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EFFICIENT CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY SOME HEADS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA

Management

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ABSTRACT

The tenet of the research was to adopt the descriptive survey to identify conflict situations and the frequency of their occurrence as well as investigate into the conflict resolution skills that headmasters in educational institutions in the Kumasi metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana exhibited in preventing and/or solving conflicts. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the schools and teachers whereas the purposive sampling was used to select the headmasters. A total sample of 114 respondents, comprising of 110 teachers and four headmasters were engaged in the study. A questionnaire of 30 statements was used for soliciting the data for the research. Descriptive statistics were used to present and analyze the data. The study revealed that various forms of conflict existed in educational institutions some of which occur often while others are rare. However, while headmasters indicated that they attached great importance to conflict prevention; teachers stated that their headmasters attached some importance to conflict prevention. The study concludes that every educational institution has its unique forms of conflict though others are general. The study recommends that heads of institutions and teachers should be trained in the dynamics of resolving conflicts to enable them become versatile and well versed so as to handle conflicts that occur in their educational institutions.

KEYWORDS:

Conflict Management, Education, Educational Institutions, Teaching skills

1. INTRODUCTION

In any human institution where two or more people are involved in an organization, conflict is inevitable. In the school set up, conflict could occur between management and staff, among staff members, between the headmaster and staff, between students and staff, and among students and the community. As a matter of fact, conflict cannot be done away with irrespective of how careful one would be. This is so because people have varied backgrounds which could be social, political, economic and religious differences, and as a result, come with different ideologies and perceptions. [1] claimed that not all conflicts are harmful and that a certain level of conflict is inevitable and necessary. He insisted that conflict should not always be seen as damaging to establishments. Conflicts are useful when geared towards creating harmony. Conflict could result in two opposing areas; development and progress or chaos, anarchy and destruction. [1] emphasized that conflict may be desirable for bringing about change, growth and progress. This will, however, depend on how the manager or authority responds to the conflicts, the outcome or results of which may help or stifle individual growth. For that matter, conflict in itself, is not alarming but how it is managed.

Various schools of thought have made attempts to give simple definition to conflict. [2] defines conflict 'as a contrast of opposing forces or power struggle to resist or overcome'. [3] explained conflict as anything that exists wherever an action by one person or a group or persons prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures or in some ways makes less likely the desire action of another person or a group. Such an activity creates panic and can lead into conflicts. [4] avers that conflict is a process which begins when one party perceives that the other party has frustrated or is about to frustrate some concerns of his. According to Thomas, conflict comes as a result of mistrust on the part of any of the parties. In the school system, conflict can occur between students and staff, students and headmaster, and staff and headmaster as a result of one party not content with the other party's action. This action could be query or low performance of duty, failure to prepare lesson plan, lateness and absenteeism, and undermining one another. In other instances, conflict could be between teaching staff and non-teaching staff and among students themselves. Among students, it could be the result of theft or a senior bullying a junior student.

[5] explained conflict to mean anything that exist whenever an action by one person or group of persons prevents, obstructs, injures, interferes with, or in some ways makes less likely the desired action of another person or a group. Such an activity creates panic and can degenerate into conflict. [6] defined conflict as an emotional or physical struggle arising when two or more persons vie for the same resources, activities or goals, but only one can achieve them at the expense of the other. This definition basically addresses conflict between individuals and between groups. [1] posits that conflict is a process which begins when one party perceives that the other party has frustrated or is about to frustrate some concerns of his. According to Appleby, conflict comes about as a result of mistrust on the part of any of the parties to the conflict.

From the above definitions, conflict could be described as situation where one party (either individual or group) makes an attempt to thwart the efforts, interest or puts impediments to the success of his colleague's activity. In effect, conflict does not occur in isolation but rather occurs between at least two parties. Some of the parties could be individuals, groups, organizations and institutions. Since human beings form the basis of conflict of any kind in organization or institutions, these places appear to be fertile grounds for conflict to emanate. The slightest misunderstanding that crops up between workers and management, be it remuneration, working environment, job dissatisfaction, and lack of communication flow could easily sparkle off conflict. In the school system, conflict can occur between students and staff, students and headmaster, and staff and headmaster as a result of one party not being content with the other party's action. This could be query, low performance of duty, failure to prepare lesson plan, lateness and absenteeism, and undermining one another. In other instances, the conflict could be between teaching and staff and non-teaching staff, among members of teaching staff, and among students themselves. The bone of contention among students as stated earlier may be the result of theft or a senior student bullying a junior student.

Conflict, as stated earlier on, could be seen as a two-edged sword which could bring about development and progress or anarchy and disorder. In the light of this, if conflict is to bring progress, and then it must be resolved in a manner whereby its nature of progress is not done away with. Such conflicts might arrive whereby two teachers fight over the use of free period on the times table or who becomes part of the weekly or fortnightly general sanitary inspection team. Such conflicts

may bring about progress and it will make none of the parties involved offended. [7] also lamented that such conflicts may bring about progress, but at the same time will make none of the parties involved offended. In school situation, headmasters/headmistresses who have the capabilities of planning, organizing, leading, coordinating and controlling school activities, are given the mandate or empowered to find a lasting solution to conflicts when they arise. The headmasters should, therefore, resolve the conflict so that it results in progress but not anarchy. Conflict may seriously be destructive if not handled with care. When conflict occurs, the headmaster who acts as a Managing Director and has almost all the elements or processes of management under his sleeves may use one or a combination of some strategies, techniques or practices to resolve them.

However, preliminary investigation in some educational institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana revealed that most heads of institutions lack the best conflict resolution strategies to efficiently manage the intermittent conflicts in especially Senior High Schools. The research aims at investigating into the types of conflicts and their causes in the study area while analyzing the conflict management strategies adopted by some heads of educational institutions in Ghana. This academic vacuum in conflict management strategies is relevant because the findings of the study would ease the burden on conflict resolution faced by many heads of educational institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis and Ghana at large. This knowledge would ensure the smooth fruition of teaching and learning activities in most educational institutions in Ghana that are often marred by diverse forms of conflicts.

1.1 The Concept of Conflict

[5] viewed conflict as the final characteristics of a team process. He claimed that whenever people work together, either within a group or between groups, some amount or elements of conflict are definitely bound to occur. This he explained to reflect on his definition that since human beings have common together, one (or more) is bound to disrupt the efforts or activities of another which may either be intentional or otherwise. According to [8], conflict disagreement may be superficial or very strong; some disagreement would be short-lived, while others last for months, years or decades. Some of the conflicts may be work related with others being personal. Griffin viewed conflict itself in various ways, such as people, groups and organizations seeking legal redress, protecting and ousting popular and unpopular members respectively, competing with one another, glaring at one another, shouting or withdrawing.

[8] further saw the need for conflict since it does not only bring about situations such as unpleasantness, dissension, hostilities and antagonism, but in its wake come with some elements of benefit if it is well handled. He cited an example where people involved in a conflict would have to do thorough studies in order to defend their preferred alternative. [8] continued that in as much as the conflict is well handled in a constructive and cordial way, it is serving a useful purpose, but when working activities are being disrupted and destructed then it ought to be addressed with all the needed resources. He continued that in the absence of conflict, members become complacent and apathetic as organization performance may suffer. A moderate conflict could therefore initiate, motivate, innovate, raise performance and be creative. Too much of conflict on the other hand brings chaos, anarchy and lower performance.

Obviously, what constitutes optimal varies with the situation and people involved. [9] contends that an imperative for all business today is 'innovative or fall behind.' He continued that innovation is hard to achieve because different ideas and perceptions exist as well as ways of processing and judging information differ among people. He opined that managers have two ways of responding to this situation. First, managers who cherish their own approach or abhor conflict seriously avoid clashes of ideas and rather employ or recruit people just like them; i.e. people who share similar sentiments with them or people who think like them. On the other hand, there are other managers who value employees with divergent styles and as such design a full spectrum of devices or approaches and perspective in their organization whereby people of diverse styles would respect people's style and work together to direct the creative process.

Furthermore, [5] opined that conflict which brings rivalry among individuals in a team or among groups can have a healthy impact on the performance of workers due to the fact that it energizes people to enhance their performance since conflict acts as competition. However, he was quick to react that too much of the conflict can be obstructive and destructive to production, break relationships into pieces as well as interfering with whatever healthy system that exist to ensure sound exchange of ideas and information. He, again, saw conflict as the most important of all the skills that one needs to ensure effective team management. [10] viewed organizational conflict as a mechanism where each member's performance or activity is different from the other, but then they all contribute to a common goal. He explained further that their performance achievement must be a holistic one which would be without gaps, friction and/or wasted duplication of efforts. He argued that, when the organization is seen as an integrated and harmonious whole then the conflict may be seen to be a dysfunctional outcome resulting from many sources. He further argued that should conflict be seen in the views of the social action writers and the pluralist approach, then conflict among individuals and/or sub-groups within an organization is inevitable since it is an inherent activity of the organization and comes about via the makeup of the organization's structure.

1.2 Traditional View of Conflict

[10], again opined, to support his views on organizational conflict, that, when the organization is viewed in a unitary perspective manner, that is, when it is seen as an integrated and harmonious whole then conflict may be seen to be a dysfunctional outcome resulting from many sources. He further argued that, should conflict be seen in the views of the social action writers and the pluralist approach, then conflict among individual's and/or sub-groups within an organization is inevitable since it is an inherent activity of the organization and comes about by the nature of the organization structure. According to [5], individuals in organization are organized into three basic types of power networks. Based on these power relationships, certain kinds of conflict tend to emerge. The first relationship is equal versus equal, in which there is a horizontal balance of power among the parties involved in a conflict. An example of this type of relationship would be a conflict between individuals from two different departments in the school. The behavioural tendency is toward sub-optimization, that is, the focus is on a win – lose approach to problems, and each party tries to maximize its power at the expense of the other party. Interventions like improving coordination between the parties and working towards a common interest can help manage these conflicts.

The second power network is high versus low, or a powerful versus a less powerful relationship. Conflicts emerge here take the basic forms of the powerful individuals trying to control others, with the less powerful people trying to become more autonomous. Organizations typically respond to these conflicts by tightening the rules. However, the more successful ways of managing these conflicts are to experiment a different style of leadership such as coaching and counseling style, or to change the structure to a more decentralized one. The third power network is high versus middle versus low. This power network illustrates the classic conflicts felt by middle managers. Two particular conflicts are evident for middle managers: role conflict in which conflicting expectations are placed on the manager from bases and employees, and role ambiguity in which the expectations of the boss are unclear. Improved communication among all parties can reduce role conflict and ambiguity. In addition, middle managers can benefit from education in positive ways to influence others.

Knowing the typical kinds of conflict that arise in various kinds of relationship in the school, can help the school head to diagnose conflict and devise appropriate ways to manage them. According to [10], there is the radical perspective of conflict, which seeks to oppose the traditional view. He argued on the radical perspective, claiming that conflict is an unequal nature of organizational life where naturally there is struggle for class. He buttressed this point by stating that “the design of organizational structure, management systems and the choice and use of technology” are all means of struggle for power and control within the work of organization. He further lamented that conflict as seen mostly by people is not necessarily a bad thing, but something that can have positive outcomes. He claimed that when timely identified and properly handled, it can eliminate the widely acclaimed nature of conflict.

1.3 Causes of Conflicts

Conflict arises from several factors. For example, [11] mentioned scarce resource as a factor that can give rise to conflict as supplies, materials, man and money help workers to achieve organizational

goals. In this wise, workers may want to increase their resources so that they could work hard towards achieving organizational goals. In a similar trend [12] agreed with Sorenson et al and lamented that since resources are scarce and/or may be declining, workers may scramble for it and in an attempt to partition the scarce resources conflict may inevitably arise. In addition to the above, [13] and [14] admitted that conflict would occur as a result of communication breakdown. Communication which is described as the transmission of information from one party to the other with understanding may sometimes be faulty. This will result in a breakdown in communication as it ends up in misunderstanding and misperception of others. This is based on the fact that the right information which will promote healthy relationship is absent. The implication is that sometimes vital information is deliberately withheld. When communication does breakdown or vital information is deliberately withheld, it hinders progress of staff and their efforts or activities, and as such, conflict could erupts within the organization.

Furthermore, [13] stressed that differences in power and status is another area which brings about conflicts. This is so when individual or a group has absolute or disputable administrative influence and control over the other. Those at the lower echelon may 'fight' to resist the status in which they find themselves. This buttresses the fact further that a majority of the human race would always want to be seen with the high echelon in society. In the light of this, those with low prestige would always 'fight' to increase their influence in society just as those with high status would also struggle to maintain their status in their respective teams or groups. From another viewpoint, [15] intimated that goals difference is a potential source of conflict. When people in an organization do pursue or are pursuing different goals which is natural, conflict is bound to occur. He stated an example where the sales people's target may be in disagreement with other sales people or with the sales manager. He further stated that sales department may have an agenda which would be quite different from the manufacturing department and it would result in conflict. This could be explained to mean that the manufacturing department is targeting a certain quality to achieve goal where the sales department would also expect a certain style to meet consumer specifications.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design, since in the view of [16], it focuses on determining the status of a defined population with respect to certain variables. The purpose of a descriptive survey, according to [17] is to count and when it cannot count; it counts a representative sample and makes inferences about the population as a whole. In this wise, the study sought to generalize specific sample of the population to the general population as a way of making conclusions that would bring about the characteristics or behavours of the populations. The researchers decided to use this method because the study aimed at identifying conflicts in some Senior High Schools and how conflicts are managed when they arise.

Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana has many Senior High Schools but the study was carried out in four selected schools which are closed to the researchers. The various headmasters and teachers constituted the population of the study. The schools are Serwaa Nyarko Girls Senior High School, Asanteman Senior High School, Adventist Day Senior High School and Wesley Girl's Senior High School. The sample comprised four Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. The sampled schools were Serwaa Nyarko Girls Senior High School, Asanteman Senior High School, Adventist Day Senior High School and Kumasi Wesley Girls senior High School. The four schools produced a total population of 285 people, thus, four headmasters and 159 teachers. A total of 163 people (headmasters and teachers) were selected out of 285 people. This sample size of 163 consisted of 159 teachers and four headmasters. The convenience sampling procedure was used for selecting the four schools and the teachers. On the other hand, the four headmasters were purposively selected. The convenience sampling procedure was used because the four schools were accessible. Similarly, convenience method was used to select the teachers. This was due to the fact that these were the teachers available at the time of administering the questionnaire in the schools. Finally, purposive sampling procedure was used for the headmasters because the focus of the study was on the school heads and that of all the selected schools should have their headmasters being selected.

[18] are of the view that questionnaire is an effective tool for social research. It is in light of this that questionnaire was used in collecting the data. The questionnaire comprised the close – ended type whereby possible answers were provided to the questions as per the questionnaire. The responses that were provided, to some extent helped the respondents to select a response that, to his opinion, came too close to his perception as far as the questionnaire items were concerned. The structure of the questionnaire was basically the type as described by [17], the four-point Likert scale type. In all, the data were collected by means of 24 questionnaire items this data collection instrument of 24 items was broken down into four sections. Respondents were expected to indicate by ticking on another four – Likert scale, the extent to which the headmasters administered the techniques listed on the scale. The rating scale was from 'Very often', 'Often', 'Rarely', and 'Never'. As it was stated earlier on, [18] asserted that questionnaire is an effective tool social research tool since opinions and perceptions cannot be concluded via observations. This informed the use of questionnaire for the research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section examines the results of the analysis of the responses made by respondents to the questionnaire. Wherever applicable, tables are provided to illustrate and support the findings. Frequency and percentage tables based on Likert scale responses were constructed. On the whole 110 questionnaires were received from 150 sampled teachers and four of the headmasters of the selected schools.

3.1 Background Information of Respondents

The study was conducted in four Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis thus Serwaa Nyarko Girls' Senior High School, Kumasi Wesley Girls' Senior High School, Asanteman Senior High school and Adventist Senior High School.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Gender	Headmaster	%	Teacher	Percentage
Male	2	50%	68	61%
Female	2	50%	42	38.20%
Total	**4**	**100%**	**110**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The above table shows that out of 110 teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 68 (61.8%) were males and 42 (38.2%) were females. Two male headmasters and two female headmistresses were involved in the study. Data on the table depicts that the study was dominated by male respondents.

Table 2: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Teacher	Percentage
Single	28	25.5
Married	74	67.3
Separated	4	3.6
Divorced	2	1.8
Widow	2	1.8
Total	**110**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

As indicated in table 2, (25.5%) teachers were single and 74 (67.3%) of the teachers were also married. Whiles 8 of (72%) had once tasted or been married. This shows clearly in the distribution that all things being equal, respondents had some experience in managing conflict as well as avoiding conflicts.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Teacher	Percentage
20 – 29	28	25.5
30 – 39	74	67.3
40 – 49	4	3.6
50 and above	2	1.8
Total	**110**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The above table indicates that 95.1% of the total respondents were above thirty years and could make good decisions on their own. The other six (5.5%) cannot make a concrete decision as the other respondent, even though they are also matured.

Table 4: Academic Qualification of the Respondents

Highest Academic Qualification	Teacher	Percentage
GCE 'O' LEVEL	36	32.7
GCE 'A' LEVEL	30	27.3
DIPLOMA	14	12.7
BA, BSC, B. Sec., B.Com	28	2.5
Total	**110**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4 shows that 36 (32.7%) of the teachers had had General Certificate Examination Ordinary Level and 30 (27.3%) of them also had had a General Certificate Examination Advanced Level and as such might involve in conflict situations. Two of the headmasters had Bachelor's degrees and the other two also had had G.C.E. 'A' Level.

3.2 Analysis of Research Question 1: What are the causes and types of conflict in the selected Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

The purpose of this research question was to find out the types of conflict that existed in the selected Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis and to ascertain the causes of such conflicts. The data that provide an answer to the research questions are summarized in Tables 5 and 6. The following letters were used to represent the terms on the Likert scale: V – Very often, O – often, R – rarely, N – never

Table 5: Teachers Responses to causes and types of Conflict

NO.	STATEMENTS	N	R	O	V	TOTAL
1.	Conflict caused by attitude of teachers towards school activities.	9 16.4%	21 38.2%	19 34.5%	6 10.9%	55 100
2.	Conflict caused by the headmaster siding with one party and neglecting the other.	17 30.9%	19 34.5%	13 23.6%	8 0%	46 100
3.	Conflict caused by the headmaster's leadership style.	15 23.3%	19 34.5%	13 23.6%	8 14.5%	55 100
4.	Conflicts caused by competition (each party trying to get what the other party want).	34 30.9%	36 32.7%	24 21.8%	16 14.5%	110 100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 5 shows the state of causes and types of conflict as indicated by teachers. The first statement under this section looks at the extent to which conflict caused by lackadaisical attitudes of teachers towards school activities 38.2% said it rarely happens, 34.5% indicating that it often occurs, 16.4% also maintained that it never occurs and only 10.9% indicate it occurs very often.

On the part of headmasters, three people admitted that conflict exists very often whilst one person maintained that rarely do conflicts occurs in the school.

Table 6: Headmasters Responses on types and causes of conflict

NO	STATEMENTS	N	R	O	V	TOTAL
1.	Conflict caused by attitude of teachers towards school activities	0 0%	1 25%	0 0%	3 75%	4 100
2.	Conflict caused by the headmaster siding with one party and neglecting the other	0 0%	3 75%	1 25%	1 0%	4 100
3.	Conflict caused by the headmaster's leadership style.	3 75%	0 0%	1 25%	0 0%	4 100
4.	Conflicts caused by competition (each party trying to get what the other party wants).	0 0%	4 100%	0 0%	0 0%	4 100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 6 shows frequencies and percentages of types of conflict in the school as indicated by headmasters. The statement under this section looks at conflict existing between the headmaster and individual teachers, 29.1% of the total respondents claimed that such a conflict never exists, 40% rarely happens and 18.2% maintained it often happens with only 12.7% indicating that it occurs very often. This is an indication that headmasters are able to control conflict in their schools, thereby creating peaceful co-existence between headmasters and staff.

Another question was posed to the respondents was whether conflict caused by headmaster siding with one party and neglecting the other could spark off conflicts. 34.5% of the respondents intimated that such an action rarely results in conflict. 30.9% asserted that it never result in conflict. Ten people representing 18.2% of the respondents opined that conflict caused by headmasters siding with one party often occurs. Three of the headmasters representing 75.0% lamented that such a conflict often occurs, and the only person among the headmaster's maintained that it never happens in the school.

When inquired whether the headmasters' leadership style could cause conflict in schools, the respondents have this to say. From the least in terms of numbers, 14.5% of respondents maintained that the headmasters' leadership style causes conflict very often. 23.6% being thirteen respondents insisted that conflict is often caused by the headmaster's leadership style. A group of nineteen respondents representing 34.5% agreed that conflict rarely a headmasters' leadership style causes conflict in the school. Three of the headmasters agreed that their leadership style never causes conflict in the school, where as one of them admitted that conflict in the school often caused by leadership style of the headmaster. The final question on causes and types of conflict put to respondents was whether competition among members of staff causes conflict. A majority of 30.9% of the respondents noted that competition among staff members never causes conflict. Another 32.7% said such an issue rarely causes conflict in schools. Another twenty one pointy eight percent of the total respondents of twenty four maintained that conflict is often caused by competition among members of staff in schools whereas a minority of 14.5% intimated that very often, competition at this level causes conflict.

As evident from the tables 5 and 6, it can conclusively be said that there were three types of conflict in the school, namely: Conflict cause by lackadaisical attitude of teachers towards school activities, conflict between headmaster and individual teachers as well as conflict caused b the headmaster's leadership style. These conflicts were caused mainly by headmasters trying to control the behavior of other staff members. Discussion on causes of conflict the issue of headmasters having conflicts with individual teachers coincided with what [5] said. He claims conflict as final characteristics of a team process. He is of the view that wherever people work together either within a group of between groups, some amount of elements of conflict is definitely bound to occur. This he explained to reflect on his definition that since human beings have come together, one or more is bound to disrupt the effort or activities of another which may either be intentional or otherwise.

The headmasters in trying to control the lackadaisical attitude of teachers towards school activities, thereby generating into conflict occur rarely in schools as portrayed by respondents, tallies with what [8] and [10] said. They maintained that great differences in perception or aspiration lead to people not agreeing to being controlled by their bosses. Both headmasters and their staff had a common opinion that the headmasters' leadership style rarely causes conflict. This was in contradiction with [10] views that the headmasters' leadership style causes conflict.

The headmaster in conjunction with their teachers stressed that the occurrence of conflict emanating from competition for scarce resources is rare. This is in total disagreement with what [8], [10] and [5] opined when they individually said that scarce resources cause conflict.

3.3 Analysis of Research Question 2: What conflict prevention strategies or practices are applied by headmasters in the selected schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

The purpose of this research question was to find out the conflict prevention mechanisms put in place by headmasters in some selected senior high schools in the Kumasi metropolis. It would further help to

examine if the mechanisms used by the headmasters are effective or not. The data that provide an answer to this research questions are summarized in table 12 and 13. The following letters were used to represent the terms on the Likert scale:

GI – Great importance
SI – Some Importance
LI – Little importance
NI – No importance

Table 7: Prevention of Conflict by headmasters (Teachers Response)

NO.	STATEMENTS	NI	LI	SI	GI	TOTAL
1.	There is fairness in dealing with all staff members (rewards and punishments)	12 10.9%	14 12.7%	36 32.7%	48 43.6%	110 100%
2.	There is free flow of information to staff members	6 5.5%	14 12.7%	30 27.3%	60 54.5%	110 100%
3	There is regular staff meeting	6 15.4%	8 7.3%	32 29.1%	64 56.2%	110 100%
4.	Ensure a transparent administration	6 15.4%	10 18.2%	23 41.8%	16 29.1%	55 100%
5.	Whole–heartedly welcomes feedbacks, criticism, suggestions, reports etc.	6 10.9%	13 23.6%	17 30.9%	19 34.5%	55 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 7 shows the state of conflict prevention strategies by headmasters as indicated by teachers.

Table 8 shows the state of conflict prevention techniques by headmasters as shown by headmasters. Respondents were subjected to the answering of questions as to importance their school heads attach the prevention of conflict occurrence in their schools. The respondents were to state whether the school heads attach no importance, little importance, some importance, or great importance to statements stated in section "c" of the questionnaire.

When the respondents were asked whether the headmasters were fair in dealing with all staff members with regards to rewards and punishments, forty-eight representing 43.6% claimed the heads attach great importance to being fair to all staff members. Good enough, only 10.9% claimed that the school heads attach no importance to this conflict preventive strategy. On a safer side, all the four headmasters opined that they attach great importance being fair to all staff members as a way of preventing conflict in their school.

Table 8: Prevention of Conflict by headmasters (Headmasters/ Headmistresses Response)

NO.	STATEMENTS	SI	GI	TOTAL
1.	There is fairness in dealing with all staff members (rewards and punishments)	0 0%	4 100%	4 100%
2.	There is free flow of information to staff members	0 0%	4 100%	4 100%
3.	There is regular staff meeting	0 0%	4 100%)	4 100%
4.	Ensure a transparent administration	0 0%	4 100%	4 100%
5.	Whole-heartedly welcomes feedbacks, criticism, suggestions, reports etc.	1 25%	3 75%	4 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The headmasters together with their teachers maintained the view that the schools' "Chief executive" attached great importance to fair distribution of rewards and punishments to staff members at all times.

Headmasters allowing for free flow of information to staff members were another bone of contention. A minimal of twelve point seven percent said little importance is attached to the free flow of information by school heads. Another group of 27.3% hinted that the headmasters attach some importance to freely given of information while a majority of 54.5%, representing to respondents opined that great importance is attached to the frequent flow of information by headmasters. All the four headmasters however, admitted that they attach great importance to supplying information freely to staff members. Both the headmasters and the teachers are of the opinion that the headmasters attach great importance to the flow of information among staff members as a means of preventing conflict in schools.

Moreover, as to what importance the headmasters attach to regular meetings, a minimal 5.5% lamented that the headmasters attach no importance to conveying meetings. Another batch of 29.1% said some importance is attached to this issue. 7.3% also opined that the headmaster attached little importance to the issue at stake, whilst a whopping 58.2% of the teachers indicated that headmasters just to prevent conflict in their schools. All the four headmasters admitted that they attach great importance to organization of regular staff meetings.

The headmasters as well as their teachers who responded to the questionnaire lamented that headmasters attach great importance organizing regular staff meetings. The next item of interest on the questionnaire was how important it is to the headmaster in ensuring a transparent administration. The least percentage of 5.5% agreed that headmasters attach no importance to operating a transparent administration 23 and 16 respondents, each representing 41.9% and twenty-nine point one percent claimed that headmasters attach some great importance respectively to transparency in administration. Believably all the four headmasters impressed that they attach great importance to offering transparent administration.

The teachers and their headmasters shared varied views since the teachers' response on transparent administration by headmasters reflected some importance. It was further realized that 23.6% of the total respondents saw that headmasters attach little importance to the idea of welcome feedback, reports, suggestions and criticisms. 30.9% opined that headmasters attach some importance of this concept, whereas a majority of 34.5% stressed that great importance is attached to it by headmasters of their schools. One headmasters, on this occasion agreed that he attached some importance to the issue at stake, shares the other three admitted that great importance is attached to welcoming suggestions, feedback, criticism and reports from their subordinates.

The headmasters together with their teachers portrayed that headmasters of the schools attach great importance to the fact that headmasters willingly take bits of information their teachers give them.

With regard to the research question two, the responses from the respondents attach great importance to preventing conflicts. This is deduced from the fact that their responses to the various statements were high.

Both headmasters and teachers lamented that headmasters allow for free flow of information as a way of preventing conflict. [5] supported this idea when he claimed that to prevent conflicts, those in authority are to allow information to flow freely. [5] support for the free flow of information also goes with the headmasters' and teachers claim that the headmasters frequently call for staff meeting where information is disseminated. Both headmaster and tutors further agreed with [5], that when headmasters or those in authority supply information freely to staff members, there is transparency in headmasters' administration and this helps to prevent conflict. The findings on whether the leadership style of the headmasters collaborated with [10] who lamented that the leader's style of administration could help avoid conflict.

3.4 Analysis of Research Question 3: How are Conflicts resolved in the selected Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

The reason for this research question was to find out the strategies put in place by headmasters. In the selected Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis to resolve conflicts when they erupt. It was to

elicit, if the strategies used by the headmasters are appropriate or not. The data that provide an answer to the research question are summarized in tables 14 and 15. The following letters were used to represent the terms on the Likert scale:

V – Very often
O – Often
R – Rarely
N – Never

Table 9: Response of teachers on conflict resolution by headmasters

NO	STATEMENTS	N	R	O	V	TOTAL
1	Withdrawal or non-response i.e., he doesn't bother	16 29.1%	17 30.9%	14 25.5%	8 14.5%	55
2	Keeps on postponing to resolve conflicts i.e. procrastination	19 34.5%	15 27.3%	16 29.1%	14 9.1%	55
3	Removes or reduces contacts between parties involved in the conflicts i.e. isolation Calls and allow for open exchange	13 23.6%	20 36.4%	14 25.5%	8 14.5%	55
4	Confirmation by parties to arrived at a solution that is mutually beneficially to all i.e., collaboration	8 14.5%	9 16.4%	21 38.2%	17 30.9%	55
5	Domination – settles the conflicts without consultation with party	16 29.1%	23 41.8%	10 18.2%	6 18.2%	55

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The last section of the questionnaire was to know what techniques headmasters employ to resolve conflicts when they occur in their schools. Respondents were to indicate the frequency with which the statements given them occur in their school, thus, never, rarely, often and very often.

First on the statements was whether headmasters withdraw or do not respond to conflicts as a measure to resolve such conflicts. 14.5% of the teaching respondents claimed their headmaster very often withdraw from conflict in order to have things normalized by themselves, whereas 25.5% said school headmasters often withdraw from conflict as a resolutely measure. 29.1% of respondents asserted that withdrawal or non-response to conflict by headmasters never occurs in their schools and 30.9% of the respondents opined that withdrawal rarely occurs as a means of solving conflict. Three of the headmasters lamented that they never withdraw from conflicting issues just to make the conflict die down naturally. One of the heads opined that rarely he withdraws from conflict as a way of making conflict die down.

Secondly, respondents were asked whether headmasters procrastinate (postponed) as a means to resolve conflict. The response from 27.3% indicated that procrastination rarely happens on the part of the headmasters trying to resolve conflict and 34.5% of respondents asserted that headmasters never use such a method to nine conflicts. 29.1% and 9.1% intimated that procrastination often and very often occur respectively as instances with which headmasters attempt to "fight" conflict in their schools. On the part of the headmasters, all the four admitted they postpone very often resolve conflict.

The next issue of interest was to find out whether headmasters in their bid to resolve conflict reduced or remove contacts between conflicting parties or isolated them. In responding, 23.6% of respondents claimed the headmasters never reduced contact between conflicting parties 36.4% also said the issue at stake rarely occurs as a means of conflict resolution.

25.5% insisted that isolation method is often used by the headmasters to have conflicts resolved in their schools, whereas 14.5% lamented that headmasters very often resolved conflict through isolation. Three of the schools "Chief Executives" opined that they rarely isolated parties to a conflict in their bid to resolve it. The other one headmaster stressed that they rarely reduced contacts of the parties involved in the conflict during conflict resolution.

In the penultimate question, respondents were to indicate whether headmasters collaborate, that is calling for an open exchange of information from both parties to arrive at a solution. 14.5% and 16.4% out of the total respondents intimidated that headmasters in some selected Senior High Schools never and rarely respectively use collaboration to settle disputes in their schools. Another group of respondents of 38.2% lamented that their headmaster used this method to solve conflict, whereas 30.9% of them said the headmasters applying this technique very often. On the part of the headmasters two of them maintained that they use the collaboration method very often. The other headmasters also lamented that they often and the other headmasters also lamented that they often and rarely use the collaboration method as a means of conflict resolution strategy in the school.

Lastly, the respondents were asked 'How often does your headmaster dominate over conflict' that is headmasters settling conflict without consulting either of the parties. 29.1% argued that headmasters never settle conflict without consulting both parties and a whopping 41.8% asserted that headmasters rarely settle conflicts without the parties involved. A batch of 18.2% of the respondents insisted that often, school heads do not consult conflicting parties before settling conflicts. A minimal group of 10.9%, however gave the extreme of very often as the extent to which headmasters resolve conflict by not consulting conflicting parties before resolving conflicts.

The four headmasters of the selected schools in responding to this issue admitted that they never dominated over conflicts whereby they do not consult conflicting parties before resolving conflicts. Both headmasters and the teachers lamented that headmasters never dominated over conflicts without consulting the parties involved in the conflicts that the headmasters use the following very often to resolve conflicts when they occur. Such solution strategies include:

(i) Allowing for open exchange of information by parties to arrive at a solution that is mutually beneficial to all that is collaboration.

(ii) Domination – settles conflict without consulting the other party. These are deduced from the fact that the responses on these statements were high.

3.5 Discussion on Conflict Resolution Techniques

While the respondents (both headmasters and teachers) maintained that the headmasters never isolate conflicting parties as a means of resolving conflicts, rather opposing. [5] opined that separation or isolation could be used to prevent conflict instead of using it as a measure for resolution.

[8] shared some view with the respondents on the use of collaboration to resolve conflict issues.

They both maintained that an open confrontation approach where individuals freely share their worries for an amicable solution should always be established. [5] further advocated that a third party must be brought in by THE authorities to mediate in conflict resolution. Respondents on their part whole heartedly agreed that their headmaster often brings in third parties to serve as mediator when conflict is to be resolved.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analyses of the result from the study, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Lackadaisical attitude of teachers towards school programmes is the major source of conflict in the schools studied. Headmasters collaborated very often by calling for open exchange of information from both parties to arrive at solutions. Headmasters attached great importance to dealing fairly with all staff members (reward and punishment). The heads of educational institutions that demonstrated openness, friendliness and cared for the welfare of their staff employed rational approaches to conflict management. These heads were successful in managing conflict. By preventing conflict, the heads resolved concerns before they became problems and so saved the school from unnecessary stress.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the research findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are offered to the headmasters of selected Senior High Schools to ensure and enhance conflict free schools.

1. Workshops and/or seminars on the dynamics of personnel management should be organized frequently by the District director of Education through the assistance of the District Coordinating Council and other benevolent organizations for headmasters so that they would be able to manage conflicts when they appear.

2. Heads must be prepared to manage conflicts. In the light of this, it is recommended that there should be conflict management training for both heads and their subordinates by members of the Ghana education Service Head Office. Conflict management skills could be gained through internships and research.

Providing conflict management training for heads will go a long way to help the heads to be effective and efficient managers of their schools.

3. The heads of educational institutions should attempt to maintain an objective and professionalism towards disputes, since by so doing; the heads reactions which might escalate the conflict would be avoided. If the head is not part of the parties to the dispute, it will be easier to play the role of mediator in resolving the conflict. It is, however, advised that a third party be invited if the two parties cannot resolve the issue themselves.

4. It must be noted that people have different values, beliefs, skills, attitudes and aptitudes. Heads should, therefore, have an understanding of the dynamics of group work and skills in human reactions. They must therefore develop the skill for bringing people together congenial terms in case of differences, which must be resolved. It could however be observed that some heads do not have the requisite interpersonal skills and do not time or the inclination to master such techniques as reflective listening or expression of feelings. It is therefore recommended that in case where the heads do not possess the necessary interpersonal skills to use or co-operative and confirming approach, a member of staff who has these qualities should be assigned to act as a communication facilitator.

5. Headmasters are to be encouraged to maintain the practices that have been put in place to avoid conflict in their schools. These practices are being fair in dealing with all staff members, organizing regular staff meeting, allowing information to flow freely to staff members, ensuring a transparent administration among other things.

6. New headmasters of educational institutions must be counseled to emulate or improve upon the footsteps of their predecessors by the District Director of Education or any other qualified personnel from the Ghana Education Office. In order to remove suspicions, and mistrust, there should be adequate provisions for communication in the school. Teachers must be well informed about what is happening in the school.

7. Teachers are to advise themselves to be proactive towards school activities in order to deprive conflict from occurring.

6. AREA OF FURTHER RESEARCH

It is the wish and hope of the researchers that a further research is done on the incidence of lackadaisical attitude of teachers towards school activities as the major cause of conflict in schools. This would help the headmasters understand certain behaviours of some teachers.

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