

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF THE HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS IN THE MASERU TOWN**

by

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SCRIPT

**Submitted in fulfillment of the demands for the module CMS 791, being part of the
requirements for the degree**

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

(consisting of an advanced research methodology module and a script)

in the

**DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION AND
EDUCATION MANAGEMENT**

School of Education

Faculty of the Humanities

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

BLOEMFONTEIN

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JUNE 2004**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this script to :

- My parents, Michael Salmon and Marosalia Anna Tlali, may their souls rest in peace.
- My husband, Gerard, whose support, trust and confidence in me has never wavered and our sons Tsepang and Alfred who had to endure long hours of silence.

DECLARATION

I, Rosalia Mofolo hereby declare that this script submitted for the M. Ed. Degree at the University of the Free State is the result of my independent investigation. Where assistance has been sought, it was acknowledged. I further declare that this work has never been submitted for a degree at any other faculty or university.

.....

R. Mofolo

June 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to the following people who have immensely contributed towards the successful completion of this study:

- My supervisor, Professor R.R. Brazelle, without whose inspiration, invaluable and skilful guidance, support, patience and encouragement, this script would not have been completed.
- My husband, who constantly inspired me to share his strong commitment to progress and education and to never give up. His encouragement is highly appreciated.
- Principals and deputy principals who sacrificed their time to complete the questionnaire.
- Mr. Pepenene and Mr. Lika for granting me permission to interview them for the purpose of completing my advanced research methodology module.
- All my friends whose words of encouragement gave me a spur to move on.
- Above all to God Almighty who saw me through those sleepless nights and gave me the strength and wisdom to complete this script.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

The concept of conflict is not new. Conflict is a general phenomenon of human existence and embraces a spectrum of social relationships (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:639-640). All people experience conflict in their lives. Everyday disputes have to be settled, for example, about who does the dishes, what programmes are to be watched on television or about how are approaches to a particular project at work. Given the different needs and priorities, some of these daily negotiations turn into destructive conflicts. Conflict occurs when two or more people oppose one another because their needs, wants, goals and values are different and as long as these are not satisfied, conflict will usually persist. Conflict is often accompanied by feelings of anger, frustration, hurt, anxiety or fear. Whetten, Cameron and Woods (1991:8) view conflict as the life-blood of progressive organizations since it sparks creativity, stimulates innovation and encourages personal improvement.

Since conflict is natural and a fact of life, it is not surprising that it can develop in any organization and in schools where according to Van der Westhuizen (1991:303), the management tasks of the principal are people directed. According to Smith, Mazzarella and Piele (1995:275) within every society, there are numerous forces that often seem to clash. Conflict happens when people live together and Whetten, Cameron and Woods (1990:3) state that conflict can be experienced at a broader level: in businesses, government agencies, schools, hospitals etc. Stauffer (1991: ii) argues that at whatever level conflict happens, the results come back to the personal, that is, often people are hurt or killed, families and organization are crippled. Lampen and John (1997:5) echo the above view by saying that though conflict seems to be unavoidable, it is often painful and most people would confess to being a little bit afraid of it. Often, they remember bad

experiences with conflict and these normally colour their feelings about it. In the eyes of an ordinary person, conflict mostly has negative and unreasonable connotations, as it is regarded as something unpleasant (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:303). Even scientific management experts such as Frederick W. Taylor, initially believed that all conflict ultimately threatened management's authority and thus had to be avoided or quickly resolved (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995:283). Much of the ambivalence toward conflict stems from lack of understanding of the causes of conflict, the variety of modes for managing it effectively and from lack of confidence in one's personal skills for handling tense situations.

On the contrary, some writers do not see conflict as totally bad but as having positive effects (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995:283; Whetten, et al. 1990:3; Brazelle, 1999:1 & Rahim 1990:1). To show the necessity of conflict, Kreitner and Kinicki, (1995:283) and Rahim (1986:7), argue that organizations that experience too little or no conflict tend to be stagnant and ineffective while on the other hand, excessive and uncontrolled conflict may threaten the existence of such organisation. The above discussion leads one to conclude that too little or too much conflict are both dysfunctional for any organization's effectiveness. Rahim (1986:8) thus says a moderate amount of conflict handled in a constructive manner is essential for attaining and maintaining the best level of organizational effectiveness. John Dewey once wrote, '*conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving...*' (Dewey, 1938:8). By this Dewey understood that, through conflict we stretch ourselves, question our intentions and reasoning, form opinions and learn how to defend them - in short, Dewey understood conflict to be among the best learning methods.

Conflict also arises when there is change. In Armstrong's words (1991:195), it may be seen as a threat to be challenged or resisted, or when there is frustration, this may produce an aggressive reaction. For any organization to develop, there has to be some change.

According to Anstey (1999:3), nations want to expand their territories or reclaim loses; minorities, on the other hand, want greater influence while oppressed people want their freedom and human rights. It therefore shows that change is an ongoing feature of human life and along side it, there is usually conflict. For example, when the political struggle in South Africa and Namibia became a threat, the apartheid regime was forced to admit that substantial change was needed. They asked for evolutionary and not revolutionary change. The implication was that there was no place for conflict in the process of change. Unfortunately for these countries, their plea was not listened to; conflict was not avoided but it played an integral part in the process of transformation. The point being made is that conflict is a catalyst for change and there is little or no way of avoiding it.

Given the formal and informal groups within the schools and outside groups interested in the schools, and lack of complete agreement of opinion among teachers, parents and pupils, it is not surprising that schools are a fertile ground for conflict (Van der Westhuizen, Steyn and Mosoge, 1991:31). Conflict may involve any of the following groups: principal-staff members, principal-pupils, pupils-pupils, staff members-staff members (Cheek & Lindsey, 1986:282). Conflict among children and adolescents is often a concern because children (in addition to most adults) have not yet learned to handle conflict constructively (Hoot & Roberson, 1994:258). School principals are therefore increasingly called upon to manage conflict situations so that teachers can spend more time teaching and students can spend more time learning. However, managing conflict at school has been an age-old challenge for educators and learning to deal constructively with it is a life-skill educators need.

The schools in Lesotho are equally having the same conflict experienced elsewhere. According to P. Khofane (interview, 2003), among other sources of conflict, poor communication, private interest, lack of commitment and motivation, decision-making process and personality traits are common problems. He continued to say most principals

also view conflict negatively; they see teachers who are involved in conflicts as being insubordinate. Teachers in Lesotho are basically trained in the development of helping skills, so when they become principals, they often lack some management skills and thus it is difficult to cope with certain situations including conflict. For the above reason, they need to develop skills that will help them view conflict in a more positive manner, and which will enable them to manage conflict situations effectively.

From the above discussion, it is evident that conflict is a characteristic of human existence. It is part of the dynamic life that drives people into the future. But it needs to be managed constructively. When associated with violence, destruction and killing, it is no longer a healthy part of living. Violent conflict solves few problems, creates many, and breeds more unhealthy conflict. However, when conflict is understood, it is easier to find ways to predict it, prevent it, transform it and resolve it. It is also apparent that conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. If it is anything, it is essential. While the definition of conflict and feelings about it tend to be negative, conflict itself does not need to be negative. It is how it is dealt with that makes it either productive or unproductive. The challenge is not so much the conflict but how one is going to manage this conflict. To achieve the organization's goals, people will usually hold different opinions because naturally, they are different. So there will often be conflict. The principals should however know when to eliminate conflict and when to build on it. Managed properly, Rahim (1986:1) states that conflict can enhance school's effectiveness. The central task is therefore that of managing conflict by doing everything possible to ensure that its positive effects are maximized while the negative and potentially disruptive effects are minimized (Rahim, 1990:1). Such management of conflict needs principals to have an understanding of what conflict is, its types, its sources and dynamics. They must, in addition, have the skills necessary to manage conflict effectively. Finally, according to Hoot and Roberson (1994:258), the need for effective conflict management technique is strong both at home and at school because our society provides easy access to guns and

other weapons and is plagued by drugs, parental absence, violent images and sexual abuse.

Given the above-mentioned problem, the following problem questions will therefore receive attention:

- What does the concept of conflict entail?
- What are the conflict management practices of the high school principals in Lesotho in the Maseru town?
- What can be done to improve the conflict management strategies of the target group of the principals?

1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

In an effort to answer the problem questions above, the general aim of this research is to investigate what the management practices of the school principals in the Maseru high schools are.

From this aim, the following objectives will be pursued:

- To describe by means of a literature study, what the concept of conflict and conflict management entail.
- To determine what are the conflict management practices of the high school principals in the Maseru town.

- To provide findings, conclusions and general recommendations on improving the management strategies of the target group of principals.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to accomplish the objectives of the research as set out in 1.2, the following methods of investigation will be used:

1.3.1 Literature Study

A comprehensive and well-integrated literature review is essential to any study. According to Mouton (2001:179-80), it gives the researcher a good understanding of the issues, trends and debates in the area one is working in, current theoretical thinking and definitions as well as previous studies and their results. In this research, a literature review will be used to help the researcher to get to the general or proper understanding of conflict and conflict management. On the contrary, a literature review can only summarise and organize the existing scholarship. Even a critical review of the literature cannot produce new or validate existing empirical insights. Although literature review often leads to theoretical insights, the researcher still has to undertake an empirical study to test new insights (Mouton, 2001:180). The next session therefore deals with a questionnaire.

1.3.2 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire will be sent to ten randomly selected high schools to determine how the principals deal with conflict situations in their schools, gain insight into their feelings and perceptions about conflict management. This design will help the interviewees to be free to express their views undeterred by the presence of the researcher

and his or her possible biasness. This method is mainly useful because of its potential to generalize to large populations.

1.4 DELIMITATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

The schools in Lesotho are divided into four levels: pre-primary, primary, secondary and high schools. All these schools are found in all the ten districts in the country. For a limited study like this, only high schools will be contacted, as it will be difficult to cover all levels. Of the 16 high schools in the Maseru town, a sample of 10 will be selected to represent the target population of the chosen area because of their accessibility and the fact that they are a mixture of government and church owned.

The scientific field of study of this research is Education Management, a sub-discipline of Education. According to Van der Westhuizen (1991:45-46), management concerns itself with tasks such as planning, organizing, leading and control. These tasks are not carried out in a vacuum but are applied to various management areas which include staff affairs, pupils, physical facilities, providing information, financial affairs, school-community relations and classroom management (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:49). Conflict management, which is a human science concept, is but a small issue in the management of staff affairs. Since this study is limited, focus is therefore on the management of staff affairs with emphasis on conflict management. Because all the tasks of management are integrated, the study must also refer to all of them.

1.5 RESEARCH OUTLAY

In chapter 2, the concept of conflict management will be placed within a theoretical framework in terms of literature and research.

Chapter 3 will present a report of the responses to the research questionnaire about the principals' conflict management strategies.

Chapter 4 will contain findings which are derived from the empirical research and which are supported by the theoretical study, conclusions and recommendations on how to improve the management strategies of the target group.

1.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter provides an orientation with regard to the conflict management practices of the school principals in the Maseru high schools. The purpose of the study included collecting and studying relevant literature so as to know how other researchers and theorists view the concept of conflict and conflict management. Also, the aim was to conduct a survey by means of a questionnaire and to interpret the empirical data. Furthermore, the research methods to be employed by the researcher, which are a literature study and a questionnaire, were outlined. Finally, the research outlay was also outlined.

The next chapter comprises the literature review, which includes literature study on the views from different theorists and researchers with regard to conflict and conflict management.

CONFLICT IN SCHOOLS: A LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools, like all other organizations, are often troubled by conflict. As head of the institution, the school principal must manage such conflicts. Among other responsibilities, the school principals are entrusted with the delicate task of educating pupils and must therefore manage conflicts with discretion so that their learners can lead a full and good life and that the educative task is realized (Kistan, 2000:17). In order to gain more clarity on the conflict phenomenon, this chapter will deal with definitions of conflict, types and causes of conflict, and conflict handling styles.

2.2 DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

The relevant literature is virtually endless and proposes many different definitions. According to Brown (1983:4), some of these definitions emphasize the conditions that breed disagreements, such as scarce resources or divergent interests; others emphasize the perceptions and feelings arising in conflict e.g. hostility and antagonism; still others focus on the behaviour, such as covert resistance or overt aggression.

Although there seems to be no consensus on a definition of conflict, at least one can draw three common key elements from all the definitions. Conflict is viewed as incompatibility of goals or opposition, as a process and as disagreements.

2.2.1 Conflict as incompatibility of goals

Conflict is defined as:

- A situation in which groups with equally incompatible goals simultaneously perceive a chance to achieve their goals by blocking those of others (Anstey, 1999:6; Van der Westhuizen et al., 1991:32).
- The clash, competition or mutual interference of opposing or incompatible forces or qualities (Rahim, 1986: 276).
- Perceived or experienced incompatible difference within the individual or between two or more individuals, which may lead to some or other form of opposition (Kistan, 2000:6; Bartol & Martin, 1991:578; Kroon, 1990:433;).
- Incompatible goals and beliefs, which are from opposing behaviours. It is seen as the behaviour intended to obstruct and frustrate the achievement of some other person's goals and needs. It can further be viewed at the individual, group or organizational level (Mullins, 1999:816; Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:147; Mullins, 1993:658; Rue & Byars, 1992: 402).
- An expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who understand incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from the other party achieving their goals (Kistan, 2000:13).
- Incompatible behaviour between parties whose interests differ (Rahim, 1986:12; Dunham, 1984:343; Brown, 1983:4).
- A situation in which the condition, practices or goals for the different participants are inherently incompatible (Rahim, 1986:13).

- Difficulties that arise when people want different things (Thamae, 2002:1).
- The interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims and values and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals (Brevis, Vrba & de Klerk, 1997:345).

According to the above definitions, conflict is considered to result from incompatibility or opposition of goals, activities or interaction among two or more parties. Again, conflict is seen to have the concepts of scarcity: resources are scarce and people may be in competition in obtaining them. Linked to this idea is obstruction, where one party blocks the other in obtaining goals.

2.2.2 Conflict as a process

Some authors view conflict as:

- Some kind of process within which a number of stages may be identified such as latent, perceived, felt, manifest and conflict aftermath (Kistan, 2000:8; Rue & Byars, 1992:475).
- A process in which one party understands that another has taken or is about to take some action that will cause negative effects on its major interests (Greenberg & Baron, 2000; 382; Greenberg & Baron 1995:426).
- A process within which an intentional attempt is made by one party to stop the efforts of another by way of obstruction that will result in frustration of attaining objectives (Fox, Schwella & Wissink, 1991:174).

From the above definitions, conflict is not only seen as opposing interests between individual or groups but it is also viewed as recognition of such opposition. It is furthermore considered to be the belief by each side that the other party will thwart its interest. Finally, it is regarded as a cause for negative effects.

2.2.3 Conflict as disagreement

Another approach to conflict definition is that of disagreements: some authors described conflict as:

- A disagreement within the organizational setting between individuals or groups (Kistan, 2000:15; Mullins, 1999:346; Griffin, 1990:531; Van Fleet, 1988:444).
- A disagreement between people on substantial issues such as goals, resources, policies and procedure or emotional issues (Schermerhorn, 1996:240; Katz & Lawyer, 1994:17).
- An interactive state manifested in disagreements or differences within or between social entities (Rahim, 1986:21).
- A state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, countries etc. (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English p.285).

In conclusion, conflict has been defined in a variety of ways. However, for the purpose of this research, the term conflict will be used to mean any disagreement or, opposition between two or more parties where one party prevents the other by whatever means from carrying out their tasks, duties and objectives.

2.3 CONSTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS

Many of the above definitions are closely related to how different people view conflict. When considering the concept conflict, some people have a negative attitude. That is, they associate conflict with what is undesirable. On the other hand, conflict is also reviewed as positive. The next subsection of this research report therefore, deals with contrasting views people have about conflict.

Common definitions of conflict tend to be associated with negative features and situations which give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness or dysfunctional consequences. Conflict in schools is often assumed to be unnatural and undesirable. For this reason, conflict should be avoided because people see it as bad and representing a form of deviant behaviour, which should be controlled and changed (Rue & Byars, 1992:402). It is true that in some cases, conflict can have very upsetting or even tragic results for some people and adverse effects on school performance. On the contrary, conflict is also perfectly natural and should be expected to occur. Properly managed, conflict can have potentially positive results. Mullins (1993:659) and Kroon (1990:440) suggest that in certain situations, conflict can be welcomed or even encouraged. Some authors such as Brazelle (1999:1), Bartol and Martin (1991:578) and Everard and Morris (1990:96-7) seem to suggest that conflict can be constructive as well as destructive. Destructive conflict is dysfunctional and works to the disadvantage of the people and the organization. Its effects are often obvious. On the other hand, constructive conflict is functional and results in benefits for the people and the organization involved. However, it may be more difficult to detect.

Conflict can be regarded as constructive when it (Brazelle, 1999:1; Mullins, 1993:661; Rue & Byars, 1992:402; Bartol & Martin, 1991:578; Everard & Morris, 1990: 96-7):

- Increases creativity and innovation when people are highlighting problems and identifying possible solutions
- Increases involvement of individuals in important issues
- Forces open communication
- Provides an outlet for bottled-up tensions and feelings
- Enhances morale and cohesion among people
- Increases people's understanding of one another, helps individuals involved in a conflict learn and grow personally

On the other hand, conflict can be regarded as destructive when it (Brazelle, 1999:1; Schreuder, du Toit, Roesch & Shah, 1993:56; Mullins, 1993:660; Everard & Morris, 1990:96-7; Dunham, 1984:343-4):

- Distracts attention and needed energies from major tasks and issues
- Destroys people's enthusiasm and confidence and increases staff's turnover
- Reduces communication, cohesion and cooperation between individuals
- Increases group's differences in values and causes resistance rather than team work
- Breeds hostility and tension

Conflict, *per se*, is therefore not necessarily good or bad but it is an inevitable feature of school life. It is how it is dealt with that will make it either functional or dysfunctional. If managed intelligently, conflict can be a positive rather than a negative force (Hanson, 1979:177). Even if the principals have taken good care to avoid or suppress it, conflict will still occur because whenever two or more people come together, there are usually differences of opinion, values etc. The best thing for the principal is to properly identify the conflict situation and then make an attempt of confronting it and using it as a creative force for positive change. This way, he/she can help to minimize the destructive effects.

2.4 TYPES OF CONFLICT

Conflict can be analysed from many different perspectives. One approach is based on the party or parties involved, such as interpersonal, intrapersonal, intragroup, intergroup and interorganizational. In schools, most of these conflicts are generally not planned and they simply develop as a result of existing circumstances. Principals must therefore be prepared to deal with these various types of conflict situations that occur regularly in the schools. These five types of conflict are examined in more detail in the following section.

2.4.1 Intrapersonal Conflict

The intrapersonal conflict is a conflict within the individual and it is closely linked to someone's personality (Schermerhorn, 1996:241; Rue & Byars, 1992:403; Van der Westhuizen, 1991:304). Kroon (1990:443) further sees intrapersonal conflict as illustrative of different and opposing ideas, feelings and activities. Rahim (1986:16) adds that intrapersonal conflict occurs when an employee is asked to do certain duties and roles which do not match his /her expertise, interests, goals and values. Rue and Byars (1992: 403) seem to concur with Rahim by viewing this type of conflict as related to the need-drive goal motivational sequence. Often when individuals cannot get what they

want, they become stressed, anxious, frustrated and depressed (Kroon, 1990:44). As a result, people find a way of coping with such stressing situations. Rue and Byars (1992:403) suggest that the responses vary from absenteeism, turnover, aggression, excessive drinking and drug abuse and in their view, intrapersonal conflict is the most difficult form of conflict to analyse.

2.4.2 Interpersonal Conflict.

Interpersonal conflict occurs between two or more individuals in the same environment. Like intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict marks the presence of different, conflicting ideas, feelings and activities between people. Feelings such as anger, suspicion, fear and rejection are usually associated with this type of conflict (Kroon, 1990:444). According to Rue and Byars (1992:404), this level of conflict can be caused by personality conflicts and structural conflict. In describing the interpersonal conflict, Van der Westhuizen (1991:305) states that it is the most common and visible type in schools. Furthermore, he argues that interpersonal conflict is not immediately recognizable by an outsider. Schreuder et al. (1993:55) also see this type of conflict as a common and obvious form in schools. It is among pupils, teachers, between teachers and pupils, between teachers and principal, between teachers and parents and between teachers and the ministry of education staff. If interpersonal conflict is not managed effectively and in time, it can develop into intergroup conflict.

From the above discussion, it is evident that interpersonal conflict takes more than one person to occur. Most of the time, these people can either come from the same or different hierarchical levels. Rahim (1986:59) states that there should be an existence of incompatibility, disagreement or difference between two or more teachers, pupils etc. In schools, the origins of such conflicts can even lie outside the organization. Even though everyone has experience with interpersonal conflict, in schools, principals are commonly faced with this type of conflict and more often than not, they try to avoid it. However,

according to Schermerhorn (1996:241), they have to learn how to engage in interpersonal conflict without letting it become destructive, and they should also help others do the same.

2.4.3 Intragroup Conflict.

Intragroup conflict refers to conflict among members of a group or between two or more subgroups within a group (Rahim, 1986:59). This may arise due to incompatibility or disagreements between some or all members of a group. At times, it can occur because of scarcity of resources or the sharing of work activities or different objectives, values or perceptions (Kroon, 1990:444). In an organization such as a school, intragroup conflict plays a very crucial role to members of groups because they need to belong and if the conflict that occurs is not addressed, it is likely that it will bring disruption to the activities of the school and those involved.

2.4.4 Intergroup Conflict

Rahim (1986:17) and Schreuder et al. (1993:55) view intergroup conflict as a conflict between two or more groups within an organization. Rue and Byars (1992:406), on the other hand, see it as a result of the structure within the organization and it may relatively be independent of the individuals occupying the roles within the structure. Intergroup conflict often occurs in two forms: vertical and horizontal (Schermerhorn, 1996:241; Schreuder et. al., 1993:55). This means that conflict may arise between groups at the same level in the hierarchy or between groups at different levels. For example, such a conflict may be between teachers and top management in a school, between different subject groups and between the pupils and the personnel. This type of conflict is inevitable in very complex organizations. It is often regarded as necessary because it may lead to creative tension, which might result in more productivity and contributions and high standard work (Schreuder et al., 1993:56). However, if unmanaged, intergroup

conflict may be destructive. For instance, it can result in interdependent groups refusing to cooperate. Intergroup conflict, like the other types of conflict, is very essential to the growth of any organization. For the purpose of this research, it is described as any form of disagreement between groups in the organization. The principal has to look out for this conflict and manage it to bring about constructive benefits.

2.4.5 Interorganisational Conflict

Interorganisational conflict involves disagreements between two or more organizations. This level of conflict stresses the significance of the environment in which the school operates (Mullins, 1999:346; Schermerhorn, 1996:241). It can for example be a conflict between a school and its suppliers or competitors. The principals have to be aware that certain functions within the community and the other organizations outside their schools do not use schools to help achieve their specific goals.

Of all the types of conflict described above, interpersonal is very common in schools and it can also be easily detected. However, whatever the source of a specific type of conflict is, conflict does not necessarily have to be worthless or damaging. It all depends on how principals handle the conflict. If they handle it unskillfully, conflict can be destructive and this would be dangerous to the school and individuals concerned. Schools in which there is little disagreement generally fail in competitive environments. It is understood that the negative attitude towards conflict could result from a lack of understanding of the causes of conflict.

2.5 CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Careful examination of literature seems to suggest a great variety of causes of conflict. According to the definitions above (cf.2.2), conflict involves the presence of perception of opposing interests. Yet this condition, by itself, is not necessary and enough for the

actual conflict to occur. Open confrontations sometimes do not develop even though incompatible interests exist. Sometimes, conflict still arises even in the absence of opposing interests (Greenberg & Baron, 1995:430). It is clear therefore that there are various factors and conditions that contribute to the occurrence of conflict. To arrive at a more comprehensive view of these causes, this research will classify the causes in main categories and then have them distinguished into a number of sub-factors under every main category. In this way, Greenberg and Baron (1995:430) distinguish four main categories namely organizational structure, individual and group differences, ambiguities and authority structure. Each of these main causes of conflict and sub-factors will be dealt with in more detail.

- Organisational structure: Task interdependence, scarce resources and departmentalization and specialization
- Individual and group differences: Personality differences, differences in values, perceptions and expectations
- Ambiguities: Role ambiguities and communication problems
- Authority structure: Departmental policies and power struggle

Each of the above causes of conflict will now be discussed.

2.5.1 Organisational Structure

2.5.1.1 Task Interdependence

While Anstey (1999: 24), argues that task interdependence is when either an individual or a group is heavily dependent on another to complete their duties, Griffin (1990: 532) on

the other hand, sees it as either sequential or reciprocal. He explains that in sequential interdependence, work is passed from one department to another. Conflict may then arise if the first group is turning out too much work, which will make the second group fall behind. Various individuals and departments in most organisations depend on others for performance of their own jobs. They receive input from others and cannot proceed without it. When such input comes late or is delivered incomplete or in unsatisfactory manner, conflict may result (Greenberg & Baron, 1995:430).

2.5.1.2 Scarce Resources

Most often, organisational resources are limited. Individuals and groups often have to fight for their resources. At school for instance, these limitations can be allocation of the budget or the cutbacks in the budget, sharing classroom etc. It is clear, therefore, that possibilities for conflict expand when there are limited resources. Mullins (1993:66) backs this by saying that “the greater the limitations of resources, the greater the potential for conflict.”

2.5.1.3 Departmentalisation and Specialisation

Some organizations, including schools are divided into separate departments with specialized functions. Because of the familiarity with the way in which the members of the department perform their duties, they sort of concentrate on the achievement of their own goals. When departments need to work together on certain issues, this becomes a frequent source of conflict.

2.5.2 Individual and Group Differences

2.5.2.1 Personality Differences

According to Griffin (1990:532), conflict may arise from interpersonal dynamics and the most general situation is the personality clash. He describes personality differences as a situation when two people distrust each other's motives, dislike one another, or for some reason simply cannot get along. For instance, there could be different personalities of the extrovert versus the introvert, the optimist versus the pessimist and active versus the less active. Whetten, Cameron & Woods, (1996:11-12) argue that individuals bring attitudes to their roles in the organizations. Their values and needs have been shaped by different socialization processes, depending on their cultural and family traditions, level of education, breadth of experience, etc.

2.5.2.2 Differences in values, perceptions and expectations

These are conflicts stemming from incompatible goals, interests, needs and expectations (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995:284-8). They further argue that since people are different, they will usually see things differently because their values and needs and how they view the real world have been influenced by different backgrounds. This therefore, will result in their interpretation of issues, ideas and expectations differing a great deal. According to Whetten, et al. (1996:12) and Stone (1999:5), this is the most difficult conflict to resolve because involved people normally become highly emotional with the believe that their value systems are being challenged, when other people do not agree with them. To them, such a disagreement stops being about who is factually correct and easily turns to who is morally right.

2.5.3 Ambiguities

2.5.3.1 Role Ambiguities

A role is the expected pattern of behaviours associated with people occupying a particular position within the organizational structure (Mullins, 1993:661). In practice, people may not behave as expected of them by their roles. Problems of role incompatibility or ambiguity often arise from inadequate or inappropriate definition of responsibilities and often, this leaves people uncertain of who is responsible for various tasks or duties (Greenberg & Baron, 2000:383). When this occurs, each involved person disclaims responsibility and conflict can quickly develop. It is possible therefore that the more clearly the organizational responsibilities are laid out, the less likely for conflicts to occur. In addition, Houghton, Mchugh and Morgan (1975:271) view role ambiguity and role dissatisfaction as being related to more basic organizational variables such as growth rate, organizational level and hierarchical differences. For instance, slower rates of organizational growth and of opportunities for promotion increase role dissatisfaction. At the same time, heavily emphasized hierarchical differences in for example, status, power and rewards can be responsible for some conflict because these factors tend to activate and to legitimate individual aspiration for increased status and power.

2.5.3.2 Communication Problems

Conflicts can arise from deficiencies in the organisation's information system. An important message may not be received, instructions may be misinterpreted, or decision-makers may come to different conclusions because they used different data bases (Whetten et al., 1996:12). Squelch and Lemmer (1994:148) and Greenberg and Baron (2000:384), are in unison and point out that problems in communication can further result from distortions that can either be due to incomplete or inaccurate information. So people act on what they thought they heard and often, a conflict can occur. However, according to Whetten et al., (1996:12), conflicts based on misinformation or misunderstanding tend to be factual in the sense that clarifying previous messages or

obtaining additional information generally resolves the problem. They add that this type of conflict is not only very common in organizations, but is also easy to resolve.

2.5.4 Authority Structure

2.5.4.1 Departmental Policies

If policies and practices in operation are such that people perceive them as being unjust, Mullins (1993:661) suggests that this can lead to tension and conflict. Policies should try to be reasonable and clear. For instance, people should not be subjected to extreme time pressure or unreasonable deadlines. Again, reward and punishment systems should not only be fair on paper but must be seen to be so, even in practice. A policy should remain the same to all employees and failure to observe this, can result into a conflict.

2.5.4.2 Power Struggle

According to Mabey, Salaman and Stoney (2001:511), organizations are structures of power. There are continuous struggles over a question of purpose, or interests. Unequal distribution of power and status may lead to frustration and eventually conflict because people who do not have any power might try to get it by force. Power struggle can be caused by lack of shared and legitimated information and this gives rise to mistrust in relationships (Anstey, 1999:26).

From the preceding discussion, it appears that the causes of conflict are numerous and varied. However, it appears that many conflict cases arise out of an organisational structure, personality differences and communication problems. Awareness of and insight into the causes of conflict puts the educational leaders in a better position to manage conflict. The next sub-section thus focuses on conflict management.

2.6 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AS THE TASK OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

According to Kistan, (2000:38), there is very little research carried out in the field of conflict management. He attributes this to the fact that either the researchers have no fundamental research ability or knowledge of the field. This author argues that the research needs to go beyond mediation and negotiation to fundamental interaction in conflict situation. Previously, the principals only required professional training and experience to run the school. The view was that a competent teacher with a certain number of years of experience and the right personality, was well equipped for the task and demands of being a school principal. However, as a result of an increasing complexity of the school as an organization, principals are subjected to the changing demands, especially in respect of their management abilities. Inevitably, managerial training is now expected in addition to educational training (Mampuru & Spoelstra, 1994:14).

When any one or more causes of conflict are present, an informed principal expects conflict to occur. If conflict can yield benefits as well as costs (cf. 2.3), the key task facing school principals then, is to manage the occurrence of conflict. In short, the overall goal should not be to eliminate conflict but to minimize its potential costs. For principals to be able to do this, they need to be thoroughly trained in conflict management. Maurer (1996:15) warns that no meaningful teaching and learning can take place if the school is constantly hampered by conflict. According to Fox, et al., (1991:175), one of the roles that may be attributed to a successful leader is that of a manager. Kistan, (2000:41) suggests that the logical and sensible way of managing conflict will depend on the nature and cause of conflict as well as conflict management styles of a school principal. The next section focuses on conflict management styles.

2.6.1 Conflict Handling Styles

A careful study of literature reveals that there are five conflict management styles. According to Schermerhorn (1996:243), Van der Westhuizen (1991:642) and Frase and Hetzel (1990:22), conflict is dealt with on the basis of cooperative dimension, which means the degree to which one attempts to satisfy the other party’s concerns and/or assertive dimension, which is the desire to satisfy one’s own needs and concerns. For principals to manage conflict and ensure effective functioning of schools, they have to have some comprehension of these two dimensions. There seems to be a consensus among certain authors that when these two dimensions of cooperativeness and assertiveness interact, they produce five distinct styles of handling conflict. These are avoiding, accommodating/smoothing, compromising, competing/power and collaborative/problem-solving as shown in Figure 2.1 (Greenberg & Baron, 2000:383; Brazelle, 1999:3-4; Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995:288; Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:150-1).

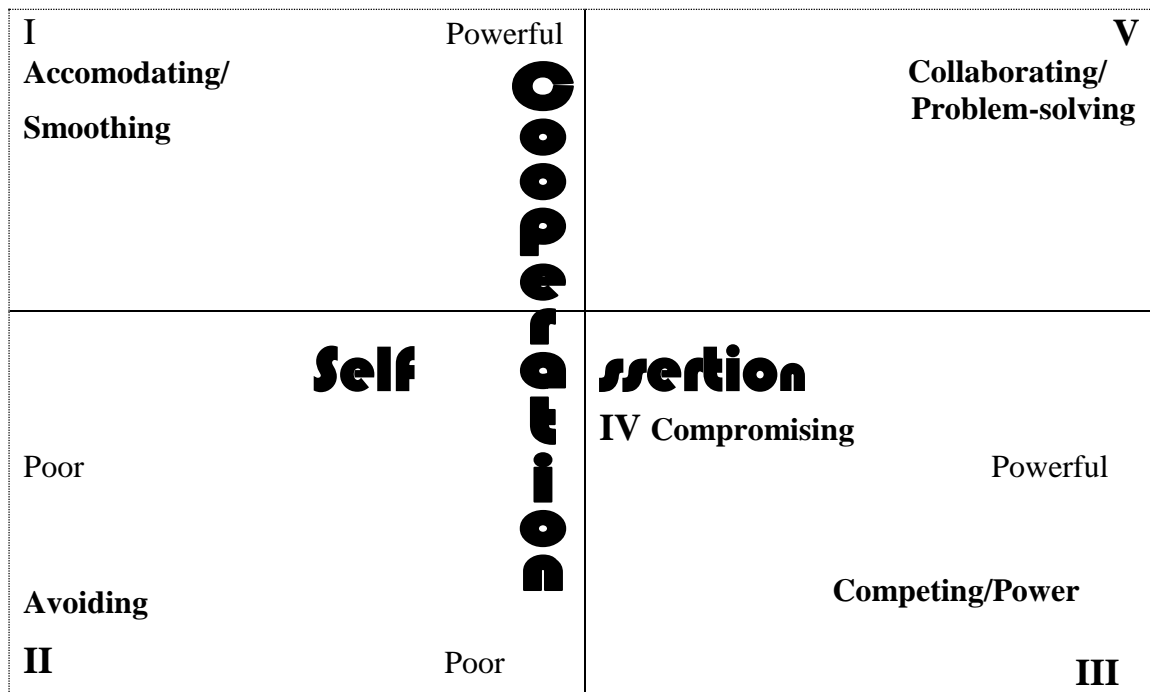


Figure 2.1 Two – dimensional model of conflict behaviour
Source: Adapted from Brazelle, 1999:3

2.6.1.1 Avoiding

The avoiding style involves either sidestepping or postponing a problem or simply withdrawing from the situation with the hope that the problem will go away or will not become disruptive or pretending that it does not exist. Thus, this style results in a lose-lose situation (Schermerhorn, 1996:243; Bartol & Martin, 1991:580; Everard & Morris, 1990:109-110). Frase & Hetzel (1990:22) add that this style is unassertive and uncooperative and most times it does not address the conflict. The strength of avoiding is that it allows time for conflict to unfold, while its main weakness is its provision of a temporary solution that dodges the underlying problem. According to Kreitner and Kinicki (1995:288) and Rosenfeld and Wilson (1990:146) avoidance can be used when:

- Unimportant issues are being handled.
- The costs of confrontation are far more serious than the benefits of resolving the conflict.
- Time is needed to calm down when people are angry.
- An immediate decision is not needed.
- More information is required.
- There is no chance of winning in a competition.
- Others can resolve the conflict more effectively.

2.6.1.2 Accommodating/Smoothing

When accommodating, an individual sacrifices his/her concerns to satisfy those of another person. An attempt is being made to smooth over differences in order to maintain good relations. This is like producing a win-lose situation in which one person obtains what he/she wants, while the other achieves nothing except conflict resolution (Schermerhorn, 1996:243; Squelch & Lemmer, 1995:151). This style is unassertive but highly cooperative. It is mostly strong in encouraging cooperation. However, its weakness lies in failing to permanently solve the cause of the problem. Squelch and Lemmer (1994:151) and Brazelle (1999:5) suggest that the accommodating style should be used when:

- Issues are of relative importance to the other person and one wishes to build credit for oneself.
- There is need to preserve the relationship.
- One discovers that he/she is in the wrong.
- To allow subordinates to develop by learning from mistakes.
- Credit is needed for future situations.

2.6.1.3 Compromising

In compromising, both cooperation and assertion are moderate. The solution to the problem partially satisfies both parties. Here, both parties have to give up something they value hence it is called a lose-lose situation. The focus, according to Squelch and

Lemmer (1994:151) is on reaching common ground rather than quality solutions. The good thing about this style is that there is no real loser but at the same time, it suppresses the creative problem-solving skills. Also, if it is overused, it leads to no definite conclusion. Whetten et al. (1996:28), Kreitner and Kinicki (1995:288) and Rosenfeld and Wilson (1990:146) point out that compromising is appropriate when:

- The issues being dealt with are very complex and moderately important.
- Parties involved have opposite goals or possess equal power.
- A temporary settlement is necessary for complex issues.
- When involved groups have reached a stalemate.
- There is enough time for negotiation.
- Collaboration and or compromising do not work.

2.6.1.4 Competing/Power

Competing involves an attempt to satisfy one's own concerns at the expense of the other party's expense. It is often an aggressive strategy where one other party tries to overpower the other by using coercive and reward power. In addition, this style is not only uncooperative and highly assertive but it also encourages a win-lose competition (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995:288; Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:150). The strength of the competing style lies in its speed, and its weakness is that it often causes resentment. However, Whetten et al, (1996:27) and Squelch and Lemmer (1994:150) point out that there are some situations in which the competing style may be necessary and this is when:

- A conflict involves values and one is forced to defend his/her position that is considered correct.

- There is emergency that requires quick and decisive action.
- Unpopular actions must be enforced for long-term survival and effectiveness of the organization.
- A superior-subordinate relationship is involved.
- Maintenance of good relationship is not important.
- The problem at hand is minor.

2.6.1.5 Collaborating/Problem- solving

According to Brazelle (1999:4), this style is both assertive and cooperative and it involves an attempt to work with a person to arrive at a mutually fully satisfactory solution to both parties. This produces a win-win situation in which the concerned parties get most of what they want. The collaborating style focuses on identifying the underlying causes of the conflict, sharing information to explore each other's interests and also generating creative solutions which are considered to be mutually beneficial (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995:288). Resolving the problem in this way can lessen competition for resources or unhealthy confrontation (Frase & Hetzel, 1990:22). The strength of collaborating is found in the lasting effects it has since it aims at resolving underlying problem and not just symptoms. While its strength is to encourage involved parties to trust each other and work together, its weakness is that it is very time consuming (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1995:288). Finally, it equips problem solvers with the skills they need to govern themselves and thus they become empowered. Rosenfeld and Wilson (1990:146) and Whetten et al. (1996:28) suggest that collaboration is useful when:

- Complex issues are misunderstood.
- The goal is to learn more skills.
- Commitment and agreement are needed above all else.
- There is need to generate creative solution.
- Good relationship has to be maintained between peers.
- An integrative solution has to be sought when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised.

From the above it is obvious that there are five conflict-handling styles. Although collaboration is often regarded as the best overall style, each style as noted above, may be useful in specific situations. Apparently, these techniques should be applied in combination rather than singularly. For this reason, principals should first examine each conflict situation carefully and then respond appropriately. The principals should use a contingency approach whereby the choice of a conflict-handling style is influenced by a situation, which is the basic source of the conflict. In this way there is no method which is appropriate for all conflict situations.

2.7 GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

The present and future school principals are faced with serious challenges as far as the management of a school and especially conflict management is concerned. As no single style of conflict management is suited to all situations, principals must be made aware of the alternative styles and the circumstances in which they may be used. This will enable them to deal with conflict when it arises. The art of conflict management involves maximizing constructive conflict and minimizing destructive conflict. To achieve mastery of this art, the principal must understand the whole concept of conflict.

But knowledge alone is not enough the principal must be equipped with proper conflict management skills for their effective daily dealings with conflict.

According to Whetten et al. (1996:11), some managers see problems as time-consuming and stressful and therefore, do not like them. They tend to get rid of them as soon as possible and more often than not choose the first reasonable solution that comes to mind, which unfortunately, might not be the best one. They call this approach rational problem-solving and suggest that it can be used when the problems faced are straight-forward, when alternatives are readily available, when there is relevant as well as sufficient and accurate information and when there is existence of clear standards against which to judge the correctness of a solution (1996:20). Rational problem-solving involves four distinct sequential steps: definition of the problem, generation of alternative solution, evaluation and selection of alternative and lastly, implementation and follow up on the solution. These four steps as shown in Figure 2.2 will be discussed in more detail.

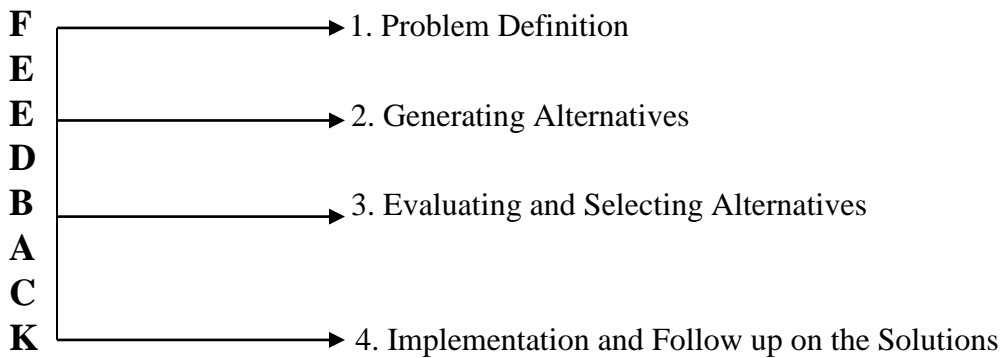


Figure 2.2

2.7.1 Rational Problem-solving

Step 1: Problem Definition

Problem definition involves looking into the situation in order to focus on the real problem, not just its symptoms. To define the problem more accurately, a wide search for information is required before any action is taken (Whetten et al., 1996:12). They continue to suggest that good problem definition should have some of the following characteristics:

- Factual information should be differentiated from opinion or speculation.
- Everyone involved with the problem should be consulted.
- The problem should be stated clearly.
- The problem definition should show whose problem it is.

Step 2: Generating Alternatives

This step involves generating as many alternative solutions as possible by delaying to make selection of one solution until a number of choices have been made. Whetten et al. (1996:14) and Anstey (1999:135) agree that good alternative generation should have the following attributes:

- All alternatives should be proposed before evaluation is allowed.
- As many relevant individuals as possible should propose the alternatives.
- The atmosphere during the process should be positive.
- The alternatives generated should be both short and long term potential solutions.

Step 3: Evaluating and Selecting Alternatives

Whetten et al. (1996:15) states that the evaluation and selection step involves discreet weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed alternatives before making a final selection. Judgement of the best alternative is first based on whether such an alternative meets the standards set for the solution to the problem. Secondly, it is based on whether they fit within the organizational constraints. Thirdly, such an alternative should be based on whether all involved individuals especially the problem owner will accept and are happy to work with the alternatives suggested. Finally, it is based on whether the implementation of the alternative is likely to solve the problem without causing other unanticipated problems. Anstey (1999:145), Whetten et al., (1996:16) and Niemann (1995:4) propose the following characteristics for a good evaluation and selection:

- Alternatives should be evaluated according to a satisfactory standard, which includes among others their feasibility, functionality and effectiveness.
- Since evaluation of alternatives occurs systematically, all alternatives should be evaluated. The exception to this rule can be if the problem owner is satisfied with one alternative, there is no need to assess all the ideas.
- Alternatives are evaluated in terms of the goals of the organization and the individuals involved.
- Alternatives are evaluated in terms of their effects in the wider world.

Step 4: Implementing and Follow up on the Solutions

The last step is to implement and follow up on the solution. Anstey (1999:145) says that a solution is not a solution until it has been effectively enacted. Implementing any solution requires sensitivity to possible resistance from those who will be affected. Effective implementation also requires some follow up to check on implementation,

prevent negative side-effects and make sure of the solution of the problem. Follow up does not only ensure effective implementation, but it also serves as feedback and as a tool to provide information to be used in the future to improve problem-solving (Whetten et al., 1996:17-18). Niemann (1995:8), Carnell (1995:43-44), and Evans (1990:221) suggest the following characteristics for effective implementation and follow up:

- Implementation should occur at the right time and in the proper sequence according to a well - constructed action plan.
- The implementation process should include opportunities for feedback.
- Implementation should be supported by the whole team, all of which should have been involved in the process where possible.
- Monitoring of the implementation should be set up with short, medium and long - term goals clearly written out.
- The success of evaluation should be based on problem solution, not on side effects.
- Feedback should indicate whether the implemented solution is effective or whether one of the steps or all of them have not been dealt with sufficiently in which case, those certain steps should be repeated.

However, the rationale problem-solving model is not always effective. This could be attributed to a number of reasons. For example, it could either be because of the nature of the problem itself or the unavailability of sufficient and accurate information. When this happens, it means a new way of thinking may be required; where many definitions might be needed and alternatives never considered before may have to be generated. This would call for creative problem-solving and it is discussed next.

2.7.2 Creative Problem-solving

Creative problem-solving is sometimes difficult due to the conceptual blocks that people set up. This constrains the way the problem is defined and limits the number of alternative solutions thought to be relevant. To overcome these, creative problem-solving techniques can be used to improve the first two steps of the rational problem-solving process, namely: improving problem identification and generating more alternatives (Whetten et al.1996: 51-52).

Step 1: Improving Problem Definition

This is similar to the first step in rational problem-solving but the difference is that there are hints that can be applied to help individuals see the problems in the alternative ways so that their definitions are not very narrowly limited. Whetten et al., (1996:54) suggest the following tips for improving and expanding definition:

- *Make the strange familiar and the familiar strange*

A well-known technique used for improving creative problem-solving is called ‘synetics’ (Whetten et al (1996:54). It means that the individual puts something not known in terms of something known and vice versa. They continue to say that the approach helps with new insights and perspectives. This is how it works: First, a definition of a problem is formed (making the strange familiar). Then this definition is distorted or changed in some way (making the familiar strange). These helps to connect what one is less sure about, which is the original problem, to what one is more sure about (metaphor). When analyzing the metaphor, one may identify characteristics of the problem that too were not clear before.

- *Elaborate on the definition*

Whetten et al. (1996:57-8) argue that there are a variety of ways to enlarge, change or replace a problem definition once it has been specified. One way is to generate at least

two alternative hypotheses for every problem definition. For instance, the idea is to either specify at least two reasonable definitions of the problem in addition to the one originally accepted or to think in plural terms rather than in singular terms. Another way to elaborate definitions is to use a question check-list. This simply refers to questions planned to help individuals think of choices to their accepted definitions.

- ***Reverse the definition***

A third instrument for improving and expanding problem definition is to reverse the definition of the problem. This means turning the problem upside down, inside out and back to front (Whetten et al., 1996:59). The idea is to reverse the way in which one thinks of the problem.

All the three techniques above help to generate alternative definitions in order to broaden one's perspectives and overcome conceptual blocks and to produce relevant solutions.

Step 2: Generate More Alternatives

Once the problem has been clearly defined in a way that is acceptable to the involved parties, the search for solutions can begin. The idea is to generate as many alternatives as possible. Several methods have been suggested in the solution search process. For example, brainstorming can be used and Anstey (1999:142) describes it as a technique whereby people are asked in small groups to generate as many solutions as they can, someone recording these as they are suggested. Whetten et al. (1996:62), outlines other techniques that can help improve people's ability to generate many varied alternatives. These are:

- ***Defer judgement on any proposal***

Anstey (1999:142) argues that evaluation restricts idea generation and constrains proposal. The idea is for people to make suggestions freely without premature

evaluation. According to Whetten et al., (1996:62), the most common method of generating alternatives is the brainstorming technique. They continue to suggest four rules that govern brainstorming and these are:

- No evaluation of any idea is permitted; this is to allow all the involved people to generate ideas rather than to defend them.
- Also, people are free to have even the wildest of ideas.
- The idea is not to concentrate on quality but on quantity.
- Participants should build on or modify the poor ideas so as to make them good. Only when ideas collection has been exhausted can they be evaluated.

- ***Building on the current alternatives***

One technique that can be used to build on each other's proposals is what Whetten et al. (1996:64) calls sub-division. This simply means that the problem is divided into smaller parts that can easily be managed. The point is that, by identifying the sub-components of any problem, far more alternatives can be generated than by trying to solve the problem as a whole. This technique therefore improves problem-solving by increasing the speed at which alternatives can be generated and selected.

- ***Combine unrelated attributes***

According to Whetten et al., (1996:66), this final technique focuses on helping involved parties expand alternatives by forcing the integration of seemingly unrelated elements. They suggest a relational algorithm technique, which involves applying connecting words that force a relationship between two elements in a problem. The relational words in the problem statement are removed and replaced with other relational words to see if new

ideas for alternative solutions can be identified. By connecting the two elements of the problem in different ways, new possibilities for problem-solution can be formulated.

2.8 CONCLUSION

From the literature overview, it becomes evident that a score of authors has defined conflict in a variety of ways. Conflict is both constructive as well as destructive and it depends on how it is dealt with which will make it either positive or negative. Furthermore, it appears that there are several types of conflict and these are interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, intragroup and interorganisational. Additionally, there are many causes of conflict and it is important that these causes be analysed and understood because without this, it would be difficult to deal with conflict. It also appears that there are varied ways of handling a conflict situation and the principals should be able to judge the situation so that they can use an appropriate method of resolving a problem. There are two approaches to solving problems: the first is rational problem-solving and it involves definition of the problem, generation of alternative solution, evaluation and selection of alternatives and implementation and follow up on the solution. The second approach is the creative problem-solving. It is used to improve the first two steps of the rational problem- solving.

The next chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of the research.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The assembly of literature in chapter 2 formed the bedrock of the structured questionnaire that was used to probe and gain insights into the feelings, attitudes and perceptions of principals as far as conflict and conflict management are concerned. This chapter therefore aims at presenting, analyzing and interpreting the results of an investigation done to determine the present state of principals training in conflict management in the Maseru town high schools.

3.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The main task of the educational researcher is to describe, explain, generalize and interpret educational phenomenon based on empirical evidence. The purpose of quantitative research is to make objective descriptions of a limited set of phenomenon and also to determine whether the phenomenon can be controlled through certain interventions. Thus, initial quantitative studies of a research problem typically involve a precise description of the phenomenon and a search for pertinent variables and their interrelationships. Ultimately, a theory is formulated to account for the empirical findings (Kistan, 2000:51).

Deductive reasoning, which is fundamental to quantitative research, assumes that a researcher should be able to move from general kinds of statements to particular ones. These statements are regarded as objective and independent of human experience and it is a means of linking theory with observations made. The main principle underlying

deductive reasoning is that generalizations or theories emanating from research maybe applicable to a larger number of cases or situations (Mouton, 2001:153). For instance, if a research is carried out to determine the current state of teachers' job satisfaction from a random sample of schools, the results should be generalisable to all teachers throughout the country. According to Kistan (2000: 51), the aim of such conclusions is to come up with laws that are applicable to similar situations or populations represented by the sample investigated.

In the light of the above, the main objectives of the empirical research were:

- To determine what are the conflict management practices of the high school principals in the Maseru town.
- To give an exposition of the data collected by means of a questionnaire.
- To interpret the data collected in view of the theoretical study and give recommendations for improving the conflict management strategies of the principals.

3.3 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

3.3.1 The questionnaire

A self-constructed questionnaire was used to gather information from principals of 10 high schools in Maseru town. However, two principals could not complete the questionnaire, so they delegated their deputies to do the work. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: Part A was concerned with the biographical information of the respondents such as age, gender, experience and qualifications, while Part B was concerned with conflict and conflict management in schools.

A target group of 10 high schools in Maseru town were selected out of a total of 16. This represents 63% of the total. These schools were chosen for their accessibility and the fact that they are a mixture of government and church owned. The researcher's supervisor wrote a letter to the principals introducing the researcher and the study being undertaken. After this, the researcher personally went to the schools to distribute questionnaires to the principals and these were collected from the concerned schools. All ten questionnaires were recovered and the information was used. The responses were considered adequate to make valid deductions pertaining to the target group.

3.4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

3.4.1 Introduction

The population relevant to this study comprised of the principals in the Maseru high schools and their biographical details are represented below.

3.4.2 The biographic information of the respondents

Table 3.1: The biographic information of the respondents

Biographic Variable	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
1. Age		
30 years or less	1	10
31-40	1	10
41-50	1	10
51-60	5	50
61 and above	2	20
2. Gender		
Male	6	60
Female	4	40

3. Teaching Experience		
10 years or less	2	20
11 to 20 years	2	20
21 to 30 years	3	30
More than 30 years	3	30
4. Principal Experience		
5 to 10 years	6	60
11 and above	4	40
5. Professional Qualifications	Responses (N=9)	
STC.	1	11
B.A.Ed	6	67
B.Ed. Honors	1	11
M.Ed	1	11
6. Academic Qualifications	Responses (N=6)	
Matric	1	17
B.A.	3	50
B.Com	2	33

Table 3.1 reveals that the majority of respondents:

- ❑ Are older than 50 years (70%)
- ❑ Are male (60%)
- ❑ Have more than 10 years teaching experience (80%)
- ❑ Have more than 5 years experience as a principal (100%)

- Are in possession of a B. A. Ed. Degree (67%) as highest professional qualification
- Are in possession of a Bachelors degree (B. Com = 33% and B.A. = 50%) as highest academic qualification

3.4.3 Conflict and conflict management in schools

Question 1.1 was intended to determine if high school principals experience conflict situations in their schools. The responses to this question are summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Establishing the extent to which respondents experience conflict

Responses	Responses (N = 9)	
	No.	%
Never	0	0
Seldom	2	22
Sometimes	2	22
Frequently	5	56
Always	0	0
Total	9	100

Responses to this question indicate that all the nine respondents experience conflict in their school. However, the majority of the respondents frequently experience conflict. This point is in support of the fact that conflict is inevitable and a natural part of life and therefore a natural part of school life (cf. 1.1 & 2.1).

Question 1.2 was aimed at finding out how the respondents view conflict. Five respondents (55%) see conflict as constructive and therefore as a positive force in schools that can result in benefiting the people and the organizations involved. Only four respondents think conflict is destructive (cf. 2.3). Normally, most people develop a negative attitude towards conflict when they have had bad experiences with it.

Question 1.3 was asked to find out how the respondents immediately respond when they are confronted with a conflict situation. All the respondents said that they responded calmly to a conflict as opposed to being hostile. This proves that the respondents do not view conflict as totally bad. Conflict is perfectly natural and should be expected to occur (cf.2.3).

Question 1.4 (a) was asked to provide information about the types of conflict respondents experience in their schools. Their responses are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Types of conflict

Types of conflict	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
Interpersonal	9	90
Intragroup	8	80
Intergroup	5	50
Interorganisation	2	20

The results in Table 3.3 indicate that respondents experience all types of conflict. However, the most common types of conflict are interpersonal and intragroup. This proves Van der Westhuizen' theory that interpersonal conflict is the most common type

of conflict in schools. There will usually be an existence of incompatibility, disagreement or differences between two or more people (cf. 2.4.2). It is likely therefore that conflict will occur between people, more so, because conflict is a part of most every interpersonal relationship. Schools are made up of both formal and informal groups within the school and outside groups interested in the schools, it is no mistake therefore that schools are a fertile ground for conflict (cf.1.1). Interorganisation conflict is the least experienced conflict and this probably could be because of the environment in which the schools operate (cf.2.4.5).

Question 1.4 (b) was aimed at eliciting information about the people among whom interpersonal conflict is experienced. The responses to this question are summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: People who experience interpersonal conflict

People	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
Learner and learner	7	70
Learner and teacher	7	70
Learner and principal	2	20
Teacher and principal	8	80
Teacher and parent	3	30
Teacher and department of education staff member	1	10
Principal and parent	3	30
Department head and principal	5	50
Department head and teacher	7	70
Department head and learner	1	10
Teacher and teacher	7	70
Chairperson and board of Governors	0	0
Deputy and principal	1	10
Deputy and learner	1	10
Deputy and teacher	1	10

According to Table 3.4 above, the majority of respondents experience conflict among the following: teacher and principal, learner and learner, learner and teacher, teacher and teacher and department head and teacher. This is more so because of the amount of interaction that exist between all these groups. On the other hand, there is very little conflict between learner and principal, teacher and parent, principal and parent and very limited conflict between department head and learner. There is a limited amount of interaction between the latter groups and this may be why the chances of a conflict situation are not as great.

Question 1.4 (c) was intended to find out among which groups of people the respondents experience conflict. The responses to this question are given in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Respondents' experience of intragroup conflict

Groups	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
Minority groups	3	30
Teachers	4	40
Board of Governors	1	10
Sports committee	3	30
Cultural committee	1	10
Non teaching staff	2	20
Student groups	5	50

The above Table reveals that the respondents experience conflict among all the groups, but the student and teacher groups are in the majority. This is probably due to the fact that these two are the most important groups that make up a school. Compared to the other groups above, they are not only many in number in a school but they are also the most active, so there is bound to be some conflicts caused by either incompatibility of goals, competition over scarce resources or even interdependent tasks.

Question 1.4 (d) was aimed at determining the respondents' experience of intergroup conflict. Table 3.6 gives the results of the analysis.

Table 3.6: Respondents' experience of intergroup conflict

Groups	Responses (N =10)	
	No.	%
Teachers and school management team	3	30
Learners and teachers	7	70
Learners and learners	6	60
Learners and parents	1	10
Learners and support staff	2	20
Teachers and teachers	4	40
Teachers and subject advisors	3	30
Teachers and inspectors	0	0
Teachers and parents	4	40
Teachers and support staff	1	10
Support staff and parents	0	0
Support staff and school management	0	0
Support staff and support staff	1	10
School management and Board of Governors	2	20
Teachers and Board of Governors	3	30

Table 3.6 illustrates that the respondents experience conflict caused by various groups. However, the majority experience conflict between learners and teachers and then learners and learners. One may add that this is not surprising because most interaction in school is between learners themselves and learners and teachers. It is worth noting that there is no conflict at all between teachers and inspectors, support staff and parents, support staff and school management simply because their interaction is quite limited.

Question 1.4 (e) was asked to provide information about the organizations the respondents experience conflict with. The responses are shown below.

Table 3.7: The organizations between which respondents experience conflict

Organizations	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
School management team from your school and principal from other schools	0	0
Learners from your school with learners from other schools	7	70
Teachers from your school and other schools	2	20
Parents of children in your school and those from other schools	0	0
Support staff from organization with support staff from other school	0	0
School management team and TSD/TSC	1	10

According to the responses above, respondents experience conflict mostly between learners from their school with those from other schools. There is however, a limited conflict between teachers from their school and teachers from other schools.

Question 1.5 was asked to determine the factors that cause conflict situations in respondents' schools. The responses to this question are given in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Factors causing conflict

Factors N = 10	Never 1	Seldom 2	Some- times 3	Fre- quently 4	Always 5	Average Grading	Rank order
Task interdependence	1	1	1	1	0	1,0	9
Scarce resources	0	2	2	3	1	2,7	2
Departmentalisation and specialization	3	0	4	1	0	1,9	7
Differences in values	1	1	4	3	0	2,7	2
Perceptions and expectations	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Role ambiguities	2	0	3	3	0	2,2	5
Communication problems	1	2	1	6	0	3,2	1
Ambiguous departmental policies	4	2	2	1	0	1,8	8
Top down management structure	2	0	5	2	0	2,5	4
School management imposes their decisions unilaterally	4	3	1	2	0	2,1	6

Table 3.8 reveals that although there are a variety of causes of conflict, the biggest cause is bad communication.

Question 1.6 was aimed at determining the conflict management style(s) respondents normally use when they are faced with a conflict situation. The responses to this question indicate that six respondents (67%) rely heavily on communicating the problem with the involved party. Though this is a good strategy, it is but one of the many styles of handling conflict. This therefore confirms that the respondents have no variety of conflict management styles and it is something already dangerous in itself because they should be able to vary their styles of managing conflict according to a situation at hand. On the other hand, three respondents (33%) are uncertain about the conflict management

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styles they use. One can conclude that these respondents have very little or no

knowledge of different conflict management styles. This therefore means that there is urgent need to expose them to different styles of managing conflict.

3.4.4 Training needs in management of conflict

Question 2(a) was aimed at finding out if the respondents received training in conflict management as part of initial teacher training. It was imperative to ask this question because the practice is that the Lesotho teacher-training institutions concentrate on the content to be taught, so when teachers get to positions of management, they struggle because they have not had any prior training (cf.2.6). The responses to this question are summarized below.

Table 3.9: Initial training in conflict management

Responses	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
Yes	1	10
No	9	90

Table 3.9 confirms that training in conflict management is currently an issue of major concern among the respondents. An overwhelming majority of respondents seemingly have not received any training in conflict management when they trained as teachers. This further makes training in conflict management imperative and urgent.

Question 2(b) was intended to determine whether respondents received any formal

further training in management of conflict. The results of the responses to this question are analyzed below.

Table 3.10: Further formal training in management of conflict

Responses	Responses (N=9)	
	No.	%
Yes	1	11
No	8	89

Responses from Table 3.10 reveal that the majority of respondents (89%) have not received any further formal training in conflict management. One can conclude that, at times it is difficult for the respondents to deal with conflict situations in their schools when they have not gone under training in conflict management.

Question 2(c) was asked to find out the coursework qualification under which the respondents received further formal training in conflict management. The responses to this question indicate that only (10%) of the respondents has received further training in the management of conflict. This further necessitates the urgency of training in conflict management.

Question 2(d) was aimed at finding out whether the respondents received training in management of conflict as part of non-formal training (In-service). Responses to this question point out that (67%) of the respondents have received in-service training in the management of conflict.

Question 2.2 demanded to know whether those respondents who received any training in conflict management regard it as sufficient. The responses to this question indicate that (86%) of the respondents who answered this question feel that the training they received is not enough.

Question 2.3 was intended to find out whether the respondents feel they need any further training in the management of conflict. Responses indicate that all the respondents (100%) who answered this question do need training in conflict management.

Question 2.4 aimed at determining who must supply further training in conflict management. The responses to this question are summarized below.

Table 3.11: The suppliers of conflict management training

Suppliers	Responses (N=8)	
	No.	%
Education Resource Centres	7	88
Ministry of Education	7	88
Teacher Training Institutions	5	63
Other agencies	3	38
Subject officers	0	0

From the Table above it becomes apparent that the majority of respondents feel that the responsibility of supplying training in conflict management should be shared between Education Resource centres and the Ministry of Education. However, some of the respondents believe that some responsibility should lie with teacher-training institutions. Indeed, initial training in conflict management should begin at the teacher-training institutions so that the Ministry of Education together with the Resource Centres should be responsible for ongoing in-service trainings.

Question 2.5 was aimed at finding out whether or not various groups of participants required training in conflict management. Table 3.12 gives a summary of the responses.

Table 3.12: Participants' order to receive training in conflict management

Participants N = 9	High priority 3	Low priority 2	No priority 1	Average Grading	Rank/Ord er
The principal	9	1	0	2,9	2
Departmental heads	10	0	0	3,0	1
Beginner teachers only	5	2	0	1,9	6
All teachers	8	2	0	2,8	3
Interested teachers only	1	2	1	0,8	9
Class teachers	5	0	0	1,5	8
Board of Governors	8	0	0	2,4	4
School prefects	6	2	0	2,2	5
Learners	4	2	0	1,6	7

From the information contained in Table 3.12, it is evident that the respondents believe that all the participants should receive training in conflict management with the highest being departmental heads and the lowest interested teachers.

Question 2.6 was aimed at finding out what topics/content the respondents would like to see included in the training of conflict management. They had to rank their responses according to high, low or no priority. The responses to the question are tabulated in Table 3. 13.

Table 3.13: Topics to be included in conflict management training

Topics N = 10	High Priority 3	Low priority 2	No Priority 1	Average Grading	Rank/Order
Styles of handling conflict	10	0	0	3,0	1
Causes of conflict	8	0	0	2,4	3
Guidelines on conflict management	9	0	0	2,7	2
Types of conflict	8	0	0	2,4	3
Prevention of conflict emergence	1	0	0	0,3	5

According to Table 3.13, the respondents need their training to cover all the above aspects of conflict management with styles of handling conflict as the highest priority.

Question 2.7 (a) was asked to determine the form of training conflict management should take and Table 3.14 summarizes the results.

Table 3.14: The form of training in conflict management

Methods	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
Workshops	10	100
Seminars	5	50
Symposiums	6	60
Formal presentations	4	40

The results of Table 3.14 show that training in conflict management can take a variety of forms. Nonetheless, there seems to be a consensus among the respondents that workshops should be the most common form of presentation. Symposiums are the second best, then seminars and lastly formal presentations.

Question 2.7 (b) provided information about the times when training in conflict management should be offered. The responses to this question are captured in Table 3.15.

Table 3.15: The different times for offering training in conflict management

Time	Responses (N=10)	
	No.	%
During weekends	3	30
During vacation	8	80
Throughout the year	3	30
At the beginning of the year	3	30
Every term	2	20
Every semester	1	10

Table 3.15 reveals that while training in conflict management can be offered at different times of the year, the majority of respondents would rather have it during the vacation, so that teaching time could not be wasted.

Question 2.8 (a) provided information on current training opportunities in conflict management. While five (50%) of the respondents confirmed that there were no training opportunities in conflict management, three (30%) were not sure if there was any training being offered and only (20%) of the respondents are currently receiving training in conflict management.

Question 2.8 (b) was asked to determine what methods are usually used to offer opportunities in conflict management training. Table 3.16 gives a summary of the findings on this question.

Table 3.16: Methods used in conflict management training

Methods	Responses (N=4)	
	No.	%
Lectures	2	50
Demonstrations	1	25
Discussions	2	50
Self-study	1	25
Simulation exercises	0	0
Mixed mode of the above	2	50
Other	Not sure 1= 25%	

Table 3.16 reveals that all the above methods are used in conflict management with the exception of simulation. Nonetheless, the most commonly used are lectures and the mixed mode of all methods (50%).

Question 2.8 (c) was aimed at finding out what forms conflict management training takes. The responses to this question are recorded in Table 3.17.

Table 3.17: Forms of training in conflict management

Forms	Responses (N=3)	
	No.	%
Workshops	2	67
Symposiums	0	0
Seminars	1	33
Formal presentations	1	33

The results from Table 3.17 reveal that only three respondents answered this question. The majority of these respondents concur that workshops are the most used form of presenting trainings in conflict management. While seminars and formal presentations are used, they are however not as popular as workshops.

Question 2.8 (d) was asked to determine when training in conflict management takes place. The results are summarized in the Table below.

Table 3.18: The different times for offering conflict management training

Time	Responses (N=3)	
	No.	%
During the holidays	2	67
During the week	1	33
On weekends	1	33
Throughout the year	0	0
At the beginning of the year only	0	0
Every semester	0	0
Every term	1	33

The results of Table 3.18 indicate that only three respondents answered the question. While the majority of these respondents are of the opinion that training in conflict management takes place during the holidays, only a few believe that such training can even be held during the week, on weekends and every term.

Question 2.8 (e) was aimed at eliciting information on the people responsible for the training in conflict management. Table 3.19 gives outcomes.

Table 3. 19: Presenters of conflict management training

Presenters	Responses (N=6)	
	No.	%
The principal	0	0
The subject officers	0	0
Education Resource Centres	4	67
Ministry of Education	2	33
Teacher Training Institutions	0	0
Other organizations	0	0
Transformation and Resource Centre	1	33

The results of Table 3.19 show that the majority of the respondents believe that training in conflict management is the responsibility of the Education Resource Center. However, few are of the opinion that the Ministry of Education is to take the lead. It is worthy of note that none of the respondents think Teacher Training Institutions is not charged with the responsibility of training in conflict management, more so, because that is where teachers get their initial training.

Question 3 (a) was intended to find out if schools have any policy for training of principals in conflict management. Responses to this question reveal that 80% of the respondents' schools are not in possession of such a policy.

Question 3 (b) aimed at finding out whether schools which are not in possession of a policy for training principals in conflict management, were in support of its formulation. Responses to this question reveal that eight (80%) of the respondents who answered this question are in support of its formulation.

Question 4 (a) was intended to find out whether respondents are happy with the way training in conflict management is currently being run. The responses to this question indicate that only four respondents answered this question. The majority (75%) of them are not happy with the way training in conflict management is currently being run.

Question 4 (b) demanded the respondents to express their opinion with the current state of principal training in conflict management and training in general. The responses to this question are summarized in the Table below.

Table 3.20: The current state of principal training in conflict management and training in general

Opinion	Responses (N=4)					Average Grading
	1	2	3	4	5	
Appropriateness	3	0	1	0	1	2,75
Financing	2	1	0	0	1	2,25
Time of presentation	1	0	1	2	0	3
Form of presentation	3	0	0	1	0	1,75
Venue and facilities	2	0	0	1	0	1,5
Presenters	3	0	1	0	0	1,5

From the information contained in Table 3.20, it is evident that the respondents who answered this question are not satisfied with a number of factors regarding the current state of training.

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this research, it became apparent that the respondents frequently experience conflict, however, they lack managerial skills in conflict management. This is due to the fact that they were not trained specifically for the posts they are holding. What makes this worse is that there are no centers that offer in-service training.

In chapter 4 important findings of the research will be discussed and finally recommendations will be made.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following findings and conclusions in this chapter are based on the results of the literature study and the analysis of the results of the empirical research.

4.2 FINDINGS

Findings under this subheading refer to the first two problem questions and aims of the research.

4.2.1 Findings with regard to the first problem question and aim of the research: What does the concept conflict entail?

4.2.1.1 Conflict has been defined in a variety of ways

Although conflict has been described in various ways, many definitions focus on manifestations of an underlying cause rather than on conflict itself. Conflict is viewed as incompatibility of goals and disagreements (cf.2.2). For instance, it is defined as incompatible behaviour between parties whose interests differ (cf.2.2.1). Conflict is an inevitable part of life because people will usually have different viewpoints, ideas and opinion.

4.2.1.2 Conflict can be constructive or destructive

Whereas constructive conflict is functional and yields good results for the people and the organization involved, destructive conflict is dysfunctional and works to the disadvantage of those involved (cf. 2.3). Conflict is therefore not supposed to be either good or bad.

4.2.1.3 Conflict is analysed from many different perspectives

Conflict may be classified in terms of the people involved: interpersonal, intrapersonal, intragroup, intergroup, and interorganisational. Intrapersonal conflict is an experience that takes place within the individual (cf.2.4.1). Interpersonal conflict on the other hand is experienced between two or more individuals in the same environment (cf.2.4.2). Intragroup conflict is defined as conflict among members of a group or between two or more subgroups within a group (cf.2.4.3). Intergroup conflict refers to a conflict between two or more groups within an organization (cf.2.4.4). Interorganisational conflict involves disagreements between two or more organizations (cf.2.4.5).

4.2.1.4 Conflict in schools is caused by various factors

Though there are many causes of conflict, there seems to be three major ones. The first one is personal differences. Conflict caused by this, normally arises from different needs, beliefs, values, perceptions and expectations. This is the most difficult conflict to resolve (cf. 2.5.2.1 and 2.5.2.2). The second major cause of conflict is ambiguities. These arise from the use of different sources of information or different interpretations of the same information. Roles at times could be a cause of conflict due to inappropriate definition of responsibilities (cf.2.5.3.1 and 2.5.3.2). The last major cause of conflict is the organizational structure. Conflicts caused by organizational structure arise from competition for scarce resources (cf.2.5.1.2). Finally, conflict may arise from task interdependence. This is when an individual or a group depends on another to complete their tasks (cf.2.5.1.1).

4.2.1.5 There are five styles of handling conflict

Conflict can be dealt with on the basis of two dimensions: cooperativeness or assertiveness. Cooperativeness refers to a degree to which one attempts to satisfy the other party's concerns. On the other hand, assertiveness refers to the desire to satisfy one's needs and concerns. During the conflict resolution, these two dimensions combine and they produce the following five distinct conflict-handling styles (cf.2.6.1).

- **Avoiding** - Someone using avoiding conflict style attempts to ignore conflict rather than resolve it. It is unassertive and uncooperative and a lose-lose situation is created (cf.2.6.1.1).
- **Accommodating** – Users of this style attempt to resolve the conflict by giving in to the other party. It is unassertive and cooperative and the effort is made to satisfy the other party while neglecting one's own needs. A lose-win situation is created with the other party winning (cf.2.6.1.2).
- **Compromising** – The users of compromising style attempt to resolve conflicts through give and take and by making concessions. This style involves both assertive and cooperative dimensions and attempts to meet a person's need for harmonious relationships. A lose-lose situation may result (cf.2.6.1.3).
- **Competing** – Users of this style attempt to resolve conflicts by getting their own way. It is an assertive and uncooperative style that focuses on satisfying one's own needs, even at the expense of others. It creates a win-lose situation (cf.2.6.1.4).
- **Collaborating** – Someone using collaborating conflict style attempts to jointly resolve conflict with the best solution that is agreeable to all parties. This method is called the problem-solving style. It is assertive and cooperative. The collaborators aim at fully addressing the concerns of all

all involved parties. This seems to be the only conflict style that creates a win-win situation (cf.2.6.1.5).

4.2.2 Findings with regard to the second problem question and the aim of the research: What are the conflict management practices of the respondents?

4.2.2.1 The majority of respondents experience conflict situations in their schools

According to the responses of the survey, the majority of participants frequently experience conflict situations in their schools (cf. Table 3.2).

4.2.2.2 The majority of respondents experience interpersonal conflict

The responses to this question indicate that interpersonal conflict is the most common type of conflict in schools. However, intragroup conflict is not far of as another type being experienced (cf. Table 3.3 and 2.4.2).

4.2.2.3 Interpersonal conflict exists amongst various people

The people experiencing conflict in the schools are teacher and principal, learner and learner, learner and teacher, department head and teacher and finally teacher and teacher (cf. Table 3.4 and 2.4.2).

4.2.2.4 The biggest intragroup conflict exists among student and teacher groups

Fifty percent of the respondents experience conflict among student groups, while the same figure for teacher groups is 40% (cf. Table 3.5).

4.2.2.5 The biggest source of intergroup conflict is teachers and learners

The majority of respondents (70%) indicated that they experience intergroup conflict between groups of learners and teachers (cf. Table 3.6).

4.2.2.6 The majority of respondents experience conflict between learners from their school with those from other schools

Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that they experience interorganisational conflict between their learners and learners from other schools (cf. Table 3.7).

4.2.2.7 The biggest cause of conflict in the participating schools is faulty communication

Even though conflict is caused by a variety of factors, the overall extent to which communication causes conflict situations is higher (mean= 3.2) than that of other causes (cf. Table 3.8, 2.5.4).

4.2.2.8 The majority of respondents have not received any initial training in conflict management

An overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) revealed that they have not received any initial training in conflict management (cf. Table 3.9). This therefore means that the respondents have an urgent need in the training of conflict management.

4.2.2.9 The majority of respondents have not received any further training in conflict management

The responses reveal that although the majority of respondents (89%) have not received any further formal training in conflict management (cf. Table 3.10), 86% of those who have received training are not satisfied with it (cf. Question 2.2, 3.4.4).

4.2.2.10 The respondents do need training in conflict management

All the respondents indicated that they are in need of training in conflict management (cf. Question 2.3, 3.4.4).

4.2.2.11 Education Resource Centres and the Ministry of Education are to supply training in conflict management

The majority of the respondents (88%) would like training in conflict management to be a joint effort of Education Resource Centres and the Ministry of Education (cf. Table 3.11 and 3.19).

4.2.2.12 Departmental heads are to receive training in conflict management

Although the respondents are of the opinion that each of the listed participants should receive training in conflict management, departmental heads are ranked the highest (mean=3 and cf. Table 3.12) to receive training.

4.2.2.13 Styles of handling conflict are to be the highest priority in conflict management training

The respondents agree that their training need to include all the listed topics. However, the need of training in styles of handling conflict is regarded as the highest priority (cf. Table 3.13).

4.2.2.14 Training in conflict management can take a variety of forms

Although there is evidence that the majority of respondents agree that different forms should be used in the training of conflict management, it is also evident that preference is given to workshops (cf. Table 3.14 and 3.17).

4.2.2.15 Training in conflict management should take place during vacations

The majority of respondents are of the opinion that conflict management training can occur at different times. However, the most preferred time is during the vacation (cf. 3.15 and 3.18).

4.2.2.16 Schools that do not have a policy for training principals in conflict management are in support of its formulation

All the principals from the selected high schools without a policy in conflict management commonly agree that it is essential and should be formulated (cf. Question 3 (b), 3.4.4).

4.2.2.17 Respondents are not happy with the current running of conflict management training

Although not many respondents answered this question, the few who did, have expressed their dissatisfaction in the way training in conflict management is currently being run (cf. Question 4 (a), 3.4.4).

4.2.2.18 The majority of respondents are not satisfied with the current state of principal training in conflict management and training in general

The responses to the survey indicated that principals are dissatisfied with the majority of aspects included in current training courses (cf. Table 3.20).

4.3 CONCLUSIONS

From the above findings, three major conclusions can be drawn:

- The respondents frequently experience conflict in their schools (cf. Table 3.2). Therefore there is an urgent necessity for principals to receive training in conflict management. However, few opportunities are created by the teacher-training institutions and the Ministry of Education to train these respondents in conflict management. Even the little training that is offered is not satisfactory.
- It is apparent that the respondents lack managerial skills in conflict management, because they were not specifically trained for the posts they are holding. What makes this even worse is the fact that there are no centers that offer any in-service training.

- Consequently, the respondents have a need to receive training in the management of conflict.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are made to answer the **third problem question and the aim of the research: What can be done to improve the conflict management practices of the respondents?**

To improve the conflict management practices of the respondents, the following recommendations are made:

4.4.1 Recommendations regarding training

- A good beginning is essential: the educational teacher training institutions should not only train teachers to teach but also train and prepare potential school leaders for the demands of higher positions. Also, the respondents should prepare themselves by means of reading theories in management of conflict.
- In-service training and enrichment courses should be presented on a regular basis to address any deficiencies because the respondents have not received any initial training in conflict management before they were promoted to their present posts.
- Training in conflict management should take place during vacations.
- Training in conflict management should be a joint effort between the Education Resource Centres and the Ministry of Education.
- The current training in conflict management should be revised in order to meet the needs of the respondents because they regard the current training as being insufficient.

- Training in styles of handling conflict should receive urgent attention, as this is the area where the respondents showed the biggest need.
- A policy for training in conflict management should be set up.
- The heads of department should be among those who urgently receive training in conflict management because basically, they are in constant interaction with other teachers in their departments.
- Training in conflict management should predominantly employ workshops since this is what the respondents prefer. Nonetheless, the other methods such as symposiums, seminars and formal presentations could still be used.
- Because it is not only the teachers and principals who work with the learners, it would be ideal for all school personnel, parents and the community members to receive conflict management skills training.
- Schools should set up conflict management programmes that are linked to other school programmes addressing violence prevention, alcohol and drug abuse. This can help learners make better choices when they encounter disagreements, peer pressure, violence and alcohol or other drugs.
- Students should be taught basic problem-solving skills so that they can solve their own disputes. This way, teaching time will be increased by reducing time spent on managing classroom conflicts.

4.4.2 Recommendations regarding further research required

The following topics are recommended for further research:

- Investigation into more details regarding causes of conflict (cf. 2.5).
- Improving the conflict management styles of principals (cf. 2.6 & 3.4.3 Question 1.6).
- Improving communication skills among teachers in the Maseru town so as to reduce the occurrence of conflicts.

- Establishing a comprehensive programme for pre-service and in-service training of principals in Maseru town (cf.4.2.2.8 & 4.2.2.9).

By addressing the above topics, a lot can be done to improve the general management skills of principals and their deputies. It ultimately depends on the future researchers to find out exactly what skills high school managers are in need of.

4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to highlight the need to improve the conflict management strategies of principals in the Maseru town. Although this study does not claim to have identified all aspects pertaining to conflict management, it is apparent that the majority of principals experience conflict situations in their schools. The results from the survey reveal that the biggest causes of conflict are bad communication, scarce resources and differences in values. However, these principals did not receive any training in conflict management during their initial training as teachers and before their appointment as principals. There is therefore need for principal training in conflict management and it varies according to individuals. The areas of critical urgency and need are conflict handling styles and effective communication. For the principals to operate effectively, it can be argued that they must possess the skills of managing conflict and these skills can be developed and enhanced by effective training.

It could be concluded that to achieve effective conflict management skills, the Ministry of Education should pay attention to the factors causing conflict. The recommendation is therefore that these areas causing conflict should be investigated with the aim of identifying specific aspects which could be corrected. Finally, the findings in this study will help improve the conflict management skills of principals at the high schools in Lesotho.

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APPENDIX B

PART A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

INDICATE DATA APPLICABLE TO YOU WITH A TICK IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1. Indicate your age
- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 30 years or less | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31 to 40 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41 to 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51 to 60 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 61 and above | <input type="checkbox"/> |
2. Indicate your gender
- | | |
|--------|--------------------------|
| Male | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |
3. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 10 years or less | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 to 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21 to 30 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More than 30 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
4. Indicate years of service as principal.
- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 years or less | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 to 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 years and above | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. What is your highest professional qualification?

B.A. ED.

B.ED. Honors

Post Graduate Diploma

M.ED.

Other, please specify.....

6. What is your highest academic qualification?

JC

MATRIC

B.A.

B.SC.

B. COM.

Other, please specify.....

PART B: CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

1. Information regarding conflict situation in the schools

1.1 Do you experience conflict situation in your school?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always

1.2 How do you personally view conflict?

Constructive Destructive no influence

1.3 How do you immediately respond when confronted with a conflict situation?

Calm Hostile

1.4 a) What types of conflict do you experience in your school?

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- Interpersonal (between two or more individuals)
- Intragroup (among members of a group)
- Intergroup (between two or more groups)
- Interorganisation (between two or more organizations)

b) If you experience interpersonal conflict, among which of the following people do you experience conflict?

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- i) Learner and learner
- ii) Learner and teacher
- iii) Learner and principal
- iv) Teacher and learner

- v) Teacher and principal
- vi) Teacher and parent
- vii) Teacher and Department of Education staff member
- viii) Principal and parent
- ix) Department Head and Principal
- x) Department Head and teacher
- xi) Department Head and learner
- xii) Teacher and teacher
- xiii) Chair person and Board of Governors
- xiv) Other, please specify.....

c) If you experience intragroup conflict, do you experience it among:

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- i) Minority groups
- ii) Teachers as a group
- iii) Board of Governors
- iv) Sports committee
- v) Cultural committee
- vi) Non-teaching staff
- vii) Student groups

d) If you experience intergroup conflict, is it among:

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- i) Teachers and school management team
- ii) Learners and teachers

- iii) Learners and learners
- iv) Learners and parents
- v) Learners and support staff
- vi) Teachers and teachers
- vii) Teachers and subject advisors
- viii) Teachers and inspectors
- ix) Teachers and parents
- x) Teachers and support staff
- xi) Support staff and parents
- xii) Support staff and school management
- xiii) Support staff and support staff
- xiv) School Management and Board of Governors
- xv) Teacher and Board of Governors
- xvi) Other, please specify.....

e) If you experience interorganisation conflict, is it between:

(Mark more than one if appropriate)

- i) School management team from your school and principal from other schools
- ii) Learners from your school with learners from other schools
- iii) Teachers from your school and other schools
- iv) Parents of children in your school and those from other schools
- v) Support staff from your organization with support staff from other school
- vi) Other, please specify.....

1.5 To what degree does each of the following factors cause conflict situations in your schools? Tick in the appropriate column.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Task interdependence					
Scarce resources					
Departmentalisation and specialization					
Differences in values, perceptions and expectations					
Role ambiguities					
Communication problems					
Ambiguous departmental policies					
Top down management structure					
School management imposes their decisions unilaterally					

1.6 Fill in what style(s) of conflict management you usually use when you are faced with a conflict situation, or indicate with a tick in the box, if you are uncertain.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f) Uncertain.....

2.TRAINING NEEDS IN MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT

2.a) Did you receive any training in conflict management as part of initial teacher training?

Yes

No

Uncertain

b) Did you receive any formal further training in management of conflict?

Yes

No

c) If yes, as part of the coursework for what qualifications?

i) STC

ii) B.A.ED.

iii) B.ED. Honors

iv) Post Graduate Diploma

v) M.ED.

vi) Other, please specify.....

d) Did you receive training in management of conflict as part of non-formal training (In-service- training)

Yes

No

Uncertain

2.2 If you have received any training in conflict management, do you regard your training as sufficient?

Yes

No

Uncertain

2.3 Do you need any further training in the management of conflict?

Yes

No

Uncertain

2.4 If yes to 2.3 above, who must supply this training?

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

i) The principal

ii) Education Resource Centres

iii) Ministry of Education

iv) Teacher Training Institutions e.g. (NUL, NTTC)

v) Other agencies e.g. (LIPAM, IDM)

vi) The subject officers

vii) Other, please specify.....

2.5 Participants of various groups to receive training in conflict management. Tick in the appropriate column according to the order of priority.

	High Priority	Low Priority	No Priority
The principal			
Departmental heads			
Beginner teachers only			
All teachers			
Interested teachers only			
Class teachers			
Board of Governors			
School prefects			
Learners			

2.6 What topics/content should be included in the training of conflict management? Rank them according to high, low or no priority.

	High Priority	Low Priority	No Priority
Styles of handling conflict			
Causes of conflict			
Guidelines on conflict management			
Types of conflict			

Other, please specify.....

2.7 a) What form must the training in conflict management take?

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- i) Workshops
- ii) Seminars
- iii) Symposiums
- iv) Formal presentations
- v) Other, please specify.....

b) When should training in conflict management take place?

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- i) During weekdays
- ii) During weekends
- iii) During vacation
- iv) Throughout the year
- v) At the beginning of the year
- vi) Every term
- vii) Every semester
- viii) Other, please specify.....

2.8 a) Are there currently any training opportunities in conflict management being offered which you can attend?

Yes

No

Uncertain

b) If yes, what methods are usually used to offer these opportunities?

(Mark more than one alternative if necessary)

- i) Lectures
- ii) Demonstrations
- iii) Discussions
- iv) Self-study
- v) Simulation exercises
- vi) Mixed mode of the above
- vii) Other, please specify.....

c) If yes to 2.8 a) above, what forms does the current training take?

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- i) Workshops
- ii) Symposiums
- iii) Seminars
- iv) Formal presentations
- v) Other, please specify.....

d) If there are current opportunities offered in conflict management, when does this training take place?

(Mark more than one choice if appropriate)

- i) During the holidays
- ii) During the week
- iii) On weekends

- iv) Throughout the year
- v) At the beginning of the year only
- vi) Every semester
- vii) Every term
- viii) Other, please specify.....

e) If there are current opportunities offered in conflict management, who are responsible for this training?

(Mark more than one if appropriate)

- i) The principal
- ii) The subject officers
- iii) Education Resource Centres
- iv) Ministry of Education
- v) Teacher Training Institutions e.g. (NUL, NTTC)
- vi) Other agencies e.g. (LIPAM, IDM)
- vii) Other, please specify.....

3 a) Does your school have any policy for training of principals in conflict management?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

b) If not, would you consider its formulation a necessity?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

4 a) Are you happy with the way training in conflict management is currently being run?

Yes

No

Uncertain

b) Express your opinion with the current state of principal training in conflict management (if applicable) and training in general with regard to the following: Please rank your response on a 5 point-scale, where 1 is negative and 5 is positive.

	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriateness					
Financing					
Time of presentation					
Form of presentation					
Venue and facilities					
Presenters					

Thank you for your time and cooperation