostly caused by pupils. Again the study brought to the fore that pupils were not aware of conflict resolution mechanism in their respective schools, again most schools did not have defined conflict resolution mechanism and the existing ones were not effective enough.

Upon the outcome of the research, the researcher recommends that guidance and counseling unit in most basic schools in the district needs reinforcement to equip them with conflict resolution strategies to educate pupils on better ways to handle conflict. Communication link between teachers and parents needs to be strengthened so that relationships between these key persons in education will cordial to reduce intractable problems of conflict in the school. The researcher here again recommends that pupils should be informed and involved in conflict resolution bodies and procedures in the school since it concerns them and how to channel their grievances through them. Schools that have not established conflict resolution unit should as a matter of urgency form one to reduce issues of conflict in their schools to promote effective teaching and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

There are a number of peoples who have immensely contributed to the success of this research and need to be acknowledged.

My fist thanks go to the Almighty God for his guidance and protection throughout the duration of the programme. Second to my able supervisor Nana Afua Opoku Asare (Mrs.) who did not only discharge her duty as a supervisor but also as a mother for her tremendous effort to the success of this thesis, and to all lecturers of the Department of General Art Studies who in diverse ways lent their support before and during the study.

My next gratitude goes to all my course mates for their support especially Solomon Marfo for their encouragement and moral support during and after the course. Also to Mr. Joseph M. Dasanah, the Northern Regional Co-ordinating Director for his moral and financial support to the success of this thesis. And lastly to my family and my dearest daughter Elliotmeg Naa Adjeley Kumah for their co-operation, support and encouragement offered me throughout the study.

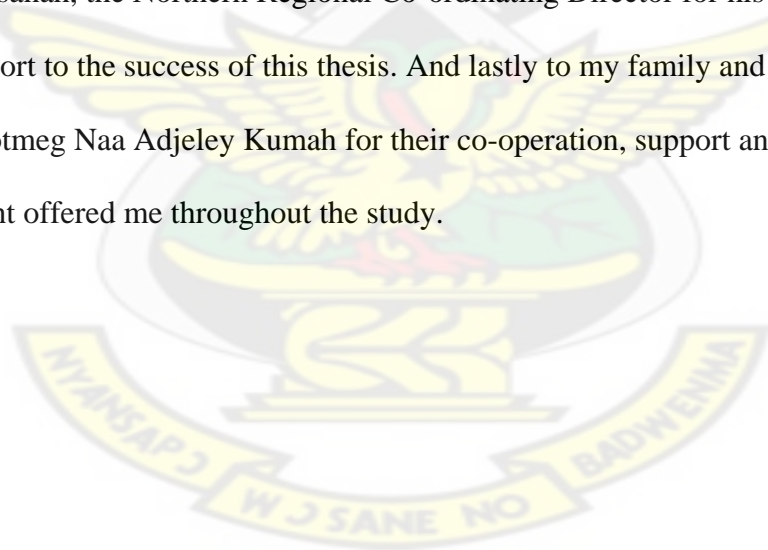


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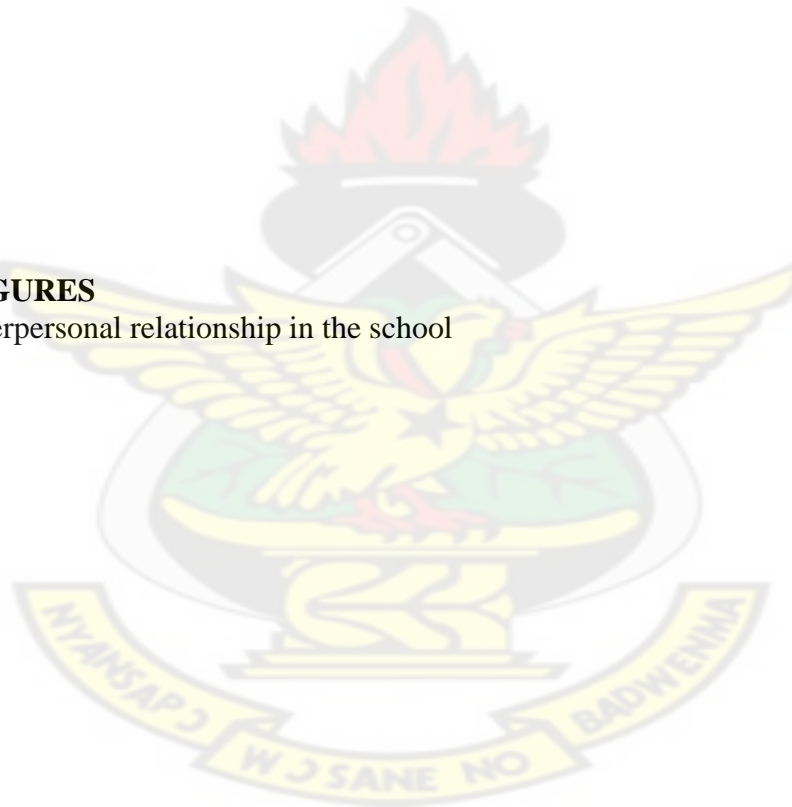
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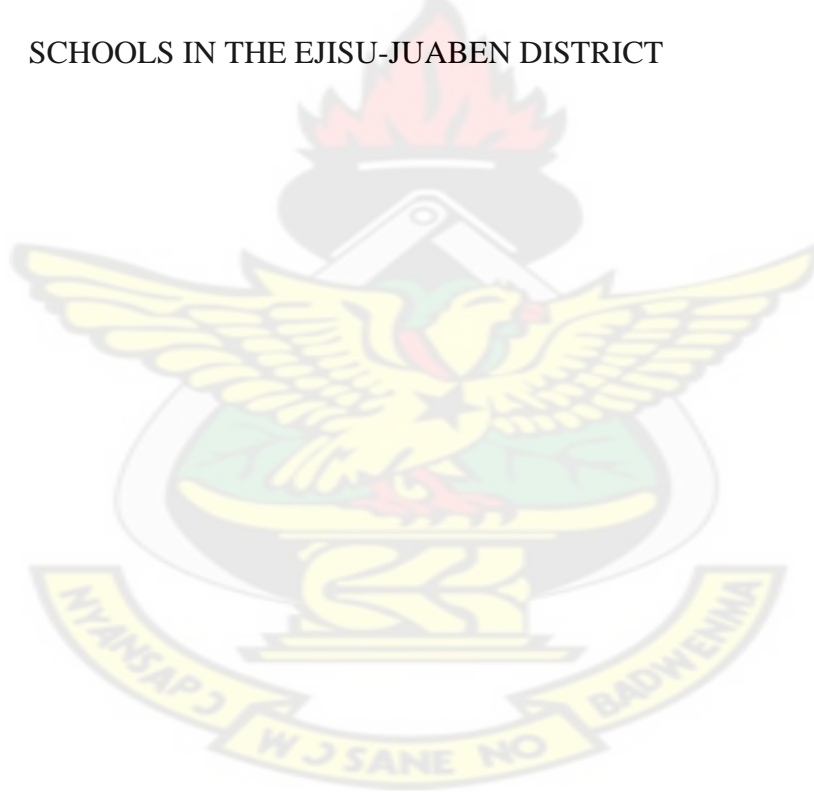
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Conflict is inevitable in any human institution. The fundamental meaning of conflict is disagreement. It is obvious that disagreement, irrespective of the form it takes, is bound to be experienced in most circumstances and situations. Our bodies experience some sort of disagreement in most circumstances. For instance, if someone takes medications and the body reacts to the drugs, there is disagreement between the body and the drugs. Similarly, disagreement arises in the body when we eat and the food comes out immediately as vomit or diarrhoea without performing the supposed functions in the body.

Different forms of disagreements do surface in our families. In many marriages, disagreement occurs over sensitive issues such as the frequency of sex in a week, house keeping money, husband dating another woman and many more. Such disagreements could be more serious and produce hatred, divorce or even murder. Another example of disagreement is when a baby cries as a result of being uncomfortable but which the mother, out of misunderstanding, forces the baby to breastfeed which the child refuses or does not respond to. Again, disagreements do crop up when adolescents believe they can lead their own lives as they desire and clash with parents or guardians who try to prevent or dictate to them as to what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, leading to the parties not understanding each other.

Disagreements can occur in communities when chiefs and elders make rules and the community members refuse to comply with them. Government policy on National Health Insurance has even brought a kind of disagreement between some people because their religious beliefs do not permit them to have photographs taken of themselves. Even in religion which has the fundamental belief that there is a supreme being (God), a lot of disagreements do occur. For example, Christians who are supposed to share the same belief have disagreement over the appropriate day for worshipping God in this case either Sunday or Saturday.

In diverse ways, disagreements can also occur in schools– among teachers, among pupils, between pupils and their teachers. For example, disagreement may emerge among teachers when a colleague keeps pupils or students at morning assembly for too long resulting in taking some time off the other colleagues' period for teaching. Disagreements could also arise between pupils if a pupil from an upper class takes a chair or table from a fellow pupil who is in a lower class and the junior struggles with the senior pupils. In the same way, disagreement could occur between teachers and pupils over disciplinary measures such as corporal punishment and other forms of punishments that ensure discipline in the school. These conflict situations have to be resolved to ensure peace and harmony between the persons and in society.

1.2 Statement of the problem

People come together to form groups through voluntary and involuntary means. Examples of voluntary groups are friends, clubs, and societies. Those of involuntary means include

families, ethnic groups, classmates among others. Conflict normally accompanies the coming together of people because of differences in beliefs, interests and opinions.

It is generally believed that quality education is centered on the quality and the efficacy of the teacher, availability of teaching and learning resources, infrastructure and the ability of the pupils or students to grasp and reproduce what has been taught them. Little attention is however paid to what happens in the school environment, in the classroom when teaching is in progress and the kind of relationships that exist between teachers and pupils, among teachers, among pupils, between teachers and their school heads, and even between the school and the community in which the school exists. Conflict needs to be looked at critically and all preventive measures adapted to enhance the school environment and enable teachers and pupils live and work together in harmony.

Conflict in the primary schools in particular can have adverse effects on teaching and learning especially when it emerges between teachers and pupils. This conflict, when not resolved early, can turn teachers and pupils into enemies or strain peaceful relationships and make it difficult, if not impossible, for effective teaching and learning to go on. This can cause unnecessary punishments to be meted out to pupils and even make pupils drop out of school.

This research aims at identifying the various types of conflicts that occur in primary schools with Ejisu – Juaben district of Ashanti Region as a case study. The focus is on the causes of conflicts and how they are resolved to mitigate their effect on teaching and learning and to also suggest conflict resolution strategies to reduce conflict in primary schools.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To identify and describe types and causes of conflict that exist in the primary school system in the Ejisu – Juaben district.
2. To examine the existing structures for resolving conflict in the primary schools and propose alternative conflict resolution strategies.

1.5 Hypotheses

1. Some conflict occurs in Ghanaian primary schools.
2. Conflict in the primary schools negatively affects teaching and learning.

1.6 Delimitations

This research is limited to conflict that occurs in the Ghanaian primary schools with Ejisu –Juaben District as a case study. Even in the Ghanaian Primary Schools, it is further limited to only government or public schools. Since it is impossible to include all primary schools in the country, focus is on the Ejisu – Juaben District of Ashanti Region for in-depth study. The study seeks not only to identify problems that hinder effective teaching and learning in the Ghanaian primary classrooms, but also problems of conflict in and outside classrooms. Even though the study is limited to Ejisu-Juaben District, the outcome could be generalized to other primary schools in the country.

1.7 Limitations

School heads did not release the number of pupils needed to be interviewed for the study. Parents and teachers who were in conflict at the time the researcher visited

the sample schools did not allow the researcher to take photographs of them. Again, any time that pupils saw the researcher trying to take photographs of them in conflict situations, they stopped whatever they were doing. Unfortunately, some heads refused to give information on conflict situations in their schools for fear of their schools being labeled “conflict prone”. This denial made the researcher difficult to have access to a reflection of real conflict situation from the school heads to validate the data obtained from other respondents, creating more room for bias.

1.8 Definition of terms

1. Pedagogy – dependence of children on their teachers for knowledge, skills and guidance.
2. Corporal punishment- is the activity of punishing pupils by hitting a part of their body with a stick.
- 3 “In loco parentis”- teachers performing the duty of parents.

1.9 Abbreviations or Acronyms

KNUST	–	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
GES	-	Ghana Education Services
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organization
DDE	-	District Director of Education
PTA	-	Parent Teacher Association
SMC	-	School Management Committee

CS	-	Circuit Supervisor
SHS	-	Senior High School
CRDD	-	Curriculum Research and Development Division
fCUBE	-	Free Compulsory and universal Basic Education
DEOC	-	District Education Oversight Committee
MOE	-	Ministry of Education

1.10 Library Research

The following libraries were consulted for secondary data for the research.

1. KNUST libraries - Kumasi
2. University of Education Technology - Kumasi
3. British Council Library - Kumasi
4. St. Louis Training College Library - Kumasi
5. St. Monica's Training College Library – Asante Mampong
6. Wesley College Library - Kumasi
7. Asante Akim North District Library – Konongo, Ashanti

1.11 Importance of the study

The study will be of immense benefit to Ministry of Education Science and Sports, Ghana Education Service (GES), Teacher Training Colleges, Parents, Communities, UNICEF, SMC or PTA and other Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) concerned with the welfare of children. It will make the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports aware of the absolute need for including conflict studies in the

curriculum of educational institutions in Ghana. This can help mitigate problems of conflict in primary schools, the society and the nation at large. The Ministry can formulate a policy and give directives to Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) to include conflict resolution studies in the primary school syllabus for GES to implement based on the awareness created on the problems associated with conflict in the primary schools by the research findings. The study of conflict resolution studies could later be extended to other levels of education for example, junior and senior high schools an even beyond.

GES can rely on the outcome of the research and organize workshops for headteachers of primary schools to conscientize them on problems of conflict in the schools and equip them with skills to deal with conflict situations to bring incredible development in the primary education. The workshops can also enhance their leadership skills to be able to deal with problems of conflict in their respective schools to improve their administrative work.

It is apparent that teachers are the pivot of the educational system. Primary school teachers spend a lot of time with the pupils because a teacher takes a class through all the subjects they are supposed to learn for the year. Because of the numerous interactions between teachers and pupils, there is bound to be conflict between them. Therefore GES can organize seminars for primary school teachers for at least once a year to equip them with skills to effectively handle conflict situations, make them tolerant to accommodate intractable behaviour of pupils, and improve their human relationships with their heads and the community members. The outcome of the study can help to reduce conflict in primary schools because their heads can organize

occasional symposia (at least once a term) for the pupils on acceptable ways to address or present their grievances while in school. To ensure successful implementation of such programmes, GES can set a team which will tour the schools for follow ups.

The Teacher Training Colleges will also benefit from the findings of this research because the school can be a place of learning when teachers realize the needs of pupils, accommodate pupils in all circumstances and treat each child as an individual. Due to this, principals of Teacher Training Colleges can incorporate conflict resolution studies in their curriculum to train teachers. The research can also help tutors of Teacher Training Colleges to improve their relationship with the teacher trainees, so that they can replicate the cordial relationship with their pupils when they are posted to their various schools. This in a long run, will have a significant impact on education in Ghana.

It is known that parents and the communities are stakeholders of education. Therefore these stakeholders are going to benefit from the outcome of the study by increasing their awareness on the negative effects conflict has on their wards education. They will also learn from the outcome by cultivating warm relationships between them and the school. This can be done by organizing open forum at community mass meeting and at the schools' PTA meetings.

UNICEF and other NGOs which have keen interest in children's education will also have their share of the outcome of the research. The findings will serve as a platform for these organizations to introduce peer mediation groups or peace clubs in the primary schools in the country by designing periodic workshops, symposia and seminars for these groups to equip them with psychological and emotional tools for

effective conflict resolution. It will also help them to manage their interpersonal conflicts. The implementation of pupils' or students' conflict resolution and peer mediation programmes could be extended to other levels of education. This body will be unique or different to recognize the pupil or student as an individual with talents that can be developed through mentoring and coaching. It will also place the principles of interdependency conflict management in the hands of the pupils. Moreover, the thesis is a body of knowledge which will serve as a reference material to other researchers.

1.12 Arrangement of the rest of text

Chapter Two provides a review of literature related to conflict and discusses issues on conflict in general, how conflict is initiated, causes of conflict, positive and negative effects of conflict, characteristics of conflict, conflict response style and classroom management in relation to disruption and teacher-pupil relationships. Chapter Three provides the research methodology. It describes the research design, population studied, sampling techniques adapted, instrumentation, primary and secondary data, data collection procedures and the data analysis plan. Chapter Four deals with analysis and discussion of the main findings of the research. Chapter Five provides the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for improving school environments and reducing conflict situations in Ghanaian primary schools

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Definition of conflict

According to Meek, Heit and Page (2005), conflict is a disagreement between two or more people or between two or more choices. Similarly, Cannie, Sasse and CFCS (2002) simply refer to conflict as a disagreement or struggle between two or more people. Expanding on this definition, Cole (1998) also states that conflict is a condition that arises whenever the perceived interests of an individual or a group clash with those of another individual or a group in such a way that strong emotions are aroused and compromise is not considered to be an option. On the other hand, Hart (2002) writes that “conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people which is sometimes characterized by physical violence or assault”. While www.biol.sukuba.ac.jp/macer/biodict/htm defines conflict as a situation in which opposing view points have come into physical confrontation.

From these definitions, conflict can be seen as a contest of opposing forces or power, a struggle to resist or overcome. It is also seen that conflict exists whenever incompatible perception or activities occur. Conflict can also be a situation in which there are incompatible goals, thought or emotions within or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition. Important aspects of these definitions include “expressed struggle”, which means the two sides must communicate about the problem for there to

be a conflict. Another important idea is that conflict often involves perceptions. The two sides may only perceive that their goals, resources and interference are incompatible with each other's.

2.2 Types of Conflict

The literature consulted identifies four types of conflict which are: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Intragroup and Intergroup conflicts. These types of conflicts are explained in the following sections.

Intrapersonal Conflict

Larson and Mildred (2000) point out that intrapersonal conflict occurs within a person and that one can experience intrapersonal conflict with respect to the amount of resources one has by hearing internal voices that disagree. In agreement with this assertion, Orlich, et al (2001) explain that in intrapersonal conflict the individual tries to reconcile conflict within his or her own value structure. Similarly, Hart (2001) observes that conflict may not only take a toll on one's physical body but it often occupies one's thoughts and causes a great deal of emotion.

Larson and Mildred (2000) also agree that intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual and can involve some form of goal or cognitive conflict. They argue that intrapersonal conflict occurs when a person's behaviour results in positive and negative outcomes or incompatible outcomes. An example is where a person has the option to choose a job in a government organisation that does not pay well but has future security

or take a job from a private company that pays well but does not provide any future security. Such a choice could lead to intrapersonal conflict.

Interpersonal conflict

While Meek, Heit and Page (2005) state that interpersonal conflict occurs between two or more persons, Larson and Mildred (2000) refer to interpersonal conflict as clashes that involve two or more individuals who perceive each other as being in opposition to preferred outcomes (goals) and or attitudes, values or behaviours. Similarly, Nelson-Jones (1990) indicates that interpersonal conflict is a situation in which one or both individuals in a relationship are experiencing difficulty in working or living with each other. Expanding on this point, Nelson-Jones states that interpersonal conflict usually occurs when due to differences or incompatibilities, needs, goals or styles clash. Similar to this assertion is Orlich *et al* observation (2001) who observed that in interpersonal conflict the values of different individuals or groups openly clash.

Intragroup Conflict

This type of conflict emerges between people who identify themselves as belonging to the same group. Larson and Mildred (2000) explain that intragroup conflict is a clash among some or all of a group's members which often affects the group's progress and effectiveness. In a classroom situation, an intragroup conflict may occur within members of a class where pupils sit in close proximity and interact with each other. Such conflict can also occur among the staff of schools who have different views on the kind of measures appropriate for punishing students. In this case, some

teachers may support the use of corporal punishment while others may support other milder forms of punishment for misbehaviour.

Intergroup conflict

This emerges between two or more groups of people. While Larson and Mildred (2000) define intergroup conflict as opposition and clashes that arise between two or more groups, Wilmet and Hocker (1998) indicate that such conflicts are highly intense and costly to the group involved. Intergroup conflict can therefore occur between two or more schools. According to Antcliffe (1998), intergroup conflict within organisations occurs at three levels: vertical, horizontal and line staff. Antcliffe explains these as follows:

- i Vertical conflict** refers to clashes between levels in an organization. For example, vertical conflict occurs when superiors try to control subordinates too tightly as subordinates resist the control.
- ii Horizontal conflict** refers to clashes between groups of employees at the same hierarchical level in an organisation. In a school situation horizontal conflict will occur if one department desires a larger proportion of scarce resources at the expense of other departments.
- iii Line-staff conflict** is a clash over authority relationships. As Jennings and Wattam (2005) indicate, line staff conflict can easily occur from the different organizational roles of line and staff departments. An example is where staffing decisions taken by the personnel department (a staff function) is opposed by the production department (a line function). This implies that conflict in an organization

can occur at different levels and so conflict resolution is paramount to effective management of organisations.

It is worth remembering that conflict that emerges in oneself, in marriages, in the family, the community, in an organisation or country can be grouped under one or more of the types mentioned. It is also important to note that conflict can arise between people who have the same goals but disagree on the means by which the goals can be achieved. Conflict that occurs within a person can have either a covert effect on the imitations of the fellow or an overt effect which he or she involves other people in the conflict. Conflict should therefore not only be studied by itself as psychologists do but conflict resolution should be given keen consideration in social situations and its study should be a concern for all.

2.3 Cause of conflict in relationships

Conflict does not occur in a vacuum, in other words, there are causes to conflict of any type. Cannie, Sasse and CFCS (2002) affirm that there are some common factors which cause conflict in relationships. They explain these as situations or circumstances in which people find themselves, the personality of the individual or people, and the urge or desire for power. The authors explain these factors as follows:

Situational factors: According to Microsoft Encarta Dictionary Tool (2007), a situation is the current condition that characterizes somebody's life or an event in a particular place, society or country. Cannie and CFCS (2002) and Beck (1987) explain that situational factors of conflict arise out of daily life. To them any aspect of living

such as working or playing together contains the seed of situational conflict. Such conflicts can occur in all kinds of relationships – between family members, among friends, groups or acquaintances and even in an organisation. As Tizard, Blatchford and Burke (2000) indicate, conflict over situational factors can be overcome when the situation or circumstance changes. Even though a situational conflict may be intense, it is usually short-lived.

Personality factors: According to Cannie and CFCS (2002), personality factors come from individualism or the differences that are inherent in people. It is evident that everybody has a unique combination of values, characteristics, beliefs and life style. In an agreement with this assertion, Marshall (1990) says that as much as differences in personality add pleasure and richness to life, these differences can also create conflict in all aspects of life. In a family for instance, if a parent values order and neatness and the children do not, conflict may occur. Covey (2002) adds that very often, conflict involving personality factors occurs over matters such as mannerism, table manners and a person's way of life. These personality quirks may get on the nerves of another person and cause conflict. In the classroom situation, personality factors may be the tendency for one to be talkative, the dragging of feet, restlessness and fidgeting.

Power factors: The BBC dictionary (1990) defines power as the ability to influence another person. Cannie and CFCS (2002) indicate that power factors result in conflict when issues are important to both parties and often results when each of the parties wants to use power to get the other to agree with his or her position. Kreidle (1982) is

of the view that conflict is inevitable when power factors come into play because those in power try to abuse it by forcing others to comply with situations that are not favourable. In the same way, Larson and Mildred (2000) emphasize that if the dependence is not mutual, but one way, the potential for conflict increases. For example, in a school situation, teachers seem to have total power when it comes to conducting examinations, marking and grading students' scripts. In this case students appear to be at the total mercy of teachers and when students' expectations are not met, conflict develops.

Conflict of any types – whether intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup or intergroup, can emerge based on the circumstance a person finds himself or herself in. In other words, certain situations can compel someone to be driven into a conflict. Again people's personality quirks are also fertile grounds for a conflict to crop up because of individualism. Conflict can easily erupt over personality factors such as courtesy, manners and so on. Thus conflict is inevitable when one tries to impose his or her interest, values or beliefs on another person. Undoubtedly, power factors can generate conflict in circumstances where people use power to subdue others to get what they want.

2.4 Some Common Sources of Conflict

Conflict can have a remote cause. It is not easy to identify specific causes for conflict because what can generate a conflict for someone may not be a problem for another.

However, some authors have identified some common causes of conflict in an

organisation. Fisher and Ury (1981) have outlined the following as some of the common causes of conflict in a workplace.

(i) Unclear definition of responsibility — there will be numerous occasions for conflict to arise over decisions made or actions taken in disputed territory.

(ii) Limited resources — time, money, space, materials, supplies, and equipment are all valuable resources. Competition for any of these resources can inevitably lead to interpersonal and inter-departmental conflict.

(iii) Conflict of interest — According to Microsoft Encarta Tool (2007), conflict of interest is a situation in which someone in position of trust, such as a lawyer, a politician, or an executive or a director of a corporation has competing professional or personal interests. Such competing interest can make it difficult to fulfill his or her duties impartially.

Cullingford (1988) also defines conflict of interest as any situation in which an individual or a corporation (either private or government) is in a position to exploit a professional or official capacity in some way for their personal benefit. Conflict therefore arises when individuals in key or managerial positions try to use their office to subdue others.

In a school situation for example, a Circuit Supervisor (CS) may by his position dupe (demand money and other material things) from teachers who default their professional obligations during inspections to fulfill his personal desire and ignore the professional goal of his or her visits. Conflict may occur if the demands become unbearable or the teachers resist complying with the conditions of the CS. Correspondingly, in this instance, conflict of interest can create an appearance of

impropriety that can undermine confidence in the ability of that person to act properly in his or her position and also retard the attainment of the organisational goal.

Contrary to this perspective, Meeks, Heit and Page (2005) point out that conflict is caused by factors such as availability of resources, fulfillment of psychological needs upholding personal values and maintaining self preservation. These factors are explained as follows:

Availability of Resources: According to Dowling and Osborn (2001) resources are available assets which may include time, money and material possessions. Meeks, Heit and Page (2005) also hammer on the issue that conflict may arise when there are insufficient available resources in a family, friendship, marriage, groups or organizations. In this instance, individuals try to have their share of the available limited resources and because people are likely to step on each other's toes in the course of the struggle or competition, a conflict can emerge.

According to Gray, Miller and Noakes (1995), if resources are not enough to be shared equally, hard decisions are made and that these decisions may provide fertile grounds for conflict because some people may not have their share as wished. In agreement with this contention, Jennings and Wattam (2005) also believe that under normal circumstances, conflict occurs when there is scarcity of commodity such as raw materials, machines or rooms, or intangible things such as prestige, influence or status, or time. Bryant (1992) also agrees that conflict is likely to be minimal where there is plentiful supply of such commodity and where there is a scarcity (real or imagined), the potential for conflict increases.

Psychological needs: Psychological needs are things that are needed to feel important and secure and may include friendship, sense of belonging, accomplishments, and status.

Values are the beliefs, goals and standards held by people and as Atkinson and Forehand (1994) posit, values are beliefs that people use to give meaning to their lives. Values explain what is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust. In agreeing with this definition, Jennings and Wattam (2005) assert that values help one to define what is right or wrong in any situation, and provide a moral compass for one's life. According to them, conflict normally occurs when decisions must be made by people who have different standards and beliefs.

However, as Burden and Miller (1993) state, value conflicts are caused over perceived or actual incompatible belief systems. They explain that value disputes arise only when people attempt to force one set of values on others or lay claim to exclusive value systems that do not allow for divergent beliefs. To this, Bodines, Crawford and Schrupf (1994) suggest that it is no use to try to change value and belief systems during relatively short and strategic mediation interventions, rather, it can be helpful to support each participant's expression of their values and beliefs for acknowledgement by the other party.

On the other hand, Bridges (1997) disagrees and makes it clear that different values do not need to cause conflict because people can live together in harmony with different value systems. This is why Bettmann and Moore (1994) point to expansion of

tolerance, understanding, and acceptance of others' points of view as the key to improving success of conflict resolution in any human institution.

Self-preservation refers to the inner desire to keep oneself and others safe from harm Nelson-Jones (1990). This may include preserving physical, mental and social wellbeing .Conflict may occur when people harm or threaten to harm others. It can be seen that there are different factors which can cause conflict at certain places and such factors serve as a conduit for conflict to occur. If people send their own values and beliefs to workplaces, marriages and communities, there is bound to be high probability for conflict to unfold as different people interact and work together.

2.5 Characteristics of conflict

Conflict has some distinctive features for easy identification. As indicated by Wilmet and Hocker (1998), Lulofs (1994), McCorkle and Mill (1992), McKinney, Kingsley and Fuller (1995) conflict is characterized by the following:

- 1) Apart from intrapersonal conflict which occurs within one's self, conflict usually requires two people or groups.
- 2) Conflict inherently involves some sense of struggle or incompatibility or perceived differences among values, goals or desires.
- 3) Action, whether overt or covert, is key to conflict. Until an action or expression occurs, conflict is latent, lurking below the surface.
- 4) Power or attempt to influence inevitably occurs within conflict.

2.6 How conflict is initiated

Meeks, Heit and Page (2005) are of the view that conflict emerges in many aspects of human life. They explain that conflict occurs in the family, in the community and in an organisation such as a school. Conflict also may surface within oneself and can be centered on different needs and values a person has. As Covey (2002) has observed, conflict emerges when one party decides that things are not moving the way it should and seeks a change, which is not agreed to by the other party. This shows that it takes one party to declare a conflict which the other party is drawn into. To Tannen and Debra (2003), where there is a change, there will be conflict since conflict is a natural part of the change process. They argue that conflict is actually the main vehicle through which change takes place in society. In this regard, Girard and Koch (1996) assert that the rapid pace of change in society over the last few decades has far outstripped the human body's natural evolutionary change rate, hence, the many conflicts in the world.

In the case of children, Nelson-Jones (1990) notes that in the face of disappointment or conflict, they copy or imitate ways in which their parents or other significant family figures behave. Likewise, McClure, Miller and Russo (1992) point out that as children witness that inappropriate behaviour of models in their environment brings rewards to them, they learn to do same. For example, a father who vents his anger on people in his home relies on it to bring him the attention or solace he needs, and siblings make demands or clamour for attention and get it, and are also indulged or gratified according to the frequency, intensity and duration of their demanding

behaviour, unconsciously sends such a message to children as the only way out of getting the attention they need.

Obviously, wherever people meet, there is a probability for conflict to occur. If the conflict is intrapersonal, it could manifest in a person's way of thinking, or relationship with others and that conflict can be extended to other people who are not involved in the issue. More often than not, conflict unfolds when initiatives are implemented or when there is a change in decision making in a family, a household, organisation, community or country. This is so because people find it unpleasant to change their beliefs or practices that have been adopted for a greater part of their lives, any attempt to change or modify these practices may breed conflict.

2.7 Conflict and Intimacy

According to Strong, DeVault, Sayad and Yarber (2002), two people do not become one when they love each other mainly because they retain their individual identities, needs, wants and past and that the more intimate people become, the more likely they may experience conflict. Moreover, conflict is more natural and is expected in relationships, perhaps because of the high value placed on individualism. On this score, Olson and Defrain (2001) also contend that the more one knows about a person, the more possibilities there are for disagreement and dislike. As Hopkins and Reynolds (1995) indicate, conflict is inevitable between people working alongside each other in close proximity for any length of time. They stress that increased interaction is also an ingredient in the conflict mixture. Likewise, McCorkle and Miller (1992) also affirm that the more people interact, the more potential there is for conflict. It is therefore

required that people understand others' points of view, needs and priorities. Teamwork and increasing levels of participation within an organisation will require a greater need for conflict resolution skills.

This notion suggests that intimacy then does not seem to exclude disagreement or conflict and that conflict cannot be eliminated when people work or live in close proximity. That is why conflict is not ruled out in friendships although the people chosen as friends seem to be the ones such people find compatible to move with. It is significant therefore to note that no matter how much one party might tolerate the other or ignore conflict situations, one party is likely to react strongly to a situation one day and respond to conflict in a more hostile manner. The idea is that even the best of friends are likely to face conflict of a sort at a point in time.

2.8 Family conflict

In the view of Barr and Dreeben (1989), conflict is an unavoidable part of family life. Because every family is a collection of individuals with distinct personalities, needs and values, it is inevitable that family members will sometimes get in each others' way. Murphy (2006) adds that family conflicts can often be extremely difficult because the people can never get away from each other (they will always be family) and that closeness can lead to very intense conflicts. Wilmet and Hoher (1998) explain that conflict can emerge when family members have different views or beliefs that clash. Similarly, Atkinson and Turner (2003) note that family conflict sometimes does occur when people misunderstand each other and jump into wrong conclusions.

This indicates that occasional conflict is normal in family life and that it is also normal for family members to disagree with each other from time to time. However, ongoing conflict can be stressful and damaging to a family relationship and it must be accepted that conflict is a part of any relationship such as siblings and cousins within a family context. Because conflict is a nearly universal experience common sources of family conflict can be identified.

2.8.1 Some common causes of conflict in a family

A variety of family issues may create or heighten conflict. According to Jasman and Lieberman (2002) and Stocker, Burwell and Rigg (2002) some common causes of family conflict are:

1. A maturing child forms his own opinion and values which may clash with the views held by his or her parents.
2. The child wants more independence than the parents are willing to grant.
3. Older children and teenagers do not bend to discipline as easily as younger children and are more likely to stand their grounds.
4. The opinions, values and needs of parents change as they age.
5. Some parents feel worried, threatened or confused by their children's rapid emotional and physical changes during puberty.
6. Family changes such as separation, divorce or arrival of a new baby.

According to the authors, these factors are the basic or potential causes of conflict in a family situation.

Workplace conflicts also have varying causes which when left unattended or resolved could retard the progress of the organisation.

2.9 Workplace Conflict

As Rau-Foster (2000) indicates, the workplace setting is a fertile breeding ground for conflicts because of the dynamics and interdependency of the employee-to-employee, customer-to-employee, and employee-to-outside vendor relationships. Moreover, Schlesinger, Eccles and Gabarro (1999) assert that conflict is a normal and natural part of our workplace and personal lives. Pondy (1995) argues that in a company, an agency or a small scale business, conflict may be the very essence of what the organisation is about and if conflict is not occurring, then, the organization has no reason for being. What this means is that conflict in most cases uproots the very impediments that undermine the organisational development and if it is absent, the management of the organisation might be off-track in managing the affairs of the organisation.

Wilmet and Hoher (1998) therefore agree that ignoring workplace conflict sets destructive forces in motion and spread the conflict to others, subsequently reducing morale and productivity. In the view of Aldag and Stearns (1987), and Ivacevich and Matteson (2002), conflict in the workplace can be grouped into two types. They are Substantive Conflict and Personality-Based Conflict and are explained as follows.

(1) Substantive Conflict- As Rau-Foster (2000) contends substantive conflict occurs when people's ideas, decisions or actions relating directly to the job are in opposition.

Similarly, conflict of ideas on any aspect of business can often be productive, if the parties involved are willing to 'brainstorm' solutions together. (C:\Documents and Settings\MD\Desktop\conflict info\Workplace conflict - Better Health Channel.htm)

(2) Personality-Based Conflict- occurs when two people just do not get along. Personality-based conflict or clashes are rarely productive. According to C:\Documents and Settings\MD\Desktop\conflict info\Workplace conflict Better Health Channel.htm, and as Ivacevich and Matteson (2002) also point out, a clash may start with a dispute on business practices and escalate from there to mutual loathing, or else the two people may simply have disliked each other from the very beginning. They add that if the conflict is caused by personality clashes, it will most likely continue unless attitude and behaviours are changed. According to Aldag and Stearns (1987), this type of workplace conflict is bad for business, because it can lead to downturns in productivity and increases in absenteeism. Wilmet and Hocher (1998) indicate that at an individual level, workplace conflict is stressful and unpleasant. This anxiety may spill over into other areas of life and disrupt, for example, personal relationships.

2.9.1 Some sources of workplace conflict

Workplace conflict can originate from several sources. Aldag and Stearns (1987) reveal that there are many causes or reasons for conflict in any work setting. They assert that while conflict may take place between members, individuals, and groups, one can easily trace the source of workplace conflicts to one or several of the following events: poor communication, different values, differing interests, scarce resources, and

personality clashes which are also what Schlesinger, Eccles and Gabarro (1999) have also identified as some of the fundamental causes of workplace conflict.

i Poor Communication: Schlesinger, Eccles and Gabarro (1999) believe that different communication styles can lead to misunderstanding between employees or between an employee and a manager. In their view, lack of communication drives conflict “underground”. On that stand, Whetten and Cameron (2005) contend that an important message may not be received if effective communication channels are not used. For instance, a manager’s instructions may be misinterpreted, or decision makers may arrive at a different conclusion because they use different databases. In this regard, Nelson-Jones (1995) says that conflict based on poor communication, misinformation or misunderstanding tends to be factual hence, clarifying previous messages or obtaining additional information generally resolves the dispute. In this regards, Aldag and Stearns (1987) indicate that the more misperceptions members have concerning what activities exist in another department or division, the greater the potential for conflict.

ii Different Values: As Ivacevich and Matteson (2002) posit, any workplace is made up of individuals who see the world differently. Consequently, conflict occurs when there is a lack of acceptance and understanding of these differences. To this end, Larson and Mildred (2000) argue that people in organisations with particular references to their predispositions, for instance, their attitude like insubordination towards authority can create conflict in the workplace.

iii Differing Interests: Conflict occurs when individual workers “fight” for their personal goals, ignoring organisational goals and organisational well-being. On this score, Larson and Mildred (2000) agree that conflict centering on differing interests erupt when individuals in an organisation admit they must work together but cannot agree to how to do so. For example, the headteacher of a primary school and a circuit supervisor could agree to work together to enhance the development of the school but could have different procedures as on how issues should be settled.

(IV) Scarce Resources: It is argued that too often, employees feel they have to compete for available resources in order to execute their jobs. Barker and Gum (1994) hold the view that in a scarce resource environment where people compete for the available limited resources, conflicts occur despite the awareness of how scarce the resources may be. Also, partial distribution of the limited resources increases the probability of conflict to occur.

Hopkins and Raynolds (1995) assert that if resources are scarce, individuals or groups make efforts to secure resources without compromise, usually to the detriment of others. Such competition for scarce resources may result in people inflating budgets, challenging the legitimate activities of the other units or individuals which can bring interpersonal or intergroup conflict in the organisation. To buttress this point, Larson and Mildred (2000) say that when an organisation’s resources are insufficient to meet requirements of other sub-units or individuals to execute their work, potential for conflict is great.

v Personality Clashes: All work environments are made up of differing personalities. As Robbins (2000) declares, unless colleagues understand and accept each other's approach to work and problem-solving, conflict will occur. Whetten and Cameron (2005) contend that because individuals bring different backgrounds to their workplace, there will always be conflict that is based on personal differences. Besides, Ivacevich and Matteson (2002) explain that people's values and needs have been shaped by different socialization processes that depend on differing cultural and family traditions, levels of education, breadths of experience and others. Nelson-Jones (1995) buttresses this issue of personality clashes with the idea that conflict stemming from incompatible personal values and needs are mostly difficult to resolve since they often become highly emotional and take moral overtones. Under these conditions, disagreement on what is factually correct easily turns to a bitter argument over who is morally right.

2.10 Positive effects of conflicts

According to Boulding (1993), despite the adverse effects that conflict can produce, disagreement between people has its good side. Although the definition of conflict does not seem to be beneficial at a glance, it has intrinsic importance when they are critically scrutinized. Wehlege and Wisconsin (2000) point out that conflict is a pivot around which change takes place in workplaces and the society at large and that when we disagree, it sharpens our focus and defines what the important issues are. However, Wheeler and Terrence (1995) indicate that suppression of conflict and dissent is a sure sign that freedom is on the decline and democracy is in trouble. Likewise, Aldag and Stearns (1987) explain that theorists and practitioners today view conflict as a useful force in an organisation and, if managed correctly, can be a potential force for

innovation and change. In disagreeing with the notion that conflict is inherently destructive, Robbins (2000) instead asserts that a certain amount of conflict in an organisation is healthy as it prevents the organisation from stagnating and from producing myopic decisions.

From this perspective, Larson and Mildred (2000) believe that when conflicts are effectively managed, it can lead to outcomes that are productive and can enhance the health of the organisation overtime. Thus, conflict in itself is neither good nor bad in value terms; it is natural. They explain that its impact on an organisation and the behaviour of the people in it is largely dependent on the way it is treated. Jennings and Wattam (2005) also agree to the assertion that conflict is a necessary agent to stimulate change and innovation and that problems and inefficiencies in working will be highlighted by conflict whereas attempts to eliminate conflict can lead to such matters being “swept under the carpet”. To add to this, Owens (2001) precisely notes that healthy competition and rivalry can lead to better decisions being made as attention is more clearly focused on the issue. Eccles and Gabbaro (1995) also note that the impact of such conflict is that groups can become more cohesive and operate more effectively as teams, increasing more group and individual motivation which goes a long way to boost standards of performance as a result of commitment and concern to make better decisions. Barker and Gum (1994) Jorgensen and Henderson (1990) Hopkins and Raynolds (1995) Wheeler (1995) Wayne, Hoy and Miskel (2001)

2.11 Negative effects of conflicts

If conflict has its good side then it has a negative side as well. According to Aldag and Stearns (1987), anyone who has ever worked in an organisation knows that conflict exists and that it can have destructive effects on the organisation and the members' activities. Nelson-Jones (1995) explains that not only can conflict in the workplace cause great stress and unhappiness but it also can lower outputs and in extreme cases, bring strikes. Furthermore, Barker and Gum (1994) emphatically state that many times, in the midst of conflict, opposing individuals or groups will put their own interests or goals above those of the organisation, resulting in the lessening of the organisation's effectiveness.

Owens (2001) also opines that frequent and powerful conflict can have a devastating impact on the behaviour of people in an organisation in that conflict often develops into hostility which also causes people to withdraw both physically and psychologically. In a school situation, physical withdrawal can take the form of absence, tardiness and turnover which is often written off by laziness on the part of the teacher. Psychological withdrawal can also take the form of alienation, apathy and indifference. On this score, Jorgensen and Henderson (1990) add that though a solution may be reached in conflict resolution, the means of gaining the solution may cause pain to the people involved and general weakening of relationships.

Contributing to the adverse effects of conflict, Eccles and Gabbaro (1995) assert that conflict can lead to outright hostile or aggressive behaviour such as mob action, property damage and minor theft of property. They explain that in some cases, the frustrated individual may direct aggression against the person or object perceived to

be the cause of the conflict. In other instances, Hopkins and Raynolds (1995) say that aggression may be displaced towards a person who is not directly involved in the situation. For instance, a teacher may displace aggression on a pupil who is not directly involved in a conflict between the child's parent and the teacher by inflicting various forms of punishments on the pupil. Whetten and Cameron (2005) conclude that most people have ample evidence that conflict often produces harmful results because some people have a very low tolerance for disagreement (whether it is a result of family background, cultural values or personality characteristics) and that interpersonal conflict saps their energy and demoralizes their spirits.

It can be seen from the discussion that the notion that conflict has negative effects and thus, should be eliminated does not wholly give the right impression. It is seen from the literature cited that in modern times, conflict has been given a different dimension resulting in the idea that conflict is neither inherently good nor bad but simply inevitable wherever people are found. It should be accepted that too much conflict can have adverse effects on individuals, groups and organizations because conflict resolution involves using up productive time and scarce resources, and diversion of energies that could more constructively be used elsewhere. On the other hand, little or no conflict in an organisation for instance can also be a negative sign as it can lead to apathy and lethargy, and provide little or no impetus for change and innovation. Conflicts may be beneficial if they are used as instruments for change or innovation. As seen from the discussion, conflicts can improve relationships and the quality of decision making in an organisation if they are managed constructively.

It is also evident from the literature cited that some conflict situations produce nothing positive and that conflict may have either positive or negative consequences for individuals, organisations and the society depending on its frequency and how it is managed. As people try to settle conflicts with physical reactions which produce negative outcomes like hitting, kicking and scratching which hurt people, such physical reactions may be interpreted as a means of finding solution to the problems. These however, tend to be damaging to relationships while violence may lead to more violence. Another negative effect of conflict is that emotions are sometimes so strong that some people want to strike at the other person. Whether conflict can produce positive or negative effects depends on how that conflict is tackled or the strategy used to settle or resolve the conflict.

2.12 Conflict response style or Conflict Resolution

Meeks, Heit and Page (2005) define conflict response style as a kind of behaviour a person exhibits when a conflict emerges while Wheeler (1995) asserts that conflict situation offers everyone an opportunity to choose the conflict management or response style appropriate for the conflict. Bittel (1995) says that the key to effective conflict preservation and management is the choice of appropriate conflict management style. To Bittel, although people have favourite styles they use in conflict situations, they are capable of choosing a different style when it is due. In the opinion of Owens (1990), because it is not always likely for one to control the source of conflict, it is paramount that one sticks to how to respond to conflict in a more acceptable and responsible manner. Similarly, Wayne, Hoy and Miskel (2001) agree that in order to

manage conflict between others effectively, it is important to be aware of the early warning signs of conflict and the causes of disagreements. Bryant (1992) therefore recommends that arriving at a positive resolution of conflict should always be the ultimate goal.

Wheeler (1995) has identified five types of conflict management styles which are described as co-operative or collaborative problem solving, competing, avoiding, accommodating and compromising. These are explained as follows:

i Collaborating: According to Wheeler, this style enables people to work together so that everyone can win. In using this style people try to find a solution that will help everyone meet their interest and help everyone maintain a good relationship. This is in line with Larson and Mildred's (2000) explanation that the collaborative style involves a behaviour that is strongly cooperative and assertive which reflects a win-win approach to resolving conflict. Furthermore, Nelson-Jones (1995) says that the collaborative approach enables both parties to work as a team to prevent unnecessary conflict and also to arrive at mutually satisfactory solution in real conflict; thus, neither of them attempts to impose his or her interest on the other. Additionally, Malcolm (1980) says that the approach assumes that each of the parties is prepared to work on their inner difficulties to ensure peaceful conflict resolution.

Whetten and Cameron (2005) contend that this approach, which is sometimes referred to as the "problem solving" mode, attempts to address fully the concerns of both parties so that both of them can feel that they have won the case. The authors

believe that people who use the collaborative style are highly assertive with regards to reaching their goals but have a great deal of concern for the other person.

ii Competing style: According to DeVault, Sayard and Yarber (2002), choosing a competitive style to resolve a conflict means a person is putting his or her interest before everyone else's interest. As Hayes (1996) indicates, people who adopt a competitive style try so hard to get what they want that they end up ruining friendships or relationships. In the view of Nelson-Jones (1995), there is always a winner and a loser with the competing style which allows one party to adopt the "I win-you lose" approach to resolving the conflict and so does all in his or her power to win the conflict. For instance, one party's tactics may include manipulation, not telling the whole truth, not admitting mistakes and sending negative verbal, voice and body messages. This is what Connie and CFCS (2002) explain as "going all out to win the conflict". Olson and DeFrain (2001) have observed that those who employ the competitive style of conflict resolution tend to be aggressive and uncooperative, perusing personal concerns at the expense of the other and in effect, such people try to gain power by direct confrontations and try to win without adjusting their goals and desires in light of the other person's goals and desires.

iii Compromising style: The BBC dictionary (1990) defines compromise as an agreement in which people concur to accept less than they originally wanted. People who rely on the compromising style to resolve conflict find it necessary to satisfy some of their interests but not all of them; and such people are likely to say "let us split".

Whetten and Cameron (2005) posit that compromise is an attempt to have a partial satisfaction for both parties in the sense that both receive the proverbial “half loaf...” and this compels both parties to make sacrifices to obtain a common gain.

iv Avoiding style: Wayne, Hoy and Miskel (2001) refer to the avoiding approach as a method of dealing with conflict from a safe emotional distant. As with viewing a distant mountain range, the specific details get lost the farther away one is. In the same way emotional distancing as part of the avoiding approach may mean that there is difficulty in emphasizing or putting on another’s shoe. This brings in Wheeler’s (1995) notion that people who choose the avoiding style do not normally get involved in a conflict because such people tolerate whatever their opponent does in order to escape conflict. Bettmann and Moore (1994) emphasize that the avoiding style involves a behaviour that is unassertive and uncooperative, as a result an individual chooses this style to stay out of conflict, ignore disagreements, or remain neutral. The avoiding approach might reflect a decision to let the conflict work itself out, or it might reflect an aversion or tension and frustration.

In the view of Eccles and Gabarro (1995), people engaging in an avoiding strategy protect themselves from the difficulty of conflict by putting up a mental wall. They stress that even though such people want to win, they are reluctant to jump into conflict the way someone with a competing response would. Connie and CFCS (2002) opine that the avoiding strategy may be useful when it is important to give some time and space to a conflict because some people are mood driven, and a day or even a few hours can make a tremendous difference in their willingness to engage in conflict

productively. This brings in the notion that timing can be extremely important in determining when a problem is brought up or a conflict is discussed, and goes with the saying that “time heals some wounds”. In agreement with this assertion, Olson and DeFrain (2001) contribute that conflict may go away over time, particularly if there is continuous contact between both sides on other issues and that contact is mostly positive and productive. In such situations, both parties may decide that what they were upset about in the past is just not important anymore.

v Accommodating style: To Connie and CFCS (2002), the accommodating style means surrendering one’s own needs and wishes to please the other person. According to Olson and DeFrain (2001), people who opt for an accommodating style deny themselves to put their interest last and let others have their way. Many times, they say, such people believe that keeping a good relationship is more worthwhile than anything else. In accordance with this notion, Whetten and Cameron (2005) maintain that the accommodating style satisfies the other party’s concerns while neglecting one’s own. They conclude that the difficulty in habitual use of the accommodating style is that it emphasizes preserving a friendly relationship at the expense of critically appraising issues and protecting personal rights.

In explaining the accommodating approach, Larson and Mildred (2000) indicate that this style involves a behaviour that is cooperative but not assertive and which may mean an unselfish and a long term strategy to encourage others to cooperate or submit to the wishes of others. They describe that accommodators are usually favourably evaluated by others but are also perceived as weak and submissive.

From these sources it can be seen that until we reach utopian society, there will always be conflict as there will always be disagreement about what is fair and best for all of us. It is impossible therefore to walk through the journey of life without experiencing conflict of any kind. If we accept the inevitability of conflict, it becomes extremely necessary to gain the skills needed to be successful dispute solvers. It will also be easiest to make this kind of shift in attitude if we have good skills to resolve or respond to conflict.

Based on the discussion of the five conflict response styles, it could be deduced that avoiding or ignoring conflict does nothing to improve the situation because when conflict is driven underground, it only grows and will stay underground until it is so intense that an explosion may be the next step. It is also seen that collaboration and compromise are the most productive forms of addressing conflict because there is not a winner or loser but rather a working together for the best possible solution. On the other hand, those who adopt a competitive style try so hard to get what they want that they ruin friendships or relationships. It is also evident that individuals who opt for the accommodating approach deny themselves to contain conflict for the benefit of others.

When conflict occurs, people most commonly employ one or a combination of these conflict response styles and generally respond to conflict using what skills they have learned and moreover, are most comfortable with. Like parenting where most people receive no formal instruction but engage in it on the basis of what has been modeled for them in the past, so do people learn how to resolve conflict through experiencing one or more of these problem-solving styles in use. This implies that people have options for managing or resolving conflicts. The decision to maintain good

relationships after conflict is perhaps, the best option. This is also probably the best option for resolving conflicts in the school system in order to sustain interpersonal relationships to ensure effective teaching and learning.

2.13 The school system: Frimpong, Agezo and Koomson (2005) define a school as a social institution set up to transmit knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and norms that are relevant or current to the learner and which will help him or her participate effectively in the activities of the community to bring about better standards of living for the people. Similar to this, Davies (1989) refers to a school as a social institution specially contrived to perpetuate society's values, norms and beliefs. Garton (1996) however, argues that a school is not an independent or isolated entity; but rather, it operates in a social context, an important element of which is the local community from which the school draws its students and depends on for much of its financial and social support.

Schools can be viewed as organisations and a system as well because there is interaction between its individuals and it interacts with the society within which it is situated. According to Orlich, Harder, Callahan and Gibson (2001), a system is an entity composed of many elements or components that interact in a positive manner to reach a specific goal. Expanding on this definition, Bey and Turner (1996) state that a school is an example of a system since it is a human institution that is made up of a collection of people, infrastructure, equipment, material resources, rules and conventions.

Garton (1996) explains that systems and subsystems are critical, in that they function as a unit and interact in a way that either stimulates or retards more interaction. Besides, Bodine, Crawford and Schrupf (1994) explain that the interactions within a system are important for the system's organisational health. For instance, in a school situation if a headteacher is a poor leader, his school will probably display poor morale and poor student or pupil achievement. Or if a regional or district education directorate forces teachers to toe a particular party line, then the teachers will tend to do so half-heartedly and subvert the policy no matter how good the office's intent. Each school tends to develop its own independent culture apart from other schools in the district or region. Their norms and values may be generated internally. As a result, subtle or even intentional pressures may be placed on teachers to conform.

Constituents of school system: A school system is made up of people, that is, headteachers (including assistant headteachers), teachers, pupils, food vendors in the school, other personnel who help the school, and the community. The community is made up of old men and women, adults, adolescents, children and babies. These people in one way or the other interact with each other for a common goal. For instance, headteachers interact with teachers, the teachers interact with each other and the pupils, teachers and pupils interact with food vendors and the school also interacts with the community members.

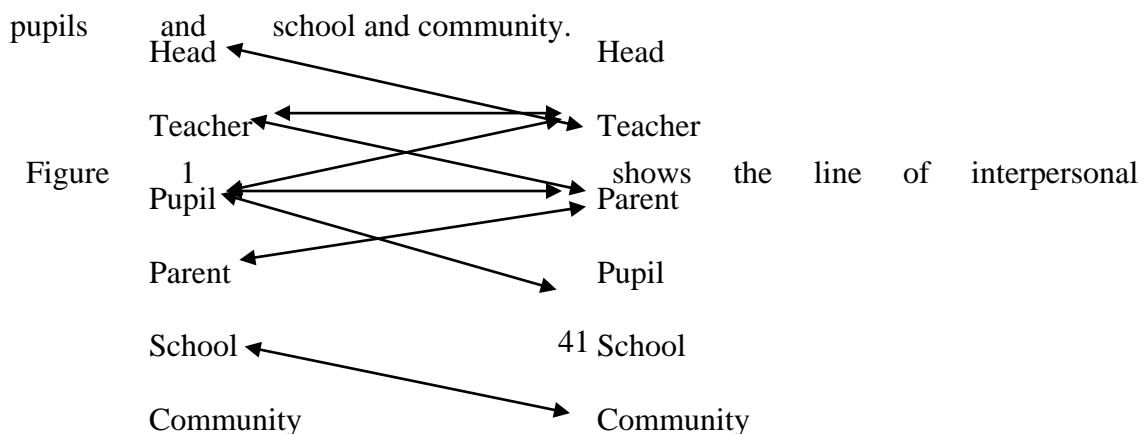
As Ivancevich and Matteson (1987) state, a system views organizational behaviour as the consequence of the interaction of social and technical factors both within the organization itself and between the organization and its environment.

Bennett (1995) simply defines organization as a system inside which several networks of individuals interact, and which itself interacts with the wider social and economic environment. Because a school is instituted to educate children for the benefit of the society, it interacts with its community through gatherings and other public programmes, PTA meetings, Speech and Prize-giving days. Such interactions are known as interpersonal relationships because they involve two or more individuals.

2.14 Interpersonal relationships in the school system

Connie and CFCS (2002) have observed that no part of one's life has more effects on the person than one's relationships with others. Although relationships can be frustrating, disappointing and painful, they can also be satisfying, fulfilling and a source of pleasure and growth. Based on this statement, Kyriacou (1999) explains a good interpersonal relationship as one of the factors which promotes effective school administration, teaching and learning. He emphasizes that an example of good interpersonal relationships that exist in the school include how well teachers relate with pupils, how teachers relate with each other, how the school relates to the parents or guardians, and to the community as a whole.

As was deduced from the school system and the discussion, interactions that exist within the school and the community are usually between headteacher and teachers, teachers and teachers, teachers and pupils, teachers and parents, pupils and



relationships in the school system.

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Source: Field notes

(a) Head – teacher relationship: This type of interaction occurs at the level of headteacher as an administrator and teachers as subordinates. Whetten and Cameron (2005) recommend the presence of free staff discussions where the headteacher allows teachers to air their views and give suggestions in matters affecting the school. Moreover, Boler, Megan, and Zembylas (2003) suggest the need for the headteacher to discuss the teachers' personal problems with them, to find solutions to their problems and to have thought and care for the teachers to sustain the relationship.

(b) Teacher – Teacher relationship: Wragg and Wood (1984) suggest that as people working in the same school with a common objective, teachers should be cooperative enough among themselves. Accordingly, Bodine, Crawford and Schrupf (1994) propose the need for teachers to meet and discuss matters in a free atmosphere and presenting a common front towards the achievement of the objective of the tasks

involved in the school. They recommend that teachers should resolve their personal differences amicably to enhance their output in the workplace.

(C) Teacher – Pupil relationship: Siann and Uswuegbu (2000) express the view that relationship between teachers and their pupils should be that of friendship. This is because the children need special friends in whom they can confide and in whom they find guidance in resolving problems which perplex them. Similarly, Beck and Betz (2002) indicate that children need someone to tell him or her things without undermining his or her self-respect. According to them, it is imperative therefore that teachers provide their pupils with ample evidence of friendliness as teachers take initiative in making friendly overtures to the pupils. As Kyriacou (1999) also observes, the relationship between teachers and pupils is of fundamental significance to effective teaching and learning. He urges that a sound relationship between teachers and pupils needs to be based on the pupils' acceptance of the teacher's authority, mutual respect and rapport between the teacher and the pupils.

HMI (1990) asserts that an essential task involved in effective teaching is the need for a teacher to establish and maintain checks over the organisation and management of pupils' learning. Smith and Lastlett (1994) also agree that an important aspect of the teacher's authority is his or her control over classroom activities in order to ensure that such activities do not lead to chaos and conflict. They recommend that a number of rules and procedures need to be adopted, including teachers effectively regulating classroom activities and teacher-pupil interactions, which also includes the

circumstances under which pupils can speak and move from their seats during the lesson time.

Siann and Ugwuegbu (2000) are of the opinion that primary school teachers may by their interactions with the pupils act in a manner to raise or lower the pupils' self-esteem. They indicate that teachers who appear to be well disposed towards their pupils show warmth, enthusiasm and concern in their interactions with the pupils and are more likely to be positively perceived by their pupils than those who do not. In line with this observation, Gross (1983) explains that a teacher who is perceived by the pupils as understanding and caring will generate more frequent interactions with the pupils than a teacher who is not. Similarly, Saunders (1980) believes that if a teacher is able to build up high tolerance, he or she will be capable of ignoring much of the conflicts in the classroom in which he or she is involved until a breakdown point is reached. Besides, Orlich, Harder, Callahan and Gibson (2001) assert that close interaction between teachers and pupils forge bonds of trust and mutual support between them.

(d) School – community relationship:

Siann and Ugwuegbu (2000) agree that a school is an integral part of a much wider society and whatever happens in the society affects the school; therefore, it is highly imperative that there should exist a healthy relationship between the school and the community. Totten and Manley (1996) view the community in which the school exists as one that exerts influence on the school informally through the SMC/PTA. For this reason, the school authority needs particularly to understand and develop a good relationship with the immediate community the school serves.

Campbell et al (1990) emphasize that since schools exist to fulfill society's aims, it is vital for the headteachers and staff to relate well with the community in order to know what other people think of their school work since any information obtained will serve as a feed-back on the effectiveness or otherwise of the school programme. Harper and Reynolds (1995) further explain that good school-community relationships will enable the community also get correct information about the school and thereby encourage the giving of financial support to the school, leading to the proper development of the children in the school.

In an agreement with this assertion, Cook and Cook (1990) indicate that teaching staff of a school can be the most potent factor in the establishment of good public relations within the community. They add that the attitudes, impressions and efforts of the teaching staff, both within and outside the school, can determine the response the community will make. To Totten and Manley (1990), teachers' professional attitude and the extent of their participation in community life are significant factors in establishing good relations. They agree that the community on the other hand should respect the views of the teachers and understand them.

The literature indicates that teachers are expected to act "in loco parentis" to their pupils and that this parenting role compels pupils to replicate the feelings they have for their parents to their teachers. It is also clear that by their authority teachers can control classroom environment to significantly reduce the occurrences of conflict and thereby increase the probability of successful learning and social progress for the pupils. This is not to deny the fact that classroom environment may not increase the tendency to

misbehave, but rather, to emphasize that there are causative factors outside the control of the teachers which influence pupils to be centre of stability in the classroom.

The relationship between headteachers as administrators and their staff on the one hand and teachers on the other are, of fundamental importance to the school administration and also more importantly, to the success of the teaching and learning process. If the relationships between these key figures in the centre of the child's education are not cordial, it can have devastating effects on the schools' activities. Moreover, the school needs to have a good social intercourse with the individuals in the community since their opinions about the school are likely to be most influential in the progress of the school system.

Importance of School-Community Relationship

According to Addae-Boahene and Arkorfol (2001), the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ghana Education Service (GES) recognize the importance of reciprocal partnership of the school-community leaders and local school authority in effecting changes in the schools. Under the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE), MOE and GES have committed themselves to building a systematic approach to assisting community organisations such as SMC and PTA to play a major part in the generation of their schools. They comment on the belief of the MOE and GES that communities have an important role to play in enforcing standards, developing and maintaining school infrastructure, and creating a partnership between teachers, pupils and district authorities to bring about needed changes. To this end, Frimpong, Agezo and Koomson (2005) state that it is useful to get the school's local

community involved as a governing body to lighten the workload of the school. This implies that the governing body should try to learn about the needs of the community and the activities carried out by the community. This means that the headteacher, teachers, pupils, parents, traders, doctors, nurses, farmers, fishermen, policemen and other groups living in the school area of location form part of the school-community and should be involved in its affairs. Good relationship between them therefore ensures effective participation in the school's system of governance, which in Ghana entails the formation of School Management Committee and Parent-Teacher Association

2.15 Conflict in the school situation

The school as an organization of individuals cannot escape conflict because it is made up of individuals. Siann and Ugwuegbu (2000) explain that parents and teachers are the two centres of almost every child's universe. No one knows their child better than the parents and no one knows how to teach better than the teacher. It is a centered child who finds that his or her universes are in harmony with each other. Smith and Lastlett (1994) believe that when there is a school-based conflict, it is almost always desirable to avoid a win or lose outcomes because the players will continue to work together in the best interests of the child. In other words, relationships between parents and the school are ongoing since it continues long after the conflict is over. The last thing that is needed in conflict in the school situation is for one party to feel like a winner and the other a loser because these stakeholders need to coordinate to ensure better education of the children.

2.15.1 Causes of conflict in the school: Classroom management, disruption and punishment have been identified in the literature as some of the common sources of conflict in primary schools in particular.

(1) Classroom management: Santrock (2001) asserts that all levels of education need good classroom managers to design the physical environment of the classroom for effective learning tasks to occur. Orlich, Harder and Callahan and Gibson (2001) also describe the classroom as a social and emotional as well as a learning environment which therefore, must be controlled to ensure law and order. Likewise, Braine, Kerry and Pilling (1990) have observed that as teachers aim to create conducive classroom atmosphere for their pupils to develop, it is equally important for them to deal with challenges to their authority as soon as they emerge before they develop to a dangerous level. This brings in Orlich, Harder, Callahan and Gibson's (2001) concept that one of the teacher's roles is to establish a classroom environment that prevents problems from emerging and if they occur, teachers should intervene quickly to prevent it disrupting the lesson. Besides, they establish that the classroom is a place for dynamic systems of interactions between teachers and pupils, and among pupils whereby uncountable verbal and non-verbal behaviours which crop up each day ought to be managed to improve learning processes in the classroom.

Braine, Kerry and Pilling (1990) have noticed that one of the commonest difficulties teachers face in the classroom is the problem of very talkative pupils. The often volatile nature of teenage behaviour can lead to outbursts of unacceptable behaviour with any teacher. It is therefore up to the teacher to deal with such outbursts and prevent them from overwhelming the class, the lesson, and ultimately, the teacher

himself herself. According to Smith and Laslett (1996), it is imperative to avoid confrontations with pupils as a teacher but there are occasions when a confrontation is beneficial. For example, a teacher cannot avoid a confrontation when he or she is summoned by a colleague to assist in solving a problem between her and a pupil. In this instance, the angry pupil may turn on his or her teacher and the other teacher may also decide that he or she will not tolerate the pupil's provocative or stupid behaviour any longer. This can result in conflict between the teacher and the pupil.

It can be seen here that a conducive classroom environment does not only involve the physical environment but also consists of establishing and maintaining classroom norms, getting pupils to co-operate, effectively dealing with problems and using good communication strategies.

(2) **Disruption:** The Microsoft Encarta Dictionary Tool (2007) defines disruption as “an unwelcome or unexpected break in a process or activity”. Elaborating on this definition, Braine, Kerry and Pilling (2003) explain that disruption in the classroom situation interrupts usual and normal class routines. Smith and Laslett (1996) also support the idea that classroom disruption undermines the learning process, explaining that certain pupils have marked tendencies to upset the stability of a class by their notorious disruptive attention-seeking behaviours while such negative situations in the classroom consume much of the instructional periods and affect the teaching and learning process. To them, the disruptive behaviour of pupils may include talkative pupils, habitual late coming, dragging chairs across the classroom, pupils talking

outside through the windows, and pupils interacting with colleagues while classes are in progress.

Furthermore, Gray, Miller and Noakes (1995) cite other destructive behaviour as verbal abuse, temper burst in class and violence to teachers and other pupils which also have different disruptive values depending upon the strategy of the teacher managing the class. Siann and Ugwuegbu (2000) are also of the view that disruptive behaviours of children in the primary schools almost always stem from low esteem although other factors may contribute to such behaviour. They emphasize that if a child who has low self-esteem probably thinks the only way to make his or her presence felt is exhibiting a bad behaviour such as any of those mentioned earlier. In spite of these challenges, Santrock (2001) observes that teachers have more influence on the behaviour of pupils in its early stages of development in the classroom and are also in a strong position to help mediate pupils' behaviour in the school setting.

(3) Punishments and discipline: Ivancevich and Matteson (1990) define punishment as a presentation of an aversive event or the removal of a positive event following a response that decreases the frequency of the response. According to Smith and Laslett (1996), many conflicts begin in the classroom with what a teacher may say, the way he or she may walk, stride towards a pupil, glare at a pupil or point at him or her. Leonard, Eccles and Gabarro (1983) also explain that conflict normally occurs in a class when a pupil feels that he or she has been punished unfairly, or feels that reprimands, criticisms and punishment were not deserved and legitimate. Ivancevich and Matteson (1990) explain that punishments and disciplinary measures are used to

eliminate undesirable behaviours and poor performance in organisations. Citing examples of such undesirable behaviour as absenteeism, tardiness, leaving the school or the workplace before closing time, fighting, violating rules and regulations, and the use of abusive language, Ivancevich and Matteson (1990) assert that such behaviours if not eradicated as early as possible can impede the growth of the organization.

Referring to discipline as the use of some form of punishment or sanctions when employees deviate from the rules, Beck and Betz (2002) say that not all disciplinary measures are necessarily punishment. They suppose that where frequent absence from work results in a three-day suspension, the suspended person who does not like his or her job and prefers to stay at home, will not regard the suspension as aversive. In such a situation, the disciplined person has not been punished with suspension.

As Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) state, it is generally seen that punishment in most cases brings conflict in organizations such as schools. They explain that punishment produces conflict when the intensity or severity and the moral behind its use are not legitimate. In their view, some people's resistance to the use of punishment is based on moral grounds, the moral position being that pain is bad and should always be avoided. Ivancevich and Matteson (1990) again stress that punishment achieves a greater effectiveness when the aversive stimulus is relatively intense and the implication of this condition is that in order to be effective, punishment should get the immediate attention of the person being punished.

Unquestionably, the emphasis on punishment in a school situation is to maintain order and control. For this reason, if punishment is unduly awarded, it almost

undermines the mutual respect necessary for a sound teacher-pupil relationship and at worse, generates conflict.

It can be deduced from the discussions that conflict results from contexts of opposing forces or power and struggle to resist or overcome. Conflict as a daily occurrence in the administration and management of an organisation such as a school is also characterized by interaction among individuals who have varied opinions and interests. Conflict will invariably occur in organisations because as people work together they will inevitably have issues to discuss, many of which are potential grounds for disagreement or misunderstanding that can breed conflict.

It can also be inferred that every conflict situation leaves a conflict aftermath that affects the way both individuals or groups perceive and act upon subsequent conflict. Such effects can be either positive or negative depending on how conflict is managed. Positively, conflict can increase productivity, improve quality and quantity of and develop better communication methods. When they are managed effectively, conflict can change organisations for the better. However, conflict can have negative outcomes such as physical and psychological withdrawal of people, aggression and damage to property. It is generally accepted that conflict has negative connotations in societies, a fact which can be deduced from the definitions given to conflict. Obviously, none of the definitions given to conflict in the literature sourced indicates the positive aspect of conflict and that clearly shows that it is bad and should not be entertained.

Conflict has many causes including competition for scarce resources, one party seeking to control another, and individualism in people, among others. The discussion reveals that conflict in an organisation can occur at four levels - Intrapersonal,

Interpersonal, Intragroup and Intergroup. Identified conflict resolution strategies include Cooperative problem solving, Competing, Compromising, Avoiding and Accommodating. More significantly, these strategies leave conflict aftermath depending on the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy.

The school as an organisation is a system in which several networks of individuals interact, and which itself interacts with the wider social and economic environment. These individual interactions can be categorized as Head–Teacher, Teacher–Teacher, Teacher–Pupil and School – Community interactions or relationships. According to Fianu (2000), pleasant interpersonal relationships between these groups are undisputably one of the factors which promote effective school administration and teaching and learning. Hence, their absence adversely affects school effectiveness.

Classroom management should therefore emphasize ways to develop and maintain a positive classroom environment that supports teaching and learning. Teachers must also use their authority to manage the classroom in order to reduce the probability of disruptive behaviour which cause conflict in the classroom. Such a situation will significantly improve teaching and learning processes and increase the chances of schooling effectiveness. In spite of the many challenges that teachers face in school, they can exert a lot more influence on the behaviour of pupils to prevent the development of conflict in the classroom. They are also in a much stronger position as classroom managers to help mediate pupils' behaviour in the school setting.

School Management Committee (SMC)

The School Management Committee is a committee designed under the Ghana Education Service Act of 1994. Addae-Boahene and Arkorful (2001) explain that the SMC is a school-community based organisation aimed at strengthening community participation and mobilization for effective education delivery. The SMC is a 11-member committee that comprises the District Director of Education (DDE) or his or her representative as an ex-officio member, the headteacher, District Assembly representative (usually the assembly man or woman), Unit Committee representative, a representative appointed by the chief of the town or village, representative of the Educational Unit (if the school is a unit school), two members of the teaching staff (JHS) and the other from Primary), a representative of the past pupils' association, a representative of the school's PTA and co-opted members for a specific functions (if needed).

Functions of the SMC/PTA

The SMC as any other organisation has assigned functions or duties. According to Addae-Boahene and Arkorful (2001), it is designed to:

- Help the headteacher in resolving conflict and reporting results to the DEO
- Refer serious disciplinary cases to the DDE for action
- Avoid encroaching upon the authority of the headteacher
- Control the general policy of the school
- Present periodic reports to Director General of Education and District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) through the DDE

- Ensure that premises of schools are kept in a sanitary and structurally safe condition, generally in a good state of repair
- Negotiate land for school projects such as school farm, football field, etc.

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

The PTA, which is a twin committee to the SMC, is an association of parents and teachers in a particular school or cluster of schools. It is non-governmental, non-sectarian, non-partisan and non-commercial. (Addae-Boahene and Arkorfol, 2001).

The functions of the PTA are to:

- Assist in school maintenance and the repair of infrastructure.
- See to children or teachers' welfare (such as Providing accommodation for teachers and school textbooks)
- See to the academic performance of the children.
- Visit the school regularly to monitor the performance of pupils.
- Help in solving school problems.
- Help to maintain discipline by reporting lateness, truancy, etc to school authorities.
- Does not encroaching upon the authority of the headteacher.
- Cooperate with other organisations or agencies having common interests regarding quality education.

It can be deduced from the above that the SMC and the PTA are there to help the school fulfill its functions within the limitations of the local communities. By so doing they do not also interfere the authority of the headteacher.

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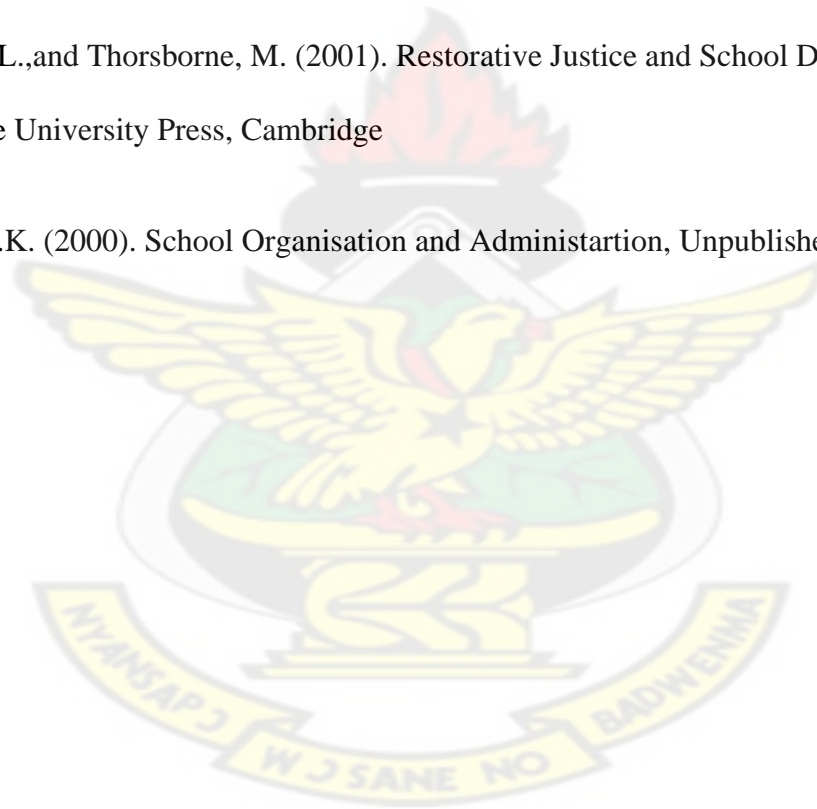
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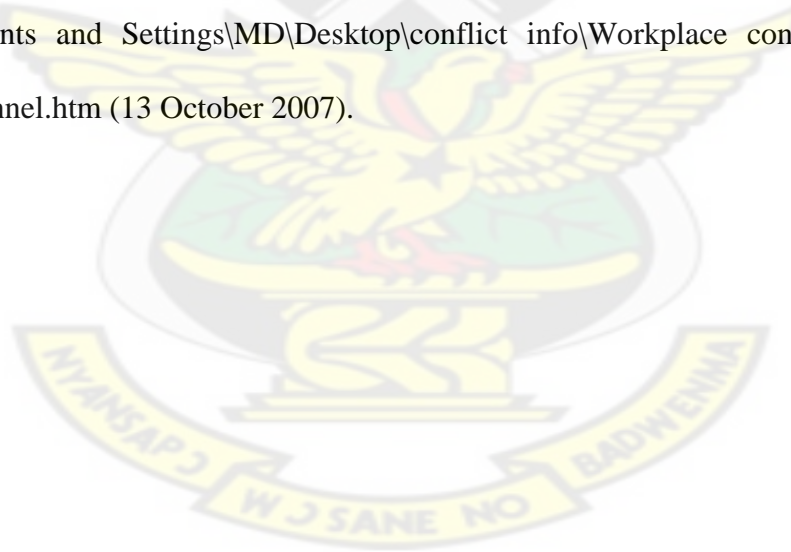
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CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The chapter describes the general procedure adopted to solicit information for the study including visits to the sample school to observe how school deal with conflict situations

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed the qualitative research method with questionnaire administration, observation and personal interviews to collect data on conflict situations in selected primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district of Ashanti Region. These approaches were adopted because they offered the best means of obtaining valid data for the study. The advantages of the research methods and tools far outweighed their disadvantages in sourcing and analysing data from the field.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

Best (1991) has described qualitative studies as those in which the descriptions of observation is not ordinarily expressed in quantitative terms but not suggesting that numerical measures are never used; rather, other means of descriptions are emphasized. Sidhu (2003) and Altrichter, Posch, and Somech (1995) explain that qualitative research emphasizes holistic description of whatever is being observed rather than comparing the effects of a particular treatment while Ary, Jacobs and Razavie (2002) assert that qualitative inquiry seeks to understand human and social behaviour from the “insider’s perspectives”. This means that in qualitative inquiry, there should be vivid description of phenomena. According to Best (1995), qualitative inquiry seeks to

portray the complex pattern of whatever is studied in sufficient depth so that whoever has not seen it may have the opportunity to understand whatever is being studied.

The study employed the qualitative research design based on the nature of the topic. It facilitated investigation of conflict resolution or behaviour as it occurred in the school setting as natural occurrences where no manipulation of conditions or experiences was possible. Even though qualitative research emphasizes the description and interpretation of data in words rather than numbers, numerical data were collected in the process and analyzed as such to understand the natural occurrence of conflict in the sample schools. Since the study adopted the case study approach for indepth study of conflict situations at the different levels of the school system, the qualitative research method was the most appropriate for the in-depth investigation of a phenomenon that cannot be contrived. As the study suggests tentative causal explanations that can extend one's understanding for educational phenomenon or proposed grounded theories and because of the human and social behaviour nature of conflict, the most suitable method for the study was the qualitative inquiry.

3.2.1 Advantages of qualitative research

Natural Setting: As McMillan and Schumacher (1993) clearly state, qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry which uses non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes, and how participants interpret the data.

Similarly, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) indicate that qualitative research studies real world situations where there is no attempt to manipulate behaviour to

satisfy any conditions. In qualitative research, the researcher allows conditions to flow at their own pace without any attempt to manipulate behaviour, besides being concerned with the description and explanation of phenomena as they occur in routine, ordinary natural environment (Blease and Cohen, 1990).

Human Instrument: In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting, gathering and analyzing data Hitchcock and Hughes' (1995). Because the method studies human experiences and situations, researchers need an instrument flexible enough to capture the flexibility of that human experience. The human instrument is essential in qualitative research to talk with the people in the setting, observe their activities and read their documents and written records, and to record the information in the field notes and journals, (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

Research roles: McMillan and Schumacher (1993) state that qualitative researchers become “immersed” in the situation and the phenomenon studied while assuming an interactive social role in which they record observations and interactions with participants in many situations, as Best (1991) indicates.

Description of Data: According to Cohen and Manion (1997) qualitative inquiry emphasizes data in the form of words rather than numbers. That is to say, emphasis is on rich description of people, events and whatever happens in the research setting. This means that in qualitative inquiry, data must be thoroughly described in detail so that “outsiders” may be able to understand whatever has been done. On the other hand,

there is room for collection of data in numerical terms although this may be done in rare cases. This is in line with Hitchcock and Hughes' (1995) assertion that qualitative research deals in words and meanings while seeking to maximize understanding of events and facilitating the interpretations of data. This brings in Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh's (2002) explanation that the purpose of qualitative research which emphasizes the typically rich descriptive and subjective character of data, makes qualitative data analysis a very different enterprise than statistical analysis.

Emergent Design: Cohen and Manion (1995) are of the view that in qualitative design, the researcher does not know or predict the outcome of a design as in quantitative inquiry where the outcome of a research is already determined. This is because in quantitative research, the researcher has a specific hypothesis in mind and can determine the outcome of the study whereas in qualitative inquiry, the design emerges as the study unfolds. Best (1991) also observe that it is worth mentioning that whatever can be learned at a particular time and setting are determined by the nature and types of interactions that go on between the inquirer, the people and the setting and this is not predictable until the researcher has witnessed the proceedings.

As McMillan and Schumacher (1993) explain, qualitative research requires a plan for choosing sites and participants, and for beginning data collection. According to them, the plan is an emergent design in which each incremental research decision depends on prior information. The emergent design may in reality, seem circular as processes of purposeful sampling, data collection plan, and partial and final data analysis plans are simultaneous and interactive rather than discrete sequential steps.

Multi-method strategies: McMillan and Schumacher (1993) contend that qualitative researchers study participants' perceptive strategies (ethnographic observation or interview) and non-interactive strategies (use of documents). Erickson (1990) also points out that a combination of data sources (such as interviews, observation and relevant documents) and the use of different methods increase the likelihood that the phenomenon under study is being understood from various points of view. According to Cohen and Manion (1995), research strategies are flexible with various combinations of participant' observation, in-depth interviews and artifact collection. In this regard, most researchers make decisions about data collection strategies during the study and the multiple realities that are viewed are so complex that one cannot decide on a single methodology.

vi Inductive Analysis: Cohen and Manion (1995) declare that often, in qualitative analysis, data collection and analyses are done simultaneously so that essential information may not be lost or forgotten.

Vii Concern for Context: According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002), qualitative inquiry is context bound in that human experience takes their meaning from social, historical, and cultural influences. Inquiry is thus defined within a particular context or setting. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) emphasize that other features of qualitative method derive from beliefs that human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur. As Tuckman (1994) says, qualitative study is a field

work in that the researcher collects data over a prolonged period at a site or from individuals, making the ethnographic research able to develop context-bound data.

3.2.2 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Sidhu (2003), Cohen and Manion (1995), and Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) have outlined the following as some characteristics of qualitative research.

- i. It requires on- going analysis of the data.
- ii. It incorporates room for description of the role of the researcher as well as description of the researcher's own biases of ideological preference
- iii. It is focused on understanding a given social setting, not necessarily on making prediction about that setting.
- iv. It demands that the researcher stays in the setting over time.

The study employed the qualitative inquiry approach mainly because data collected had to be described in the form of words rather than numbers or strictly in numerical terms. Data defined as numbers were minimal and in the form of simple tables. The study of conflict in school situation required multi-method strategies including observation of real situations and in-depth interviews of persons in order to solicit information to understand the issues involved. Adoption of the qualitative research method also made it possible for the researcher to assume an interactive social role in which observations and interactions with participants in many conflict situations could be easily recorded.

3.3 Population studied: Population in research refers to the aggregate or totality of objects or individuals regarding which inferences are to be made in a sampling study (Sidhu 2003). The population studied for this research comprised 89 primary schools in the Ejisu- Juaben District of Ashanti Region with a total enrollment of 22,703 pupils. The schools studied are located in 10 different circuits. Information was solicited from all the 10 educational circuits in the district to have a true reflection of conflict situations in the district as a whole.

3.4 Sampling: According to Sidhu (2003), sampling is the process of selecting a representative unit from a population. Similarly, Cohen and Manion (1994) expand this definition by explaining that in sampling, the researcher endeavours to collect information from a smaller group or subset of the population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population under study.

Because the target population of primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district is too large to effectively study, three primary schools from each of the 10 circuits (representing 33% of the total population) was selected for in-depth study. This was done by means of the stratified sampling technique which Cohen and Manion (1994) define as a technique of dividing population into homogeneous groups of subjects with similar characteristics. The researcher collected data from 30 headteachers, 120 teachers and 130 pupils (giving a total population of 280 people) from the sample schools.

Stratified Sampling

For the purpose of this study, three levels of sampling were selected – school heads, teachers and pupils in the three schools in each circuit because they exhibit different characteristics. Data from each level was sought to gain indepth knowledge of what conflict means to each stratum of the population and the kind of conflict that occurs in their schools.

3.5 Instrumentation

Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) refer to instrumentation as a process used to solicit information in research. There are a number of research instruments but considering the nature of the study and the data required, questionnaire, interviews and observation were combined and found to be most suited to this study for purposes of triangulation. As Cohen and Manion (1994) state, triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection techniques in a study while Brenner and Marsh (1985) assert that triangulation techniques in social sciences attempts to map out or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint.

Characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of these instruments were also taken into account in employing them to gather the requisite data for the study. Combining them made triangulation and validation of the data possible as different sources were consulted in order to overcome inherent weaknesses of each of the techniques to improve the authenticity of the study.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

Sidhu (2003) defines a questionnaire as a form prepared and distributed to secure responses to certain questions. In other words, it is a device for soliciting answers to questions listed on a form which the respondent fills by himself. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), a questionnaire is an instrument which is presented to solicit reactions, beliefs and attitudes. However, Leedy (1995) looks at a questionnaire from a different perspective as a commonplace instrument for observing the data beyond the physical reach of the observer which for example, may be sent to human beings who are thousands of miles away and whom the researcher may never see.

Since the sample teachers for the study were widely scattered in the district, the researcher found it necessary to administer questionnaire. It was appropriate for questionnaire to be administered so that all the subjects could be reached within a short time. Moreover, the result from the piloted instruments revealed that the sample teachers were more proactive in the answering of the questionnaire than the interviews.

Forms of Questionnaire: Two forms of questionnaire with open and closed ended items were adopted. The closed ended questionnaire consisted of questions that called for short check responses while open questionnaire or structured form of questionnaire called for free responses in the respondent's own words. The researcher adopted both open and closed form of questionnaire to overcome inherent weaknesses of each form.

Validation of Questionnaire: The final instruments were given to colleagues for corrections and finally to the supervisor for further editing to ensure error free questions. The instruments, after all the necessary corrections, were piloted in the sample schools. The instruments were administered to the accessible group after all the necessary corrections were made.

3.5.2 Interview: According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), an interview consists of a direct verbal interaction between the interviewer and the subject. Similarly, Ndagi (1997) also explain that interview is unique in that it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. In the same way research interview has been defined by Leedy (1997) as two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information.

Structured Interview is one in which the content and procedures are organized in advance. This means that the sequence and wordings are determined by means of a schedule and the interviewer is left little freedom to make modification.

Non Structured Interview is a more casual affair, for in its own way, is also has to be carefully planned. They are flexible; few restrictions are placed on the respondent's answer even if pre-planned questions are asked; the queries are altered to suit the situation and subjects. Personal interviews were conducted on 30 headteachers and 130 pupils in the sample schools.

Interviews were used to solicit information from the pupils because during the piloting of the questionnaire, it was found that almost all the pupils from the sample schools could neither read nor understand spoken English well. This made it necessary to adopt the local language (Twi) for the personal interview which the pupils were very comfortable with. Another reason was that only 10 percent of the questionnaire that was administered to the heads of the sample schools was returned after several visits. Interview was therefore considered as the best alternative to gather data from the headteachers. It was not very easy getting all the school heads so personal interviews were found an appropriate tool.

3.5.3 Observation: McMillan and Schumacher (1993) define observation as a particular kind of data gathering tool in which the researcher observes, visually and auditorily, some phenomenon and systematically records the resulting observations. This supports Sidhu's (2003) explanation that observation seeks to ascertain what people think and do by watching them in action as they express themselves in various situations and activities. Contributing to this point, Best and Kaln (1998) emphatically state that observation in qualitative research usually consists of detailed notation of behaviour, events and the context surrounding the event and the behaviours. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002), in normal cases, observation is employed when children are to be studied while busy in different activities such as games, dramatics or social services. To them, observation is indispensable for studies on infants who can neither understand our queries nor express themselves clearly.

As Cohen and Manion (1994) stress, observation is recognized as the most direct means of studying people when one is interested in their overt behaviour, adding that it is a natural way of gathering data. In the view of Sidhu's (2003), observation as a research tool must always be expert, directed by specific purpose, systematic, carefully focused and thoroughly recorded and also like other research procedures, observation must be subjected to accuracy, validity and reliability. Observation can be in two forms - Participant and Non-participant.

Participant and Non-Participant Observation: Best (1991) notes that in participant observation, the observer works his way into the group to be observed so that as a regular member, she or he is no longer regarded as an outsider against whom the group needs to guide itself. On the other hand in non-participant observation, the observer remains aloof from the group.

The study employed both forms of observation to study pupils in conflict situations in the sample primary schools. During classes time, the researcher sat at the back of the class for two periods in each classroom to observe conflict that might occur. The researcher also moved around the school compounds during break times to observe conflict situations while the children were busy in different activities such as eating and playing during the first and second break periods. What necessitated the choice of observation was the need for first hand information of real conflict situations in the sample primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district to validate information from questionnaire and interviews. This could only be obtained through observing conflict

situations in progress to confirm or disprove the responses from questionnaire and interviews that were adopted.

3.6 Administration of Instruments

The researcher sought permission from the various heads of schools in the target group. Three days after this, the researcher met the teachers of each school to seek their willingness to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire were administered a day after the preliminary contact. In all, 135 questionnaires were administered to 135 teachers in the sample schools. All the 30 sample school heads were interviewed a week after the questionnaire was retrieved. The interview with the pupils started the next day after they were briefed about the subject. Majority of the pupils were in classes Five and Six. The researcher again sought permission from the various heads to observe conflict situations in and around the classroom. The observation commenced immediately after the permission was granted and the observation lasted for 52 days while interviews with the heads and questionnaire administration lasted for 30 and five days respectively.

3.7 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were sought in order to achieve the objectives set for the study. The primary data were collected through questionnaires, observation and interview. While secondary data consisted of the review of literature on conflict and its management.

3.8 Data analysis plan

Data collected in the form of field notes were transcribed and assembled in narrative forms and also as tables that describe conflict issues in the sample schools. These were analyzed and interpreted to give an idea of the situation in the schools in the selected district and what the educational authorities are doing about it. Details of this have been provided in Chapter Four.



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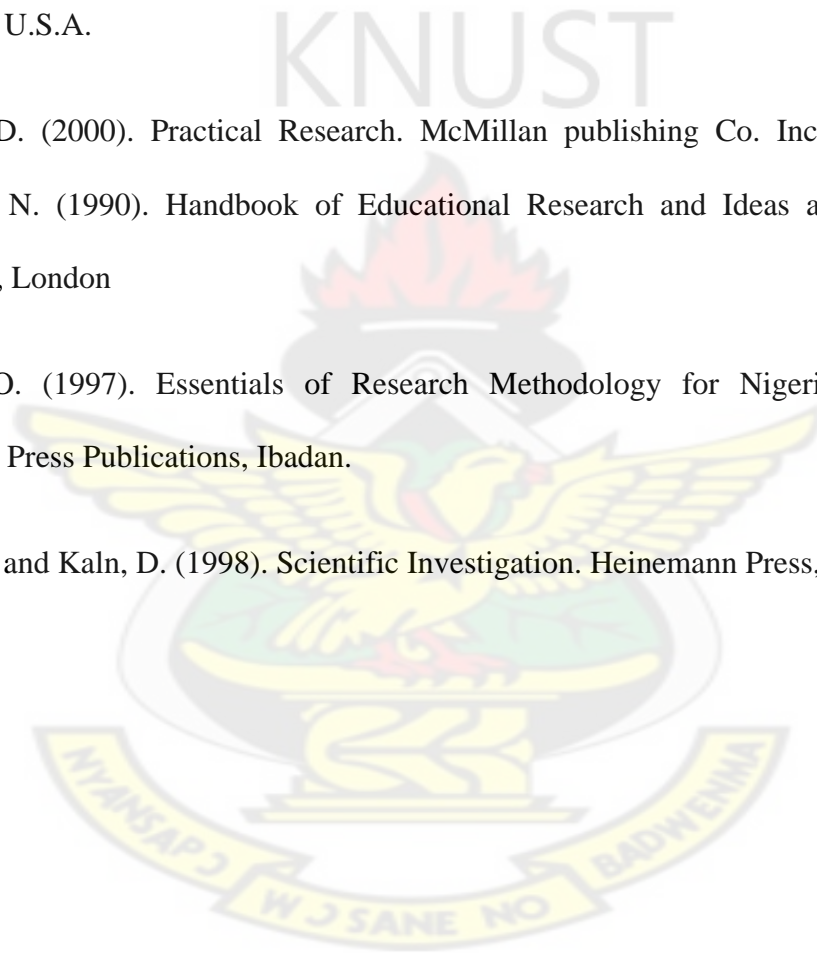
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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS

Answers obtained through Questionnaire Administration provide details of population and their views of the conflict situation in the schools.

4.1 Questionnaire Administration

Gender of Respondents

Out of 120 teachers surveyed, 54 (representing 45%) of them were men while 66 (representing 55%) were women. The fact that women teachers outnumber their men counterparts in the Ejisu-Juaben district of Ashanti probably suggests that as mothers, females enjoy teaching young children more than males. This bias towards women also suggests that as mothers whose domestic responsibilities include nursing and bringing up children, women prefer teaching to other professions because this job seems to tap their natural skills and competencies.

As shown in Table 1, 55% of the 120 teachers surveyed were between the ages of 20 and 30 years. Those who were 51 to 60 years and thus nearing their retirement age form 15% of the teachers' population. This suggests a relatively younger teacher population and fewer (15%) elderly and very experienced sample of teachers in the district.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
20-30yrs	66	55
31-40yrs	12	10
41-50yrs	24	20
51-60yrs	18	15
Total	120	100

In Table ,1 the figures indicate that more young people (20 to 30 years) are entering the teaching profession and shouldering the responsibility of teaching and caring for primary school children. This also suggests that the current educational system is providing opportunity for people to enter tertiary institutions at much younger ages to obtain higher qualifications that enable them to teach in Ghanaian schools. The fact that younger teachers in the district outnumber the relatively older generation of teachers (41-60 years) in the sample schools implies that younger teachers may not be able to handle issues of conflict in the classroom because they may lack much experience in dealing with children in conflict situations.

Teachers aged 51 to 60 years are very few (15% of the total number). It is obvious that elderly people are more experienced to handle issues in life. This situation is not different from the teaching profession in that elderly teachers are more experienced in classroom management and have ample skills to effectively teach,

motivate pupils to learn, and also handle conflict situation which would otherwise affect the pupils' education negatively.

As seen in Table 2, 57 of the 120 respondents (representing 47.5%) are unmarried while 54 (representing 45%) of the total number of teachers are married. Significantly, it can be seen that the Ejisu-Juaben district has relatively more unmarried teachers (47.5%) than married teachers (45%). The fact that the district has nearly as many married teachers as the unmarried suggests that there are adequate numbers of experienced teaching personnel with the relevant skills and experience to handle any conflicts involving teachers and pupils in the schools.

Table 2: Marital Status of the Respondents

Status	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	57	47.5
Married	54	45
Divorced	6	5
Separated	0	0
Widowed	3	2.5
Total	120	100

As evident also in Table 2, the fact that married teachers are present in the schools suggests that those 20 to 30 year old teachers who may be fresh graduates and new on the job have the opportunity to learn real life conflict management skills from

the older teachers who may themselves be parents and therefore, skilled in conflict prevention and management at the family level.

Table 3: Respondents' Level of Education

Level	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
SHS	6	5
Certificate 'A'	102	85
Diploma	12	10
1 st degree	0	0
2 nd degree	0	0
Total	120	100

As far as the educational level of the respondents is concerned, Table 3 shows that 85% of the 120 respondents hold the Ghana Teachers' Certificate "A" qualifications which qualifies teachers to teach in basic schools while only 12 (representing 10%) of the primary school teachers in the district hold diploma teaching qualifications. However, only six respondents (5%) were Senior High School (SHS) graduates while none of the 120 respondents had had university education.

The 5% SHS graduates were found to be Teaching Assistants of the Youth Employment programme who assist in the teaching of pupils in the remote parts of the district. It was not clear whether the Youth Employment staff were there to fill the positions of professional teachers who had refused postings to the rural areas. It was not surprising to find that none of the 120 respondents in the study area had university

education. This is because the university graduates normally teach in the Junior and Senior High Schools, not primary schools.

As GES regulations stipulate, 85% of the respondents have the basic requirement for teaching in primary schools. This indicates that if conflict management is incorporated in the teacher training curriculum, conflict resolution in the primary schools would not be much of a problem because even newly qualified teachers would have some knowledge and skills to enable them identify conflict in the schools and also contribute greatly to its resolution. There is also a possibility that such schools may portray reduced conflict environments needed for promoting effective teaching and learning activities.

As shown in Table 4, 75 of the 120 respondents (representing 62.5%) of the teachers have been in the teaching profession for up to 10 years while nine (7.5%) have worked for up to 40 years in the teaching service.

Table 4: Working Experience for the Respondents

Period	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
1-10 years	75	62.5
11-20 years	24	20
21-30 years	12	10
31-40 years	9	7.5
Total	120	100

From table 4, it is evident that 30 % of the teachers have done between 11 and 30 years of service. It can be seen also that the number of respondents reduces significantly with the length of service, suggesting that some teachers probably leave the teaching service or get posted to other districts as the years go by. There is also the probability that death and retirement have contributed to the drop in the number of teachers with long service in primary schools in the district. The data implies that having fewer more experienced teachers in the schools could push conflict and its management out of the limelight and given little or no attention since the large number of teachers (mainly younger ones) may not have adequate skills or experience to effectively manage conflict in the schools.

Understanding of Conflict

When the respondents were asked to express their understanding of conflict to the researcher, 108 (90%) of them explained conflict is misunderstanding or “disagreement between two or more people or a group of people”. Basically, this is the kind of definition given by most of the authors cited in Chapter Two to explain what conflict is argument. This shows that majority of the sample primary school teachers understand what conflict means and since they know what it is, they would be able to identify conflict of any kind if it occurs in their schools, either in the classroom or on the compound.

Nine of the respondents (7.5%) said conflict is “a fight between two or more people”. It suggests that this group of respondents would ignore issues of conflict until it escalates into exchange of blows or physical violence. It also suggests that these

teachers would find it difficult to resolve conflict because they would not see it brewing as a serious matter or dangerous situation at its early stages of development. It implies that pupils and all those who come under the authority of such respondents could experience psychological problems which do not involve physical assault or any overt actions. Obviously, these teachers are handicapped as far as conflict identification from its grassroots is concerned.

Three of the 120 respondents (7.5%) saw conflict to be a “mere argument between two or more people”. It can be deduced here that those teachers who are in the minority would have problems with people in that they consider an argument as an issue of conflict and therefore would address it as such. Such teachers could have relationship problems with colleagues, pupils and other people they may come in contact with because to them, any expression of ideas or merely arguing one’s views out on issues could be regarded as a conflict. The implication is that lessons might generate conflict where pupils or other teachers need to debate issues or express views in ways different from how these three respondents view conflict issues.

Type of Conflict that occur in the Schools

With reference to types of conflicts that occur in primary schools, the responses to the questions are revealed that pupil-pupil conflicts occurred most (81 points) teacher-parent conflicts was rated the second highest occurrence with 75 points while teacher-head conflict ranked third with 63 points. Teacher-pupil conflicts occurred 45 times, pupil – parent conflicts had 39 scores and then teacher-teacher and school-community conflicts received 34 and 20 scores respectively.

As revealed by the data, the high incidence of conflicts among pupils suggests that because children are inexperienced in handling relationship problems they resort to fighting, heckling, and other forms of conflict to resolve issues. The good thing is that children make up after disagreements and quickly forget or resolve their disputes. The high rate of conflict among pupils in the primary schools in the district could also imply that the pupils see a lot of conflict situations in the homes or communities in which they live and also learn to model what grown ups do in conflict situations. As the saying goes, “charity begins at home” and since the home is where socialization begins, the children pick up such habits. There is also a possibility that some kinds of assault occur in their homes which some children imitate and practice in the schools. It may also be that conflicts occur in their communities and because they do not have any better means of resolving conflicts, such negative attitudes are transmitted to the younger generation who see nothing wrong with conflict situations.

Conflict between parents and teachers (75 times) suggests that neither parents nor teachers are equipped with conflict management skills to effectively deal with issues of conflict. Because teachers live in the same community as the parents of the pupils, it is easy for them to wrong each other and where this is not communicated and resolved, any negligible issue might produce conflict. This could also be the result of both teachers and parents not being fully aware of each other’s role as far as children’s education is concerned and therefore pick up unnecessary conflicts with each other. In the case where teachers insult their pupils’ parents for offences caused by the pupils in school and which the pupils report to the parents could also contribute to increased occurrences of teacher-parent conflict in the schools. The reverse could also create

tension between parents and teachers. Cases of teachers being too harsh on pupils are another problem area.

Teacher-head conflict is ranked third in responses (63 times) suggesting that there is not much cordial relationship between teachers and their heads and if such conflicts are publicly displayed in the school, pupils can copy them. The respondents explained that such conflicts come as a result of a headteacher not running an open administration and where inadequate communication and interpersonal skills exist. Conflict also arises where teachers are insolent and do not respect the school heads and consequently, leading to teachers feeling reluctant to prepare their lesson notes or fulfill other obligatory school related responsibilities. Inadequate teaching skills, laziness and absenteeism among teachers also breed conflict between teachers and their school heads because no hardworking headteacher would tolerate lazy and truant teachers and as a result, any acts to remedy such teacher lapses was lead to conflict.

The presence of conflict between teachers and pupils in the schools suggests the possibility of teachers venting their anger with the children's parents on their wards as a situation which increases tension and leads to conflict. Another area of conflict related to daily interactions between teachers and pupils classroom. Because it is easy for them to upset each other in the course of teaching and learning or extra curricular activities, conflict between the two parties is inevitable. As the literature points out, the more people interact, the more likely there is to be conflict between them. For this reason, arrogance, insolence, indiscipline and use offensive language in addressing teachers on the part of pupils creates fertile grounds for conflict. On the other hand, if teachers use of offensive language on pupils with the idea that children do not know their rights and

cannot respond to same, can make occurrences of conflict shoot up. The reality is that teacher-parent conflict ranks high in the district.

Teacher-pupil conflict (45 occurrences) arises from teachers' merciless use of corporal punishment as a means of disciplining pupils. Friction between a teacher and pupil(s) as a result of caning, insult or harsh language creates more problems for pupils learning. The teacher might think he or she is teaching alright but the affected pupils' absorption power for what is being taught will decrease because of the conflict which acts as a barrier. This conflict eventually affects teaching and learning negatively. What makes this situation worse is that it is the same teacher who teaches all the subjects that the affected pupil is supposed to learn in class. This is grounds for pupils to fail or even drop out of school.

With regards to conflict between parents and their children or wards in the school, the 39 occurrences was related to parents not being able to solve problems between them and their children or wards at home and also not reporting difficult cases to the school authority for intervention, but leave the issue to fester. Such a conflict can get out of hand and negatively affect family relationships. Another reason for worry is that some children misbehave at home and run to school to avoid punishment and in some cases, parents follow up to the school to address the problems thereby causing more problems for the pupils and their teachers.

This type of conflict that occur the least in the district is conflict among teachers mainly because they are colleagues. It may also be due to the fact that teachers do not take instructions from each other and also a sort of cordiality exists among them.

The type of conflict which hardly occurs in the district during the study was one between the school and its community. This could be interpreted as there being little or no interaction between the school and the local community.

Most Rampant Conflict

The study revealed that the type of conflict that occurs most (81 times) in the primary schools in the Ejisu–Juaben district is conflict among pupils. This information suggests that pupils do not know how to control themselves and are also not shown the proper way of addressing their grievances in their schools that is why conflict among pupils is so rampant in the sample schools.

Table 5: Occurrence of Conflict

Occurrence	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Every day	54	45
Almost every day	39	32
Once in a while	27	22.5
Total	120	100

With respect to how often conflict occurs in the school, 54 out of the 120 respondents (45%) said conflict is a daily occurrence in their school and in particular, among pupils, confirming the high level pupil-pupil conflict discussed previously. This means that pupils in the Ejisu-Juaben district experience conflict every day. This could be attributed to the fact that the pupils stay in the classroom for most of the day and

also play together on the school compound during breaktime, they may step on each others' toes very frequently. However, 27 of the respondents (representing 22.5%) claimed that conflict rarely occurs in their schools. Table 6 indicates that whether regularly or rarely, conflict does occur in the sample primary schools in the district.

Table 6: Does Conflict occur in your school?

Response	No. of respondents	Percentages (%)
Yes	119	99.2
No	1	0.8
Total	120	100

Table 6 shows that out of the 120 respondents, 119 (representing 99.2%) affirmed that conflict occurs in their schools. This information is in agreement with the literature which indicates that conflict is natural in any human situation, of which primary schools are no exception. It also confirms the first hypothesis of the study that conflict occurs in primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben District of Ashanti. Interestingly, one respondent (0.8%) said conflict does not occur in his school, suggesting a lack of understanding of the question or this person did not read the question well enough to understand its requirement although he or she answered all the questions on conflict in the questionnaire. It can also mean that he or she did not want to expose problems in his or her school.

Effect of conflict on teaching and learning

On the effect of conflict, 114 respondents (95% of the 120 respondents) said conflict in the school has negative effects on teaching and learning while 5% said conflicts that occur in their schools have positive effects on teaching and learning. This substantiates the second hypothesis of the study that conflicts in primary schools have negative affects on teaching and learning. The enormity of the problem rests with the fact that 66% of the teachers are young and inexperienced, a situation which creates an urgent need for implementing effective strategies to properly deal with conflict in the primary schools in the district to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The fact that 95% of respondents agreed that conflict in primary schools in the district has negative effects on teaching and learning suggests that there is a great danger or threat to the pupils' future as far as the effectiveness of the foundation of their formal education is concerned. More conflicts imply possible cases of school drop out. This situation has both short and long term implications for the children's education and future livelihood.

Table 7: Effects of conflict

Effect of conflict	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Negative	114	95
Positive	6	5
Total	120	100

As can be seen in Table 7, 114 out of the 120 respondents (95%) said conflict in primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district has negative effects on teaching and

learning. The remaining six respondents were of the view that conflict in their school produces positive results on teaching and learning. This suggests that although it is generally accepted that conflict is bad it can sometimes yield positive results. The figures in the table imply that the present state of conflict indisputably retards the progress of teaching and learning in the district.

Examples of effect of conflict

The respondents said most often instructional periods are used to settle conflict that emerges in the classroom, meaning that what has been planned to be taught for that period will not be adhered to and that will surely adversely affect the pupils. They also said pupils who are involved in conflict have low concentration or divided attention in class because their minds which ought to absorb lessons would be engaged in thoughts about the conflict and thereby reducing the academic performance of such pupils. If such a conflict is not resolved as early as possible it can create overt and covert enmity among pupils and that could increase truancy and school dropout. In the same way, teachers who are involved in conflict in the school, especially with the school authority, would feel awkward and coil in their shells. Such teachers would feel reluctant to teach and if they do at all, might not put in much effort to deliver the lessons as they are expected to and that can affect the quality of delivery and learning.

It was made known in the interviews that where pupils in conflict are in the same class, they feel reluctant to be in the same group, and feel shy to respond to questions in class. This affects teaching and learning regularly because their teachers would not know whether no response means the pupils do understand the lesson or not.

Where teachers and parents are in conflict, the teachers also would not show love to the wards of those parents which would also go a long way to affect the learning of the pupils very negatively.

Means of Resolving Conflict in the Sample Schools

When respondents were asked whether there were any mechanisms of resolving conflict in their respective schools, 85% (120) said “yes” while 15% said their schools did not have any means of addressing conflict. If the schools had measures to resolve issues of conflict yet pupil-to-pupil conflict exists in the schools then it suggests that the existing means of resolving conflicts are ineffective. There probably are no established or formal structures in some of the schools hence the irregular answer of the 15% respondents to the question.

Do resolved conflicts recur?

As to whether resolved conflict recurs, 36 respondents (representing 30%) said it does while 84 (representing 70%) said resolved conflicts do not recur. It implies that even though there could be lapses in conflict resolution strategies adopted in the selected primary schools, the methods used are only effective to some extent. On the other hand, it suggests that conflict resolution strategies used in the primary schools are not appropriate for the particular conflicts on hand. This means that if effective mechanisms are used, conflicts in the primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district would be reduced to the barest minimum.

As part of the study, Personal Interviews with the school heads were conducted to solicit information from primary school heads and pupils.

4.2 Interview with Head teachers

Table 8: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	19	63
Female	11	37
Total	30	100

As seen in Table 8, 19 of the 30 school heads (representing 63%) interviewed were men while 11 (representing 37%) were women. This shows how male heads outnumber their female counterparts in primary school administration. Having more male administrators than females could have negative effects on conflict resolution because as mothers, women are more involved in resolving children's conflict at home. This idea that more father figure head primary school administration means that conflict resolution will be in trouble because women, who are usually close to children and know how to treat them both at home and in school, are not fully represented in the primary school administration in the district. It might be that gender balance in the headteacher corps of primary schools in the district has not been given priority attention.

Age of Interviewees

It was found that 17 (57%) of the 30 school-heads interviewed were between the ages of 41 and 50 years while only one (3%) was below 40 years. Those aged 51 to 60 years were 12 (40%). It can be seen that the school head position is not given to young teachers but old, long serving and experienced teachers. These older school heads with their experience in life can probably handle issues of conflict and prevent it from escalating better than younger unmarried heads.

Table 9: Marital Status of the Respondents

Status	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	0	0
Married	21	70
Divorced	3	10
Widowed	6	20
Total	30	100

According to Table 9, none of the interviewees was single while 21 (70%) of them were married. With the majority of school heads being married suggests that they have families and therefore have knowledge on how to handle children and prevent or reduce conflict in the respective schools.

Table 10: Work Experience of the Respondents

No of years	No of interviewees	Percentages (%)
1-10 years	10	33.3
11-20 years	17	56.6
21-30years	3	10.1
Total	30	100

Table 10 reveals that while 17 (56.6%) of the 30 school heads had been in leadership for up to 20 years, only three (10.1%) had served as primary school administrators for between 20 to 30 years. If effective conflict management is only determined by the number of years a person spends in leadership, then conflict should not arise in the sample primary schools in the district. It can therefore be assumed that because majority of the heads (20) had spent more than 10 years in administration, they all are experienced enough in handling children and need no tutorials on conflict management. However, administrative skills and skills for effective handling of conflict in the various schools are two separate issues that need to be addressed separately.

Does Conflict Occur in your School?

The responses to the interviews conducted with the heads show that conflict of one kind or another occurs in the respective schools. This authenticates the responses from the teachers that conflict does occur in primary schools in the district. This also suggests that despite the efforts of the heads to resolve conflict, it has not yielded considerable results.

Type of Conflict which occurs in the schools

The responses from the interviews showed that 90% of the heads mentioned that all the seven types of conflict (Teacher-teacher, Teacher-Head, Teacher-Pupil, Teacher-Parent, Pupil-Pupil, Pupil-parent and School-Community) manifest in their schools. The remaining 10% admitted that all the types of conflicts occur in their schools with the exception of school-community conflict.

Table 11: The type of conflict that occurs most

Type of conflict	No of interviewees	Percentage (%)
Teacher-teacher	0	0
Teacher-Head	0	0
Teacher-Pupil	2	7
Teacher-Parent	2	7
Pupil-Pupil	25	83
Pupil-parent	1	3
School-Community	0	0
Total	30	100

The figures in Table 11 show that conflict between pupils occurs most (83%) in the primary schools in the district. This means that existing strategies for resolving conflict among pupils must be reviewed to redress any inherent lapses to provide enabling environments for enhancing teaching and learning in the schools. It can also be attributed to the fact that pupils do not know any better means of resolving their

differences. The table also shows that pupil-pupil conflict is the most prevalent in the schools while school-community conflict is not a problem in the district. According to the interviewees, teacher-teacher and teacher-head conflicts are not rampant in the district. The fact that teacher-teacher and teacher-head conflicts are not most prevalent in the schools shows that the headteachers, teachers and people in the communities are mature and have amicable options of dealing with conflict. This also suggests that adults are better positioned to prevent others from driving them into conflict. They may also consider other means to avoid conflict situations. This implies a peaceful relationship among the adults in the district.

Table 12: Common causes of conflict in the sample schools

Table 12 the interviewees pointed out as common causes of conflict in their schools.

Type of conflict	Causal factors
Teacher – Teacher	rivalry, jealousy, teasing, betrayal, money lending
Teacher – Head	insolence, poor accountability, autocratic rule, favouritism, hatred, disrespect, gossip, truancy
Teacher – Pupil	gossip, offensive language from both sides, disobedience, punishment, lies, theft
Teacher –Parent	Offensive language from both sides, punishing of pupils, poor communication
Pupil – Pupil	teasing, theft, jealousy
Pupil – Parent	theft, disobedience

School – Community	Encroachment of school land, theft, indiscriminate defecation in and around classrooms
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What this table means is that a variety of factors are to blame for conflicts that occur in schools in the district.

Effects of conflict on teaching and learning

With regards to the effect of conflict, 27 (90%) of the interviewees said conflict undermines other administrative work (such as the head not being able to assign duties to teachers they are in conflict with) which could also hinder effective teaching and learning. Where conflict involves a teacher and a pupil, they said conflict wastes instructional time as they spend part of it usually addressing the conflict. The interviewees also said when conflict occurs between pupils in the same class during teaching periods, part of instructional time is wasted to settle the conflict. Moreover, where conflict emerges between a teacher and his pupils, the pupils do not feel happy in class since the teacher may refuse to ask them questions, mark their exercises and talk to them. The respondents said these issues eventually reduce the academic performance of the affected pupils. The affected pupils could consequently become truants and even drop out of school.

What makes the situation worse is that because primary school teachers teach all subjects on school curriculum in the classes to which they are assigned, the pupils in conflict with their teachers will not benefit fully from what is taught in all the subjects. In some cases, such pupils could inform their friends in town to assault the teachers

involved. It was revealed that some teachers also get transferred from schools in which they have problems, which ends up negatively affecting the school especially rural schools to which many qualified teachers refuse to accept postings. This situation implies that conflict in the primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district poses more problems than positive effects. It can also be seen that pupils are the most vulnerable to this negative effect of conflict.

However, 10% of the heads indicated that conflict which occurs in their schools rather have had positive impacts on the life of the individuals. They mentioned some of the positive impacts as helping to know the individual differences in people and how to cooperate accordingly. They also said if conflict is amicably resolved, both parties feel satisfied and increase their output in their work.

How are these conflicts resolved?

Teacher-teacher conflicts are first tackled by the head and his or her assistant, sometimes they include friends of both parties. If it is not resolved, the matter is referred to the PTA executives SMC, then to the CS and finally to the District Director of Education (DDE) if all attempts prove futile. That is the order of action used to resolve teacher-teacher conflict in primary schools in the district if all efforts fail.

Teacher-head – The assistant headteacher first tries to settle the conflict but where this attempt is fruitless, it is referred to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) executives or School Management Committee, then to the Circuit Supervisor and lastly to the District Director of Education (DDE).

Teacher-pupil –Conflict between teachers and pupils are first tackled by the school head and some teachers. If not resolved, the case is referred to the PTA executives or the SMC. If it does not get resolved, it goes to the CS and then to the DDE.

Teacher-parent – Conflict between teachers and parents is initially dealt with by the School Disciplinary Committee which consists of the head, the assistant head, and a teacher. If not resolved it follows the same order for teacher –pupil conflicts.

Pupil-pupil- Conflict between pupils who are in the same class is first tackled by the class teacher. If it fails, it follows the order as previously discussed. If it occurs between pupils from different classes, it is first tackled by the Guidance and Counseling Committee (GCC) which is made up of a committee two teachers in each school or it goes to Disciplinary Committee, PTA, SMC or CS if not resolved. Plate One shows a Guidance and Counseling Committee resolving conflict between two pupils.



Plate 4.1: Guidance & Counseling Unit resolving conflict between pupils.

Pupil-parent - the Guidance and Counseling Committee deals with such conflict in its initial stage of development or it goes to the Disciplinary Committee. If it does not end there it is referred to the PTA, SMC, CS, and finally to the DDE.

School-Community-Conflicts are first tackled by the Chiefs and elders of the town or village, or the SMC and then passed on to DDE if unresolved. If it occurs in a unit school (faith based), the matter goes to the Regional Manager of the school concerned and then to the District Assembly if the case relates to land encroachment.

Plates 2 and 3 are pictures illustrating conflict resolution situations in some of the sample schools studied.



Plate 4.2: A head teacher resolving conflict between pupils



Plate 4.3: A headmaster punishing pupils who were fighting

4.3 Interview with Selected Pupils

Overall, 130 pupils consisting of 73 girls (56%) and 57 boys (43%) were selected and interviewed to find out how much they know of conflict. It was realized that girls outnumbered the boys confirming the statistical data obtained from the District Education Office where personnel also said more girls are enrolled in the primary schools in the district than boys. This suggests that the district is doing well to encourage girl-child education.

Table 13: Age of Respondents

Age	Class Levels	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
6-7yrs	1-2	5	4
8-9yrs	2-3	9	7
10-11yrs	3-4	29	22
12-13yrs	5-6	87	67
Total		130	100

Of the 130 pupils interviewed, 87 (representing 67%) were between the ages of 12 and 13 years while 29 (representing 22%) were between 10 and 11 years. It can be seen that only 14 pupils (representing 11%) who were between six and nine years were interviewed because they were deemed too young to give detailed information required. The class distribution of the 130 pupils interviewed were as follows: five from Basic One and Two, 12 for Basic Three and Four; 113 (86.8%) for Basic Five and Six.

Table 14: Does conflict occur in your school?

Conflict	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	130	100
No	0	0
Total	130	100

All the 130 (100%) pupil interviewees admitted that conflict of some kind occur in their respective schools. This also confirmed the data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews that conflict does occur in primary schools in the district.

Table 15: Conflicts that occur in the School

Type of conflict	No. of respondent	Percentages (%)
Teacher-teacher	0	0
Teacher-Head	0	0
Teacher-Pupil	21	16
Teacher-Parent	10	8
Pupil-Pupil	82	63
Pupil-Parent	17	13
School-Community	0	0
Total	130	100

Table 5 indicates that none of the pupils surveyed had witnessed conflict among teachers, between teachers and heads of the schools and between their schools and the communities they are located in, while 82 (63%) pointed to conflict among pupils as one that frequently occurs in their schools. Perhaps, the teachers of the pupils avoid public confrontation when conflict occurs between them that is why the pupils said none occurs in their school. Similarly, none of the pupils mentioned that there had been incidences of conflict between their schools and the communities of location. There is no doubt that the pupils could not mention school–community conflict because the

questionnaire for the teachers as well as the interviews conducted with the headteachers revealed that school–community conflict is not common.

Table 16: Causes of Conflict

Type of conflict	Causes
Teacher-Teacher	Unknown
Teacher-Head	Unknown
Teacher-Pupil	punishment, love affair, theft,
Teacher-Parent	when pupils do excessive work on school farm, insults, collection of monies,
Pupil-Pupil	teasing, bullying, jealousy, theft, insults, gossip, giggling
Pupil-Parent	Theft
School-Community	Unknown

Table 16 shows factors that the pupils said were the common causes of conflict between teachers and parents, teachers and pupils, among pupils, and between pupils and their parents. None of the 130 respondents could name the factors that would cause conflict between teachers, between teachers and their headteachers and between their schools and the communities. It also suggests that conflicts that occur between these groups are not made or addressed publicly for the pupils to witness or be aware of.

Effects of conflict on teaching and learning

With regard to the effects of conflict on teaching and learning, the interviewees said if a conflict emerges between a teacher and a pupil(s), no matter how the conflict is resolved, the teachers harbour it in mind and make it difficult for them to relate well with the pupils as before and as a result, the pupils do not feel happy in the classroom. The respondents added that even after the conflict has been settled the teachers keep on referring to the conflict they had with the pupils in class. This causes them embarrassment before their classmates. The interviewees made it clear that after a conflict has occurred some of their teachers continue to hate the pupils, to extent of refusing to mark their exercises, refuse to ask them questions in class and more irritatingly, when such pupils raise their hands either to ask or answer questions, the teachers ignore them. According to the interviewees, if teachers deny them such rights in class, they feel awkward in the midst of their colleagues and this affects their ability to learn. As a result, the pupils cannot assess their performance in class this could lead to school dropout or truancy.

The pupils made it known that sometimes when a conflict occurs between a teacher and a pupil, other teachers support their colleague to hate the pupil concerned and as a result, the pupil becomes uncomfortable in class and also in the school. This causes some pupils to play truant at times. Such pupils end up being worse off because in primary schools, a teacher takes a class for all subjects on the timetable. This is a great source of worry as it undermines pupils' willingness to stay in school and achieve their life's goal.

Concerning the effect of conflict between teachers and parents on teaching and learning, the pupils pointed out that some teachers after they have had a confrontation with the parents, vent their anger on the children of these people which affects the children's absorbing capacity for the day. The interviewees said some teachers are fond of mentioning the wrongs of their parents to the class just to spoil their day and embarrass them. According to them, teachers use instructional periods to hammer on wrongs of their parents and sometimes insult their parents as well.

It is possible that if teachers use instructional periods to hammer on the wrongs of parents, they might not be able to complete the syllabus, and that will have a long and short term adverse effects on the pupils' education. None of the pupils interviewed was able to give a positive effect of conflict. Looking at the effect of conflict on teaching and learning on the pupils, it was realized that the pupils suffer from the effects of conflict. This suggests that in order to improve primary school education, conflict in the primary schools must be given a keen attention as other impediments to quality education.

Does your school have measures to resolve Conflict?

On the question of whether their schools have measures to resolve conflict, 103 respondents (79.2%) said there are measures to resolve conflict in their schools while the remaining 27 (20.8%) said no measures exist to resolve conflict in their schools. It is possible that there are measures to resolve conflict in the schools but they are dormant in such a way that even the pupils who are supposed to be the main beneficiary are not aware of them. On the other hand, the answers also suggest that the measures

were existence but the pupils had not been informed on how to channel their grievances through them. When the researcher probed further, it was realized that some pupils were not familiar with the existing conflict resolution measures in their respective schools, such as the Guidance and Counseling Units and the Disciplinary Committees. All they know is sometimes the headteachers or the teachers solve their conflicts. The children were also not aware of any conflict resolution body outside the school like SMC and PTAs. This might perhaps be a contributing factor to the increase of pupil – pupil conflict in the district.

How was the conflict you witnessed in your school resolved?

The pupils' responses to this question were that when a conflict occurs between a teacher and parents, the headteachers call the parent(s) to the office and calm them down. The heads later call the teacher and advise him or her. The pupils said again that if the conflict involves two pupils, either a teacher or the head settles it by advising them or punishing the offender depending on the degree of the offence. The interviewees indicated that when there is a conflict between a pupil and a teacher, sometimes the pupil feels reluctant to report the matter to the school authority and for those who report, the headteacher only advises or threatens them while the teacher goes scot-free irrespective of the one who is at fault. It could be understood from the statement that teachers or heads abuse the rights of their pupils which makes them feel unwilling to air their grievances when there is a problem between them and the teachers.

Table 17: Did the Resolved Conflict Recur?

Recur	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	41	31.5
No	89	68.5
Total	130	100

Table 8 shows that 89 respondents (representing 68.5%) said when a conflict is resolved in their schools it does not recur while 41 interviewees (31.5%) said conflict in their schools recur after being resolved. This suggests that the conflict resolution measures in some primary schools in the district work to some extent but need to be strengthened. It also indicates that those resolved conflicts might have recurred but the children were afraid to restart the conflict because of threats sometimes issued by their school authorities and teachers.

4.4 Observation

This section deals with what the researcher observed in the sample primary schools in the district using participant and non-participant observation strategies to study conflict situations in classrooms and on the school compound.

Identification of Conflict

Issues of conflict were observed in all the primary schools. This confirms the responses observed from the questionnaire and that were interviews conducted in the selected primary schools in the district.

During the observation it was realized that places where conflict occurred were the classrooms, school compound, at PTA meetings, staff meetings and in the headteachers' offices. It was also observed that the school compound and playing grounds in particular recorded the highest occurrences of conflict followed by the classrooms. An example of conflict that occurred on the playing ground is illustrated in Plate 4. which shows fighting between pupils.



Plate 4.4: Pupils in conflict on the play ground

There were also a few issues of conflict at staff meetings and in headteachers' offices in the sample schools. Some conflicts were also observed at PTA meetings in 15 of the 30 sample schools. It was also observed that conflicts which occurred at every PTA meeting were either between some of the teachers and parents, the heads and the parents or the heads and the PTA executives. Conflicts that occurred between teachers and parents were mainly due to collection of dues, teachers' lateness to school, purchasing of learning materials and other disciplinary measures used on a ward. The

one between headteachers and the PTA executives were about how PTA executives wanted to be part of the distribution of the Capitation Grants and how to disburse PTA funds.

A few of the conflicts observed between pupils occurred during instructional period. Others emerged during break time when the pupils went out to eat and others to play. There were a few instances of conflicts between teachers and the headteachers during staff meetings in some of the schools where the observation took place. There were also conflict situations which occurred between some parents and some teachers concerning punishment awarded to pupils, collection of levies from pupils to either print examination questions or pay watchmen as well as parents insulting teachers at PTA meetings.

The observation revealed that conflict between pupils, between teachers and their heads, and between teachers and parents occur in the district. No conflict among teachers and between teachers and pupils were observed during the study. This suggests that because teachers knew there was an “outsider” in the school whose intention of visit they knew, they simply acted unnaturally to avoid any conflict occurring between them and their pupils. It can also be deduced here that conflict at staff and PTA meetings occurred in the presence of the observer because the agenda for these meetings were set and those concerned were compelled to attend with no option to do otherwise. Some of the causes of the conflict situations that were observed in the sample schools are described as follows:

Pupil-Pupil Conflict: Bullying, theft, teasing and jealousy were some of the causes of conflicts observed among pupils in the schools. It was observed that the older pupils and those in upper classes bullied those in the lower classes. Surprisingly, there were some bullying in some classrooms even when there were teachers in the classrooms which the teachers ignored, whether intentionally or not. Besides, most of the bullying occurred during break time, after break and after closing from school.

Teasing was one of the major causes of conflict among pupils in the study schools. Some pupils had given their colleagues nicknames while some also teased other pupils when they were not able to give correct answers to questions asked in class. It was realized that some pupils were teased because their shoes and uniforms were torn.

Theft cases caused some pupil-pupil conflict in the sample schools. It was observed that most pupils complained to their teachers about their stolen items that included money, toys, books, erasers, pens and pencils. Such incidences occurred in all the schools the researcher visited. This situation suggests that because the district has more villages and their main occupation is subsistence farming, poverty is high among the people hence, some parents' inability to meet their wards' basic needs. The observation revealed that majority of these pupils initially tried to handle the conflict on their own by fighting, a conflict response style the pupils seemed to be most familiar with. Such conflict situations were later reported to their teachers for redress.

It was also observed that one major cause of conflict among pupils in the sample schools was jealousy. What happened in this case during break times was that whenever a pupil refused to offer another pupil some of his food, the other pupil would

tip the food over or smash it on the ground, which invariably resulted in argument and fighting.

Teacher – Parent Conflict: Punishment is one of the causes of conflict that emerged between teachers and parents in the sample schools. There were two instances where some parents claimed their wards were mercilessly beaten by their teachers. In another school a parent quarreled with a teacher for making her daughter kneel down too long for reporting to school late. In two different schools two parents were also involved in conflict with teachers for giving their wards a very big portion of land to weed as punishment. Because those parents were already angry before getting to the school, they responded to the teachers' explanation of the issues with confrontation, an inappropriate conflict response style.

Most of the conflict situations observed between teachers and parents were caused by collection of monies by teachers such as extra classes fee, printing fee for examination questions and watchman fees. Demands for items like books and other learning materials by teachers also caused conflict in some of the schools especially during PTA meetings. There were parents who did not understand why teachers should demand money and purchase of other learning materials of their pupils while the government says education is free. This indicates that some parents do not understand the essence of the Capitation Grant and the concept of fCUBE and any demands for money annoys them and pushes them into conflict with the school.

There were two instances where some parents came to the schools to confront teachers whom they claimed had insulted them to their wards. Through the study, the

researcher realized that the pupils who reported teacher insults to their parents might suffer because the teachers angrily questioned those pupils about these incidences in the presence of their mothers.

Teacher–Head Conflict:

Preparation of lesson notes: At a staff meeting, the researcher observed a headteacher was not pleased with how some of the teachers were discharging their obligatory responsibility of lesson notes preparation to guide their teaching. This did not go down well with one teacher who felt the headteacher was indirectly referring to her in his narration and so got angry and showered abusive language on the head, and instantly, a heated argument emerged.

Autocratic rule: The researcher observed a kind of autocratic administration in some of the schools. It was realized at staff meetings in two schools that some teachers were restricted on how to talk at the meetings because when it got to “other matters”, most teachers’ questions were not answered. Undoubtedly, it could be deduced that teachers in these schools would find it difficult to address their grievances in the school.

Poor accountability: The observation revealed that some school heads were not able to account for monies they had collected such as dues from food vendors in the schools, churches that use the premises for worship and Capitation Grant. Those headteachers were not able to account for those monies properly when they were questioned by their

teachers on how the monies were disbursed. The researcher also observed that those heads did not delegate any teacher to collect such monies but did that themselves.

Absenteeism: At another staff meeting, an issue of conflict occurred between the head and some teachers when he openly confronted teachers who were habitually absenting themselves from school and those who had been reporting to school late. Those teachers were upset because to them, the head could have called them individually to advise them rather doing so in the presence of the researcher.



CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conflict as a disagreement between two or more people is a natural occurrence among individuals and wherever people group. The Primary School as a system where pupils, teachers and headteachers come together to interact therefore provides fertile grounds for conflict of different kinds to occur.

5.1 Summary

The study revealed that conflict is a daily occurrence in primary schools located in the Ejisu-Juaben district of Ashanti and identified the types of conflict prevalent in the area as pupil-pupil, teacher-teacher, head-teacher, teacher-parent, teacher-pupil, pupil-parent and school-community. Among these types, the most rampant in the district is what occurs between pupils while conflict between schools and their communities are rare. Causes of conflict identified in the sample schools studied include theft, teasing, insult, insolence and punishing of pupils. The study also revealed that conflict in primary schools have more negative effects on teaching and learning when it occurs between a teacher and a pupil while conflict has immediate and long term effects on its victims. Conflict was also found to slow down the cordial relationship between school authorities and the local communities.

It emerged that although the GES had rules and specified regulations for resolving conflict in schools, conflict situations persistently occur in the district studied, presumably because these measures are ineffective. It is therefore important that the

existing conflict resolution mechanisms in the primary schools in the Ejisu–Juaben district be strengthened to help curb intractable issues of conflict and also create enabling environment for teaching and learning to occur in the schools.

5.2 Conclusion

It is evident from the study that Primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district face a number of challenges, among which are persistent conflict, inadequate teaching and learning materials and poor infrastructure. Of these challenges, conflict is seen to have a greater influence on teaching and learning. It is therefore in the interest of the schools in the district to take interest in the alternative conflict resolution strategies proposed by this study to mitigate problems of conflict.

Conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people, or groups of people which is sometimes characterized by physical violence. As cited in Chapter Two, causes of conflict in the primary schools in the Ejisu-Juaben district can be grouped according to three critical factors: Situational, Personality and Power factors.

In the instance where a pupil's item gets lost and a conflict is created, the conflict ceases when the situation is changed, that is when the lost item is found. This conflict is said to be caused by situational factors. Personality factors derive from individual differences in people. In the classroom, personality factors may result when a strict teacher cannot tolerate pupils who are talkative and restless in the classroom. Power factors arise from those who have power to decide what happens to someone. For instance, a school head has the power to decide how to share monies collected to

motivate teachers, or as incentives in kind or fees for teaching extra classes. Conflict derived from these factors can either be intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup or intergroup conflict. Human beings have the opportunity to choose a conflict response style which is appropriate to the conflict. Among these conflict response styles are accommodating, competing and conflict avoidance.

Data gathered by means of questionnaire, interview and personal observation in the schools indicate that conflict occurs in all the sample schools in the district which negatively affect teaching and learning. The data revealed that pupils are mostly affected by the conflict where a teacher uses part of the instructional time to settle conflict and are not able to complete the syllabus, a situation that denies other pupils of the benefits of the period. It also found that conflict between a teacher and a parent results when a teacher vents his or her anger against a parent on their child or ward. The innocent pupil experiences emotional and psychological problems that adversely affect the child's learning ability.

Conflict in the sample schools were found to occur most among pupils while those between teachers, teachers and the school heads, teachers and pupils, teachers and parents were relatively low. Conflict between the school and the communities were rare. The high occurrence of conflict between pupils is very significant in terms of young children's inability to control their temper and the fact that they easily make up afterwards. The presence of more young teachers who are also unmarried and fewer older teachers in the district implies fewer adult role models for the young teachers and inadequate experience and skill in conflict management at the family level. Lack of

parenting skills would make it difficult for such young teachers to effectively handle conflicts that arise among the pupils.

Knowing that conflict in primary schools, irrespective of the type, affects the child's education and having found that conflicts between pupils occur every day in the basic schools in the study district, it can be deduced that more effective measures have to be effected to educate schools in the district on conflict and its negative impact on academic performance. It is evident that conflict between parents and teachers is mostly caused by pupils who either misinform their parents or report their teachers to their parents. It is therefore important that issues of such nature be discussed and resolved peacefully.

As the study reveals, pupils in the schools were not aware of conflict resolution mechanisms in their schools apart from class teachers who try to settle conflict between pupils in their own classrooms.

The data also point to the fact that conflict between teachers and heads mostly centre on lesson notes preparation while headteachers who are reluctant to disclose the financial status of their schools to their staff members also bring about conflict. It was found that the relationship between some heads and their staff are not very cordial in some of the schools because some teachers feel reluctant to discharge their professional obligations such as the preparation of lesson notes, which when raised by heads at staff meetings, bring about conflict. These are issues that directly affect their relationship and make it difficult for effective teaching and learning to go on. Implementing conflict resolution and prevention activities will positively impact on school activities and create conducive environment for effective academic work in the district.

5.3 Recommendations

In line with the conflict situations prevailing in the schools of study, the following recommendations have been made to help the district to resolve the critical issues of conflict in the schools.

1. The District Directorate of the Ghana Education Service should form conflict resolution teams in the district to assist schools adopt existing official conflict resolution strategies for resolving conflict in the primary schools before it worsens teaching and learning.
2. Teachers, parents, school heads, pupils and the communities should be made aware of the long and short term negative effects of conflict on teaching and learning. This can be done through discussions at PTA meetings, durbars and symposia. In this regard, headteachers should be vigilant and effectively monitor teachers at work. They should sanction teachers who refuse to mark exercises done by their pupils because of existing conflict between them and the pupils. Such teachers should be counseled on the need to relate well with the pupils and their attention drawn to the fact that teachers and pupils are interdependent in the field of education.
3. The Guidance and Counseling Committees in the schools should be strengthened so that they can educate the pupils on better ways of handling conflict. School authorities should complement reward pupils' good behaviours and to encourage them to behave well in school. Peer mediation teams should be established with selected pupils who are well behaved and equipped with conflict resolution skills to help the schools handle interpersonal conflict. This group could be trained periodically by the district education office, civil society, or any community-based or non-governmental organisation which

is interested in conflict management so that basic schools in the district would have relatively reduced conflict environment. It is also necessary for pupils to be educated on all the conflict resolution mechanisms in the schools and sanctions for certain offences. The pupils will trust the bodies and channel their grievances through them. This will help curb or reduce conflict in primary schools in the district. Conflict resolution bodies in some primary schools such as Disciplinary Committees and Guidance and Counseling Committee should be strengthened to reduce the spate of conflict in basic schools in the district so that the negative effects of conflict on teaching and learning will be reduced.

4. The Ministry of Education and the GES should increase the three periods allotted to Religious and Moral Education per week on the basic school timetable to five so that more time would be spent teaching moral values to inculcate a sense of social responsibility and responsiveness in the pupils. Effective moral and religious education will instill good neighbourliness and care for one another in them so they grow up with such values.

5. Communication links between the schools and the parents of the pupils should be strengthened to reduce tension and conflict in the schools. Headteachers and teachers should be open to parents and encourage them to seek clarification on any information communicated to them by their children or wards but which they do not understand and should also explain to parents any claims or demands such as collection of monies made on them in connection with their awards.

6. Existing conflict resolution mechanisms in the schools should be revived so that parents would be educated on the proper ways of addressing their grievances. Parents

need enough education on the essentials of government's interventions such as Capitation Grant and fCUBE policy and how far this goes as far as basic school education funding is concerned so that little demands for money will not create a conflict between them and the teachers. The school authorities should encourage parents to attend PTA meetings so that they would be abreast with information about the school. Headteachers should remove all barriers of communication and relate well with the parents so that they feel part of the school system. The Capitation Grant should be disbursed for its intended purpose only and should not be misapplied.

7. Note books, pens and materials that teachers need to discharge their obligatory duties such as preparation of lesson notes must be provided at the right time to reduce conflict between teachers and their heads.

8. The District Education Offices should post bursars or accounts clerks to all primary schools in the district to handle the finances of the school. This will help reduce or eliminate accountability problems and ease the tension that arises between teachers and their heads as a result of finances.

9. The District Education Office should organize seminars and workshops aimed at improving good rapport between headteachers and their staff and building good working relations between them. GES should also organize workshops for headteachers every vacation to enable them acquire or improve their leadership skills and conflict resolution strategies so as to improve their managerial effectiveness. The facilitators of the workshops should do follow ups to ensure that whatever they have imparted are being implemented.

10. These findings would be made available to the DEO and extracts published to make the information available to schools and the general public to learn from.

KNUST



APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 –QUESTIONNAIRE

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ART EDUCATION

This questionnaire is designed to solicit information for the above project. Information collected would be kept as highly confidential as possible. The researcher will highly appreciate your responses.

Section A

- 1) Gender M [] F []
- 2) Age 20-30 [] 31-40 [] 41-50 [] 51-59 []
- 3) Educational level SSS [] Certificate “A” [] Diploma []
1st Degree [] 2nd Degree []
- 4) Work experience 1-10yrs [] 11-20yrs []
21-30yrs [] 31-40yrs []
- 5) Marital status [] single [] married [] divorced []
Separated [] Widowed []

Section B

6) What do you understand by conflict? -----

7) Which of the following types of conflict occurs in your school?

- Teacher-teacher [] teacher-pupil teacher-parent
Teacher-head pupil-pupil school-community
Pupil-parent

8) Which of the above types of conflict chosen is rampant? -----

9) How often does the conflict occur? -----

10) Does conflict occur in your school? Yes [] No []

11) Does conflict in your school have any impact/effect on teaching and learning? Yes [] No []

12) If Yes how? If no why? -----

Section C

13) Are there any means of resolving conflict in your school? Yes [] No []

14) How does conflict resolution in your school affect teaching and learning?

16) Does the resolved conflict reoccur? Yes [] No []

**APPENDIX 2 - INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS
HEADS IN THE EJISU-JUABEN DISTRICT**

1) Gender male [] female []

2) Age 30-40 [] 41-50 [] 51-59 []

3) Marital status single [], married [] divorced [] widowed []

4) Work experience: 1-10 [] 11-20 [] 21-30 []

5) Does conflict occur in your school?

6) Which of the following type of conflict occur in your school?

Teacher-teacher [] teacher-head [] teacher-pupil [] teacher-parent []

pupil-pupil [] pupil-parent [] school community []

7) Which of these types occur most?

Teacher-teacher [] teacher-head [] teacher-pupil [] teacher-parent []

pupil-pupil [] pupil-parent [] school community []

8) What are some of the common causes of these types of conflict?

Teacher-teacher -----

Teacher-head-----

Teacher-pupil-----

Teacher-parent-----

Pupil-pupil-----

Pupil-parent-----

School community-----

9) Do these conflicts affect teaching and learning?

Yes [] No []

10) How are these conflict resolved?

Teacher-teacher -----

Teacher-head-----

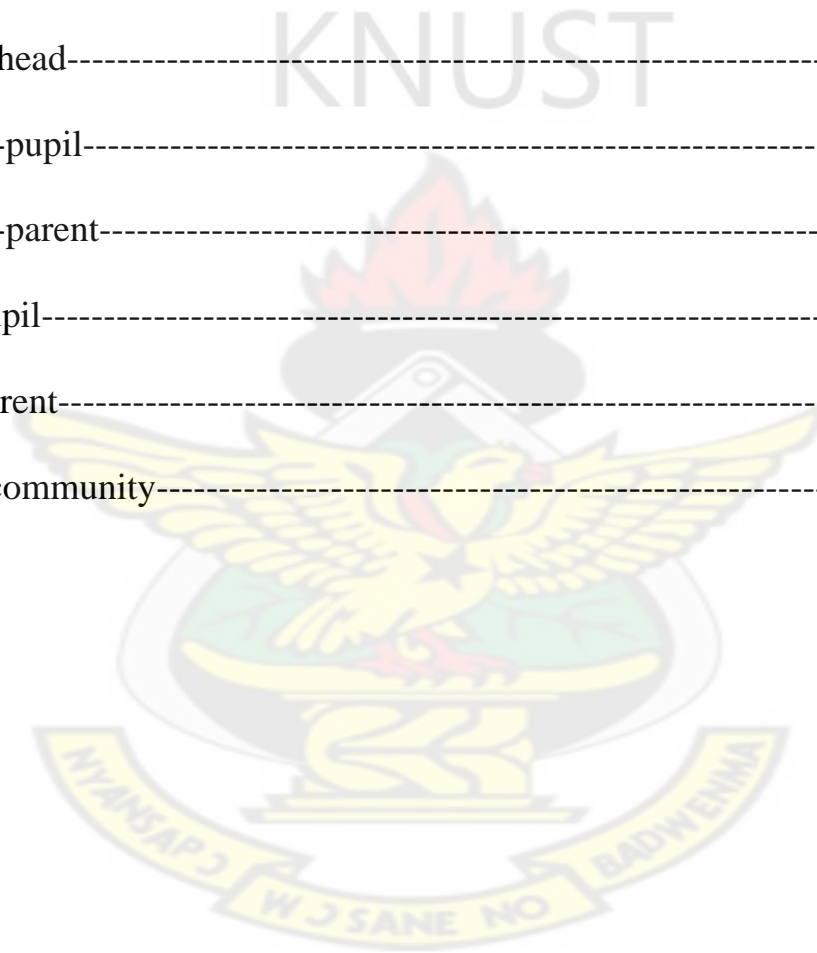
Teacher-pupil-----

Teacher-parent-----

Pupil-pupil-----

Pupil-parent-----

School community-----



**APPENDIX 3 -INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SELECTED BASIC SCHOOL
PUPILS IN THE EJISU-JUABEN DISTRICT**

1) Sex: male [] female []

2) Age: 6-7 [] 8-9 [] 10-11 [] 12-13 []

3) Class: 1-2 [] 3-4 [] 5 [] 6 []

4) Does conflict occur in your school? Yes [] No []

5) Between which people do conflict occur in your school?

Teacher-teacher [] teacher-head [] teacher-pupil [] teacher-parent []

pupil-pupil [] pupil-parent [] school community []

6) What was the cause?

Teacher-teacher -----

Teacher-head-----

Teacher-pupil-----

Teacher-parent-----

Pupil-pupil-----

Pupil-parent-----

School community-----

7) Do you think conflict in your school have effect on teaching and learning?

Yes [] No []

8) What are they effects?

Teacher-teacher -----

Teacher-head-----

Teacher-pupil-----

Teacher-parent-----

Pupil-pupil-----

Pupil-parent-----

School community-----

9) does your school have any conflict resolution mechanism?

Yes [] No []

10) How are conflicts in your school resolved?

Teacher-teacher -----

Teacher-head-----

Teacher-pupil-----

Teacher-parent-----

Pupil-pupil-----

Pupil-parent-----

School community-----

Question 11: Did the resolved conflict recur

**APPENDIX 4 -OBSERVATION LIST FOR SELECTED PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN THE EJISU-JUABEN DISTRICT**

Section “A” Identification of conflict

- 1) Does conflict exist in the school? Yes [] No []
- 2) Where did the conflict occur? Classroom [] playing ground []
school compound [] staff meeting [] at PTA meeting [] headmaster’s
office []
- 3) Which period did the conflict occur? Instructional period [] break
time [] Staff meeting [] PTA meeting [] games period [] others []

Section ‘B’ Types of conflict

- 4) Which type of conflict occurred? Teacher-teacher [], teacher-head []
teacher-pupil [] teacher–parent [] pupil-pupil [] school-community []

Section ‘C’ Causes of conflict

- 5) Pupil-Pupil - Bullying [] theft [] jealousy [] others []
- 6) Teacher-Head - disrespect [], preparation of lesson notes [], poor
accountability [] autocratic rule []
- 7) Teacher-Teacher - gossip [] insolent []
- 8) Teacher-Pupil–Truancy [] abusive language [] disrespect []
disobedience [] late coming [] punishment []

breaking of classroom rules []

9) teacher–parent – punishment of wards [] collection of monies []

abusive language []

10) School – community – encroachment of school land [] using of

school facilities [] defecation in classrooms []

Stealing of school property [] others []

Section ‘D’ resolution of conflict

State how conflict between the following groups of people was resolved.

Teacher-teacher-----

Teacher-head-----

Teacher-pupil-----

Teacher–parent-----

Pupil-pupil-----

School-community-----
