

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE PHOENIX AREA :
MANAGEMENT TRAINING STRATEGIES

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references .

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on conflict resolution in multi-racial , co-educational schools in the Phoenix region and the development of strategies for the training of management and staff to resolve conflict .

It has been observed that principals in the Phoenix region frequently seek the intervention of third party adjudicators to resolve conflicts experienced at schools . This often prevents the timeous and expeditious resolution of conflicts . The inability to resolve conflict judiciously impinges on job satisfaction , productivity and human relationships in schools .

A literature survey of conflict revealed that conflict in organisations is endemic and inevitable . Conflicts at work , when dealt with systematically , can have positive rather than destructive effects . It is the writer's belief that conflict can be reduced or eliminated if there is a conflict resolution programme in schools which is designed to train both management and staff in conflict resolution .

The writer provided a theoretical understanding of conflict through an analysis of the underlying dynamics of conflict , the effects of organisational conflict and the conflict process . The various levels and areas of conflict in schools were examined . The research examined three approaches to conflict management , evaluated the various conflict handling styles and applied these strategies to conflict situations experienced at schools .

Research was conducted by means of a structured interview applied to a representative sample of principals, teachers and chairpersons of governing bodies in the Phoenix region. The research determined to what extent participants were equipped to manage conflict . Results revealed that conflict resolution training programmes to empower all role-players was necessary for the prevention and management of conflict in schools .

The dissertation has suggestions on the various forms a conflict resolution training programme may take . The writer's recommendations with regard to the implementation of a conflict resolution training programme for principals , teachers and parents on school governing bodies may be an valuable contribution towards the reduction and prevention of conflict in schools which is undesirable and counterproductive .

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

The writer believes that if the myriad of conflicts experienced in a secondary school are to be prevented or resolved , then educational managers and educators will have to develop the necessary skills to manage or minimise these conflicts . It is hoped that the findings of this study will empower all educational leaders and educators in resolving conflict in a more creative and skilful manner , rather than on an ad hoc and emotional basis and , also , without seeking the involvement of outside intervention .

Conflict occurs when two or more people compete over perceived or actual incompatible goals or limited resources . Conflict situations can develop in any organisation and also in schools where the fulfilment of tasks is dependent on and facilitated by people (Van der Westhuizen , 1991:303) . In a school conflicts arise as a result of various reasons such as a clash of personalities , incompatible goals and limited resources . It is important that these conflicts are resolved to prevent dissatisfaction and frustration which is counterproductive . When conflict lingers without being effectively managed , it has been shown to affect the performance of the organisation (Edelman , 1993:3) .

In the layman's eyes , conflict generally has negative and unresolvable connotations . It is regarded as something unpleasant . However , in the social sciences conflict is dealt with in neutral terms . It is realised that conflict has positive and negative effects (Van der Westhuizen , 1991:303) . Conflict is destructive when it damages the physical and emotional well-being of employees and causes loss of confidence and lowers self-esteem (Edelman , 1993:3) . Nevertheless , conflicts do have positive effects as well . Conflict

can be constructive when it exposes important issues and helps to solve them , releases pent-up emotions , stress and anxiety , encourages the involvement of individuals in important issues and so enhances creativity and productivity .

Frequent conflict can have a harmful impact upon the behaviour of people . In schools , educators respond to conflict in various ways . Sometimes , educators become alienated , apathetic and indifferent . A widely occurring response is absence and tardiness . These behavioural consequences of conflict are rather undesirable and affect the efficient functioning of the school . Ineffective management of conflict can exacerbate the situation and cause mounting frustration which eventually deteriorates the school climate. On the other hand , effective management of conflict can lead to outcomes that are productive and enhance the smooth functioning of the school (Owens , 1996 :232-233) . These issues will be dealt with in greater detail in subsequent chapters .

Conflict in itself is neither good nor bad , it is neutral (Filley , 1975:4) . The impact conflict has on the school and the behaviour of educators is largely dependent upon the way in which it is treated . The strategies used to manage all forms of conflict are of utmost importance for the effective functioning of a school . For this reason , it is important that the principal be thoroughly trained in the effective resolution of conflict , otherwise it will not be possible for him to do justice to the key role he occupies .

Everard and Morris correctly state that the ability to manage conflict is a vital factor for managerial success (1996:88) . Prior to their appointment to managerial positions , principals , deputy principals and heads of department do not receive any training to

prepare them for their roles as managers , including how to handle conflict . This is the main reason why conflicts are allowed to snowball out of proportion . Whilst literature provides a general overview of dealing with conflict , there is , however , a need to look at specific areas that cause conflict in secondary schools and to devise strategies for principals and staff to deal with these conflicts .

1.2 Motivation and aims of study

1.2.1 Motivation

The purpose of this study is to identify structural , inter-staff and inter-departmental conflict in multi-racial , co-educational secondary schools in the Phoenix area and to develop strategies for training management and staff to resolve conflict .

Recently , the writer has observed that the occurrence of conflict at his school , as well as at neighbouring schools in the Phoenix region , has reached an alarming level . These schools are experiencing many conflicts on a daily basis which occur as a result of inter-staff conflict, inter-departmental conflict and conflicts which arise as a result of a hierarchy of authority that is still traditional .

In many instances , these conflicts are not managed effectively by principals and staff because they do not have the skills for handling conflict . Unresolved conflicts eventually affect the effective functioning of these schools . These conflicts often damage the physical and emotional well-being of educators and leads to frustration . They divert energy from important work or issues , destroy the morale of educators and polarise groups in the school .

It has been observed that principals in the Phoenix region frequently seek the intervention of superintendents of education and unions , in order to address conflicts that are experienced at their schools , because they do not have the necessary skills to manage these conflicts . The Department of Education of KwaZulu Natal does not have the manpower to deal with all these conflicts . This frequently prevents the timeous and expeditious resolution of conflicts . The teacher unions , who play an active role in conflict resolution as well , are also finding it difficult to cope with increasing demands to address conflicts at schools . Moreover , since many union members are also full-time educators , they do not have adequate time to address these conflicts efficiently . The inability to resolve conflict does serious damage to job satisfaction , productivity and human relationships at schools (Squelch and Lemmer , 1994:148) . It is , therefore , in the interest of Phoenix schools that conflict be effectively managed . When principals and staff are well trained and equipped with skills to handle conflict creatively , it will become easier to deal with it and so benefit the whole school .

The problem will not be solved , however , until there is a conflict resolution programme in Phoenix schools , which is designed to train both management and staff in conflict resolution . Management and staff in Phoenix schools should acquire conflict resolution skills and it is in the light of this that the present study focuses on the training of management and staff in dealing with conflict .

1.2.2 Aims of study

The specific objectives of this study is as follows:

- 1.2.2.1 To define and examine the concept of conflict in secondary schools . The writer believes that an analysis of conflict will have a very practical objective: better management of conflict . A probing analysis of conflict should try to determine what the underlying cause of the problem is and assist managers to select the appropriate strategy to manage it .
- 1.2.2.2 To present an overview of the common causes of conflict in schools and to examine , more specifically , why conflicts arise in Phoenix schools as a result of inter-staff conflict , inter-departmental conflict and conflict as a result of a hierarchy of authority that is still traditional .
- 1.2.2.3 To discuss three strategies for dealing with conflict , namely , the win-lose strategy , the lose-lose strategy and the win-win strategy . A study of these strategies will equip principals and teachers in Phoenix with skills to deal with conflict . The writer will also examine the five common conflict handling styles such as avoiding , accommodating , compromising , competing and collaborating. The writer believes that an understanding of the five conflict handling orientations will show principals and teachers in Phoenix that there is no best way of managing conflict under all conditions . All five styles are useful in some situations . Principals and teachers in Phoenix will ascertain that the effectiveness of the various conflict handling styles will depend on the requirements of the specific situation and the skill with which each approach may be used .

1.2.2.4 To evaluate the extent to which principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies are equipped to deal with conflict at schools .

1.2.2.5 To project some sort of conflict management training programme for principals and teachers in Phoenix by referring to strategies used by overseas institutions and to adapt these strategies to suit the needs of principals and teachers in Phoenix .

1.3 The Direction of this Research

In this Chapter the problem to be researched has been stated and related issues discussed , including the reasons for carrying out this research .

Chapter 2 will examine the nature of conflict in organisations and focus on the definition of conflict , the changing views of conflict , the effects of organisational conflict , the conflict process and the antecedent conditions of conflict .

In Chapter 3 the writer will present an overview of the common causes of conflict in schools and thereafter will identify conflict which involves an individual teacher , two teachers , teachers within a department , groups of teachers and an administrator such as a principal and finally , conflict between teachers and parents .

The focus of Chapter 4 will be on the patterns of behaviour which individuals use for conflict resolution and an examination of the consequences of the different conflict handling styles . Specific conflict situations experienced at schools will be examined and

the ways in which theories of conflict may be used to manage conflict in schools will be illustrated .

In Chapter 5 the writer will describe the instrument used to collect data to ascertain the extent to which principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies are equipped to deal with conflict and analyse these findings . These findings will be compared with those of other researchers .

Chapter 6 will examine a conflict management plan adopted by Bibb Middle School as a form of a staff development model designed to bring about the school-wide implementation of a conflict curriculum/management programme . The writer will also make suggestions on the various forms a conflict management training programme may take by referring to strategies used by other researchers as well as his own experiences .

1.4 Methodology

A careful study of literature with a view to deriving a conceptual framework and a theoretical background within which the problem could be investigated , was undertaken.

The South African Schools Act of 1996 and the various policy changes that have taken place in education since the democratisation of our country in 1994 , has been a source of much conflict in schools . Teachers , principals and parents do not have an idea of how to deal with these conflicts because there is nothing in the literature, which specifically deals with the kind of conflicts that are experienced in schools .

The writer conducted this research from his own observations as a member of the management of his school and as a union official . The writer has been involved in conflict resolution at school for the past nine years . He has mediated many conflict situations between teachers , between teachers and management and between teachers and parents . For the past two years the writer served the Association of Professional Educators of KwaZulu Natal (APEK) , a teacher union , as a teacher welfare officer , a portfolio which entailed resolving conflicts experienced by its members . The writer has been extensively involved in dealing with unfair labour practices and other teacher-related issues . This involved negotiating with school principals , other teacher unions and with officials of the Department of Education of KwaZulu Natal . As a result of his “hands on” experience , the writer is well acquainted with the different types of conflicts experienced at school level .

The writer conducted formally structured interviews in the Phoenix region and the sample comprised of six secondary schools and four primary schools . Ten principals , ten teachers and ten chairpersons of governing bodies participated in these interviews . These face-to-face interviews were done through a formally structured questionnaire (Refer to Appendices 1 , 2 and 3) . The objective of these interviews was to ascertain whether teachers , principals and parents on governing bodies are equipped to deal with conflict and to project some sort of programme for the training of principals , teachers and chairpersons of governing bodies to deal with conflicts at school .

Conflict resolution in schools is a new concept . The writer , therefore , consulted the available literature on conflict resolution and used other countries as a standard of

comparison . A study of the relevant literature revealed that “conflict” was a complex concept . Since there was nothing in the literature to suit the needs of schools in Phoenix , the writer proposed conflict resolution training programmes which principals , teachers and school governing bodies in Phoenix could use to deal with conflict .

1.5 Summary

In this Chapter the writer outlined the purpose of the research and provided information concerning the background to the problem . The writer clarified the aims of the study , indicated why he believed the study was important and also how it could contribute to our knowledge . Finally , the direction of the research was outlined .

In the next Chapter the writer will examine the nature of conflict in organisations and focus on the definition of conflict , the changing views of conflict , the effects of organisational conflict , the conflict process and the antecedent conditions of conflict .

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CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Introduction

Conflict is a phenomenon so omnipresent in social life that we tend to take it for granted . When we examine it , however , we see that it is a phenomenon which is susceptible to analysis (Kahn and Boulding , 1964:75) . This analysis of conflict will have a very practical objective : better management of real conflict . Kahn and Boulding believe that the very term “conflict management” expresses our objective better than “conflict resolution” (1964:78) . They assert that the term “resolution” has an air of finality . The objective of conflict management is to ensure that conflicts remain on the creative and useful side of the barrier that divides “good” conflict from “bad” . Conflict is indeed an essential and , for the most part , useful element in social life . There is , however , a tendency for unmanaged conflict to get out of hand and to become detrimental to all parties (Kahn and Boulding , 1964:76) .

Conflict occurs in all organisations . It arises no matter how carefully interpersonal relations are structured to avoid it (Anderson , 1968:115) . Although managers work to resolve or eliminate conflict , it is important to note that some conflict is inevitable and many have beneficial effects (Seyfarth , 1996:243) . It is , therefore , essential for managers to search for and analyse the underlying dynamics of conflict because the causes may not be what they seem on the surface . A probing analysis of conflict should try to determine what the underlying cause of the problem is and assist managers to select the appropriate strategy to manage it (Hanson , 1996:268) .

This Chapter examines the nature of conflict in organisations and focuses on the definition of conflict , the changing views of conflict , the effects of organisational conflict , the conflict process and the antecedent conditions of conflict .

2.2 The Nature of Conflict in Organisations

2.2.1 Definition of Conflict

If we try to get a picture of the way conflict has been treated in the literature , we immediately come up against the problem that the term has been assigned widely differing significance in different contexts . To a great many sociological and socio-psychological writers , conflict has been , more or less , equated with the expression of hostile attitudes . Elsewhere , particularly in the political sciences and economics , conflicts have been conceived as situations involving two parties with contradictory or irreconcilable interests (Rhenman , Stromberg and Westerlund , 1970: 57-58) .

Seyfarth tells us that conflict occurs when people disagree regarding values , information and goals , or when individuals compete for scarce resources (1996:243) . To Patrick and Raymond , conflict refers to a perception that values , goals or needs are incompatible (1996:2) . Burton views conflict as a behaviour that is , or has the potential to be destructive of persons , properties and systems . He contends that the issues that lead to conflicts are not the ordinary ideas , choices , preferences and interests which are argued and negotiated as part of normal living : they are those whose sources are deeply rooted in human behaviour (Burton:2 b) .

Kahn and Boulding are of the view that power plays an integral part in the occurrence of conflict (1964:1) . They believe that a person's behaviour at any time is determined by some set of forces , including those generated by his own needs and values and those exerted on him by external agents . If A has the power to change B's behaviour , then it implies that A exerts some force , in opposition to some or all of the previously existing forces , on B . This is conflict . The extent and consequences of conflict depend on many factors , viz. the nature , basis and magnitude of the force which A exerts and the forces which he is attempting to overcome in order to determine B's behaviour .

The Likerts view conflict as "the active striving for one's own preferred outcome which , if attained , precludes the attainment by others of their own preferred outcome , thereby excluding hostility " (Likert and Likert , 1976:7) . Filley defines conflict in terms of incompatible goals and different values . He summarises the characteristics of a conflict situation as follows :

- at least two parties (individuals or groups) are involved in some kind of interaction .
- mutually exclusive goals and /or mutually exclusive values exist , in fact or as perceived by the parties involved .
- interaction is characterised by behaviour designed to defeat , or suppress the the opponent to gain a mutually designated victory .
- the parties face each other with mutually opposing actions and counteractions .
- each party attempts to create an imbalance or relatively favoured position of power vis-à-vis the other (1975:1) .

Study of the vast body of scientific literature reveals that there is no consensus on a definition of "conflict". There is, nevertheless, concurrence that two things are essential to any conflict: divergent (or apparently divergent) views and incompatibility of those views (Owens, 1996:231).

By knowing the natural system of conflict, managers may adjust their actions or conditions before conflict takes place, instead of waiting for conflicts to develop before taking action (Filley, 1975:3). Hanson contends that conflict anticipation and detection are the first two phases of good conflict management. By anticipating the probability of conflict, managers will be able to adopt a proactive, rather than a reactive, strategy to conflict management (1996:268). This point will be dealt with later.

2.3 Changing views of Conflict

2.3.1 Traditional view of Conflict

Traditionally, conflict in organisations has been viewed very negatively. It has been considered as bad and harmful because conflict could cause losses in productivity and because groups would not co-operate to meet organisational goals effectively. Conflict affected the morale of employees often causing stress, frustration and anxiety, which were detrimental to the employees' well-being and his work. Too much conflict may distract managers from their work and reduce their concentration on the task on hand. Because of this, managers have traditionally been negatively evaluated for allowing conflicts to surface in their work environment. In contrast, where there was an absence of conflict, it was seen as a sign of managerial effectiveness. Hence, historically most

managers have been concerned with eliminating or suppressing all conflicts (Feldman and Arnold , 1983:210) .

Traditional administrative theory has always strongly favoured the ideal , that is , a smooth-running organisation characterised by harmony , unity , co-ordination , efficiency and order . The existence of conflict was thus viewed as evidence of a breakdown in the organisation - failure on the part of management to exercise control . In contrast , according to Robbins , the human relations view of conflict argues that conflict is a natural and inevitable occurrence in all organisations and he advocates the acceptance of conflict (1991:513) . Nevertheless , human relations adherents view conflict in a negative light as failure , on the part of management , to develop appropriate norms in the group . Thus both classical and human relations followers agree that conflict is disruptive and something to be avoided (Owens , 1996:230) .

2.3.2 Contemporary views of Conflict

The current examination of conflict indicates a dramatic change in attitude as organisations now see it as useful . Patrick and Raymond consider conflict and stress as natural parts of human life . Since people bring unique hopes , ideas and values to the workplace , not everyone will see eye to eye . Employees and managers must simply learn to cope with conflict to reach organisational goals (1996:682) . For Owens , conflict in organisations is inevitable , endemic , and often legitimate (1996:232) . An organisation's groups depend on one another to achieve their objectives : this interdependence in itself is a potential source of conflict .

Recently , a broader view of conflict has been emerging , a view that sees the positive aspects of conflict as well as the dysfunctional . While the negative consequences of conflict are detrimental to the organisation , there are some benefits to be derived from conflict as well . Conflict can be a catalyst for change . It can force organisations to re-examine their goals , force managers to face important issues they have been ignoring , jolt organisations out of the status quo and lead them toward innovation (Feldman and Arnold , 1983:210) .

Sometimes , suppressing all conflicts only leads to further negative consequences . Groups tend to become pre-occupied with outdoing their opponents and thus waste their energy , rather than focusing on problem-solving . Confrontation as a strategy for resolving conflict , can sometimes be more effective than suppression .

This current theoretical perspective on conflict is the interactionist approach . The interactionist view of conflict proposes that conflict can not only be a positive force in an organisation , but is absolutely necessary for an organisation to perform effectively (Robbins , 1991:513) . An organisation totally devoid of conflict is viewed as being static , apathetic , and non-responsive to the need for change . In fact , Robbins asserts that conflict is functional because it initiates the search for new and better ways of doing things and undermines complacency in an organisation . Change does not pop out of thin air . It needs a stimulus . That stimulus is conflict (1990:414) .

The interactionist view implies a wider role for managers in dealing with conflict than does the traditional approach . The manager's job is to create an environment in which

conflict is healthy but not allowed to run to pathological extremes (Robbins , 1990:414). The major contribution of the interactionist approach , therefore , is that it encourages managers to maintain an ongoing minimum level of conflict , enough to keep the organisation viable , self-critical , and creative .

2.4 Effects of Organisational Conflict

Conflict , a social process which manifests itself in various forms and which has certain outcomes , is in itself neither good nor bad (Filley , 1975:4) . The conflict process merely leads to certain results . Whether those results are favourable or unfavourable depends , among other criteria , on the measures used and the party making the judgement . Conflicts have long been regarded as important challenges in human affairs , primarily because of their negative effects . In the literature on educational organisations this negative perspective is also evident , but it is tempered consistently by acknowledgements of the potential for positive effects (Fris , 1992:65) .

2.4.1 The values of Conflict

Let us consider some of the positive values of conflict :

2.4.1.1 The diffusion of more serious conflict

In institutions , where acceptable resolution procedures have been established to deal with conflict , these may serve as preventative measures against more destructive outcomes . Where grievance systems are in place in an institution , these procedures help to systematically adjudicate differences and so avoid major clashes between parties such as management and unions . In addition to this , where organisation members share in decision-making and problem-solving , they will view conflict in a positive light as a

problem to be solved rather than avoided . This attitude towards conflict resolution , will no doubt , reduce the likelihood of major fights and disruption (Filley , 1975:4) .

2.4.1.2 The stimulation of a search for new facts or solutions

Conflict is not only unavoidable but is also a valuable part of life . It helps to ensure that different possibilities are properly considered and so solutions may be generated from the discussion of alternatives (Everard and Morris , 1996:88) . When parties are involved in a disagreement , the process may lead to a clarification of facts , thus facilitating the resolution of conflict . Conflict can stimulate the search for new methods or solutions . When parties are in conflict about which of two alternatives to accept , their disagreement may stimulate a search for another solution mutually acceptable to both . Discussion between people with differing interests or opinions can lead to the development of creative solutions , which neither conflicting party had previously considered (Filley , 1975:5) . Often , the anticipated course of action is also tested at an early stage , thereby reducing the risk of missing any flaws which may emerge later .

As the preceding discussion suggests , conflict can create tension which is decreased through problem-solving . This tension may be beneficial to the organisation as it acts as a stimulus to find new methods for its own reduction , and this may consequently lead to creative solutions to problems (Filley , 1975:6) .

2.4.1.3 An increase in group cohesion and performance

Conflictive situations between two or more groups are likely to increase both cohesiveness and the performance of the groups . There is an immediate increase in

group loyalty and team spirit because during the conflict , members of each group close ranks , spirits go up and all are united in their efforts . The levels of work and co-operation are high (Filley , 1975:6) . A less satisfactory result is that group members see the work of their own group as superb and downgrade that of the opposing group . All capacity for objective perception is wiped out in the struggle . Members of each group fail to see similarities in solutions and see only differences between their solution and that of the other group (Likert and Likert , 1976:62) . The winning group glorifies its leader , while the leader of the losing group decreases in status . The winning group becomes content and rests on its laurels . There is little motivation for further improvement . In the defeated group there is bitterness among members and internal fighting and splintering may occur (Likert and Likert , 1976:63) .

On the other hand there is an increased cohesion in the losing group , after an analysis is undertaken to discover what led to their defeat . The group galvanises support and works out strategies so as to increase the likelihood of victory next time . In contrast , the victorious group , on the other hand , may become complacent and may emerge as a less effective group . The level of co-operation and effort by group members during the conflict may actually decrease once the conflict is resolved (Filley , 1975:7) .

2.4.1.4 The measure of power or ability

Conflict provides a readily available method of measurement as the relative power of parties may be identified through conflictive situations . Coercion , control , and suppression require clear superiority of one party over another , whereas problem-solving requires equal power . Consequently , a party wishing to avoid suppression of an

opponent , must take action to provide a favourable power balance . The suppression of the opponent can be avoided by employing problem-solving methods which ensure a balance of power (Filley , 1975:7) .

2.4.2 Negative effects of Conflict

Conflict may become a dangerous and disruptive force whenever personal “glory” is staked on the outcome . As the conflict develops , the more “glory” is staked , the more bitter the conflict becomes and the less easy it is to achieve a solution . Decision-making is paralysed because neither party dares to make any concessions for fear that these will be seized by the other party as a victory and an opportunity for further advance (Everard and Morris , 1996:89) .

Frequent and powerful hostility , arising from conflict , can have a devastating effect on the behaviour of people in organisations and may affect the effective functioning of the organisation (Owens , 1996:232) . Negative effects of interpersonal conflict are most likely to be stress related with the individual showing psychological , physical and behavioural symptoms (Edelman , 1993:4) . Physical withdrawal , such as absence from work due to illness , is a widely occurring response to conflict in schools . Psychological withdrawal from hostility such as alienation , apathy and indifference is also a common response in organisations (Owens , 1996:232) .

2.5 The Conflict Process

When parties are arguing , a conflict clearly exists . But arguments usually take place because of a conflict that started some time earlier . The argument is merely a way to express the conflict . More formally stated , conflict follows the stages in Figure 2-1 : antecedent conditions , perceived conflict , felt conflict , manifest behaviour , conflict resolution or suppression , and resolution aftermath .

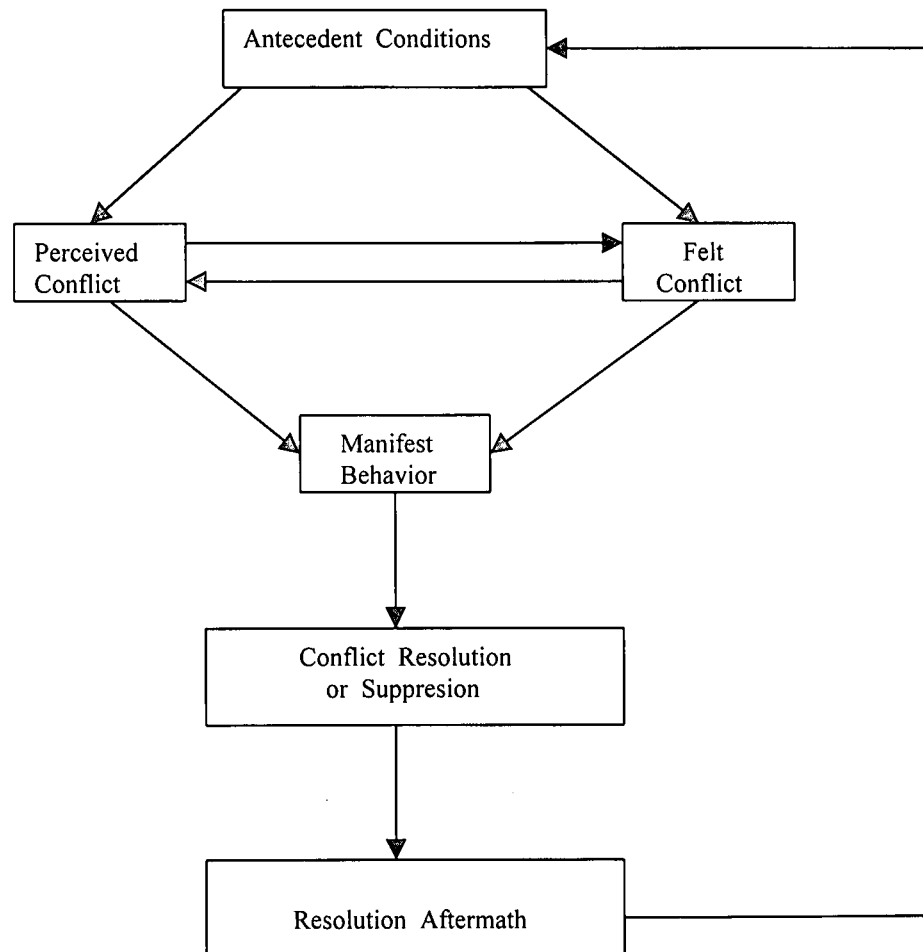


FIGURE 2-1. The Conflict Process . (Filley , 1975:8) .

An understanding of the conflict process and the factors that led to conflict is vital in order to minimise conflict .

2.5.1 The antecedent conditions of Conflict

2.5.1.1 Ambiguous jurisdictions

Conflict will be greater when the limits of each party's jurisdiction are ambiguous . The potential for conflict increases when two parties have similar responsibilities for which actual boundaries are unclear (Filley , 1975:9) . For example , in a school where there are two deputy principals , the potential for conflict will be greater if their roles are not clearly defined .

2.5.1.2 Conflict of interest

Conflict will be greater where a conflict of interest exists between the parties . One such situation is a competition for resources . For example , when the science department demands the lion's share of the annual budget (Filley , 1975:9) . There may also be conflicting interests when more than one person competes for the same promotion post in a school : a situation which may cause discord .

2.5.1.3 Communication barriers

Where communication barriers exist , the potential for conflict is greater . As information is passed up and down the hierarchy , it is susceptible to ambiguity and distortion and so may lead to conflict . Also where departments work on their own without much collaboration with other departments , animosities can develop , for instance , when there is competition for limited resources . Semantic difficulties are also a frequent problem in

organisations . They impede communication essential for departmental co-operation . Another source of communicative conflict , is the wilful withholding of information by an individual or a unit . Since information is an important source of power , it is well known that when important information is deliberately kept secret , conflict will ensue (Robbins , 1990:424) .

2.5.1.4 Dependence of one party

Conflict will be greater when one party is dependent upon another . The opportunity for conflict to occur is increased when one party must rely on another for performance of a task . (Filley , 1975:10) For example , a teacher taking over a class from another teacher finds that learners have not been prepared adequately for the particular grade , accuses their previous teacher of neglect and so conflict ensues between the two .

2.5.1.5 Differentiation in organisation

Conflict will be greater when the degree of differentiation in an organisation increases . The organisational pyramid , with a number of organisational levels , is the cause of evil as it emphasises power and in so doing reinforces insecurity , distorts communication and hobbles interaction : it presents fertile ground for conflict of interest , dependency or jurisdictional conflict (Jenkins , 1991:50) .

2.5.1.6 Association of the parties

Conflict will be greater when the degree of association of the parties increases (Filley , 1975:11) . For example , when parties are involved in joint decision-making , the opportunity for conflict is greater . This does not imply that managers must avoid

participative decision-making to avoid conflict . Managers should , however , ensure that participants are equipped with the necessary skills of conflict resolution .

2.5.1.7 Need for consensus

When parties must meet to reach consensus on a decision , there is bound to be disagreements as each party will have its own expectations and goals .

2.5.1.8 Behaviour regulations

Where behaviour regulations are imposed , conflict will be greater . Bureaucracy allows for the introduction of rules , standardised procedures and policies . These regulatory mechanisms create order in an organisation and reduce conflict to an extent . On the other hand , the imposition of rules can create disagreements . Furthermore , excessive control over parties may be resisted (Filley , 1975:11) . In schools , where professionals have a high degree for autonomy and self control , the presence of regulatory procedures is a potential source of conflict .

2.5.1.9 Unresolved prior conflicts

Conflicts will be greater as the number of unresolved prior conflicts increases . The prior experience of parties will affect their behaviour and may become a source of further conflict (Filley , 1975:12) .

These antecedent conditions may not lead directly to conflict , but they can certainly create grounds for conflict .

2.5.2 Perceived Conflict

Each party has its own perception and understanding of an event and these may differ markedly from each other . In many cases , it is the inaccurate or illogical perception of a situation which leads to conflict between parties . Sometimes parties do not understand each other's actual positions or they take positions based on limited facts . During this stage of conflict , individuals either act on or ignore the problem .

2.5.3 Felt Conflict

This is a stage of conflict during which employees have an emotional reaction to the problem . Feelings and attitudes may create conflict where a rational approach would resolve the issue . When a situation is personalised and the whole being of the party is threatened or judged negatively , tension and anxiety are created . On the other hand , removal of the personal element encourages problem-solving because the person knows that he himself is not being judged (Filley , 1975:14) .

2.5.4 Manifest Behaviour

During this stage of conflict , individuals or groups act out the conflict by intentionally frustrating their opponents or blocking the achievement of the other party's goal . Their behaviour may be subtle , such as refusal to co-operate , or obvious , such as physical aggression or sabotage . Individuals or groups are unable to work together to achieve mutual goals . At this stage conflict must be resolved quickly as manifest behaviour is destructive to the individuals and the goal achievement of the organisation (Patrick and Raymond , 1996:684) .

2.5.5 Conflict Resolution or Suppression

The next step in the conflict process is that of conflict resolution or suppression . If the conflict is resolved positively , it will augur well for greater co-operation between individuals . If the conflict is suppressed or avoided , new conflicts are likely to surface later .

2.5.6 Resolution Aftermath

Usually after the conflict has been resolved , the future relations of the parties and their attitudes about each other will be affected . The outcome of a conflict leaves parties with a positive or negative feeling . A defeat may leave a party with antagonistic feelings that may set the stage for further conflict . Where resolution is one of compromise , both parties may feel that they have given more than they received . Although neither of the parties lose all , they nevertheless may have a feeling of defeat and will prepare themselves better for their next encounter . Where both parties engage in problem-solving and achieve an integrated outcome , the parties are brought closer to each other and the level of co-operation between them increases (Filley , 1975:18) .

2.6 Summary

The preceding discussion examined the nature of conflict in organisations , defined conflict , examined the changing views of conflict and the effects of organisational conflict and finally , outlined the sequence associated with the development and resolution of conflict . In the next Chapter we will discuss various strategies for conflict resolution .

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CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of life . Everyone who works and lives together has disagreements or differences of opinion about how to deal with the many issues and concerns we face constantly (Morse and Ivey , 1996:61) . As is the case with all complex organisations , educational systems too have the ingredients of conflict and stress inherent in them (Hanson , 1996:259) . An analysis of the levels and causes of conflict in schools is the focus of this Chapter .

Conflict may occur within the individual (intrapersonal conflict) , between two individuals (interpersonal conflict) , within groups (intragroup conflict) , between groups or between an individual and a group (intergroup conflict) . Firstly , this Chapter will present an overview of the common causes of conflict in schools and secondly , deal with conflict which involves an individual teacher , two teachers , teachers within a department , groups of teachers or a teacher and an administrator such as a principal and finally , conflict between teachers and parents .

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF COMMON CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN SCHOOLS

A teacher is in contact with fellow teachers , administrators , non-teaching school personnel and parents . In each case , contact may sometimes result in conflict , of which several have been identified .

3.2.1 Conflicts with other Teachers

With respect to teacher-teacher conflicts , the usual causes are : gossiping among teachers ; criticism of one teacher by another , particularly when made to a Third Party ; blaming former teachers for the subsequent failure of students ; formation of cliques ; either of teachers of a subject , members of a social or religious group , or supporters of a particular pedagogical viewpoint , (they can mobilise a school into “armed camps”) ; using unfair tactics in competing with fellow teachers for promotion or other forms of recognition ; intolerance of fellow teachers , who propose new ideas which threaten to disturb the status quo ; dodging responsibility for activities ranging from committee work to playground supervision ; scheduling class activities , (for example , field trips) without taking into consideration disruption of teachers’ classes and appropriating the supplies and equipment of teachers without their permission (Bortner , 1959:79) .

3.2.2 Conflicts with Administrators

3.2.2.1 Conflict between teacher(s) and administrator(s)

The causes of teacher-administrator conflicts include most of those mentioned above in teacher-teacher conflicts . For instance , gossip , criticism , cliques , unfair competitive tactics and dodging of responsibilities are likely to be no less disturbing to an administrator than to a colleague . Whether these practices concern an administrator or other teachers , they are extremely harmful to the school’s total welfare .

3.2.2.2 Teacher’s dissatisfaction with the overall system of administration

In addition conflict with administrators includes the following : the failure of teachers to support administrative policies and practices in school or publicly ; failure to operate

through established channels when presenting ideas and voicing complaints ; the excessive and burdensome clerical work demanded of teachers ; large classes and insufficient time for planning and preparation ; authoritarian control and administrative measures exemplified by uniform policies and prescriptive staff meetings (all of which indicate an absence of consultation and participative decision-making in matters affecting teachers themselves) .

3.2.3 Conflicts with Non-Teaching Personnel

The causes of teacher conflict with non-teaching colleagues commonly include : snobbish teacher attitudes towards “inferior” clerical and manual employees who become resentful; teacher criticism of the work of non-teaching personnel while neglecting to discuss complaints with the individuals in question ; brusque and ungracious teacher demands on the time and services of non-teaching personnel ; teacher failure to express appreciation for services rendered , especially when these are over and above work schedules , and the failure of teachers to attend to simple “housekeeping” chores in their own classrooms and so making the work of custodians difficult (Bortner , 1959:80) .

3.2.4 Conflicts with Parents

The causes of teacher and administrator conflicts with parents include problems with learners and parents in respect of discipline and academic work .

3.2.5 Conflicts with school governors

The causes of teacher conflicts with school governors include : conflicting interests of teachers and school governors ; interference of school governors in the day-to-day

running of the school ; interference of school governors in the personal life of teachers and nepotism of school governors with regard to teacher promotions and staff recruitment .

3.3 LEVELS AND CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN SCHOOLS

Conflict can be examined on several different levels . Conflict may arise within an individual and is then termed **intrapersonal conflict** , while conflict between two people is termed **interpersonal conflict** . Conflict within a group is labelled **intragroup conflict** , and conflict between groups is referred to as **intergroup conflict** . In this Section , we will examine specific aspects and examples of intrapersonal , interpersonal , intragroup and intergroup conflicts in schools .

3.3.1 Intrapersonal Conflict

Intrapersonal conflict is the struggle that a person has within himself : different feelings within oneself can be at war with one another . The true source of conflict is thus to be found within the person and is closely linked to his personality (Van der Westhuizen , 1991:304) .

A common form of intrapersonal conflict in teachers involves choices between mutually exclusive goals : teachers sometimes find themselves in roles for which they are not personally suited , for example , the authoritarian guidance counsellor , the disorganised principal , and the anti-intellectual teacher are examples of personal attitudes not matching the vocational requirements of their positions . Such individuals frequently suffer stress . This may occur , for example , when a teacher is caught up in a conflict

between his professional autonomy and the bureaucratic authority in the school , that is , between his own responsibility , self-determination and professional autonomy , and the rules and procedures of a bureaucratic organisation . As a result , a teacher may become confused about the ultimate source of authority and his role . When the teacher's role expectations are not realised , he may abandon them and accept the type of orientation that is rewarded by a school (Anderson , 1968:114) .

3.3.1.1 Approach-Approach Conflict

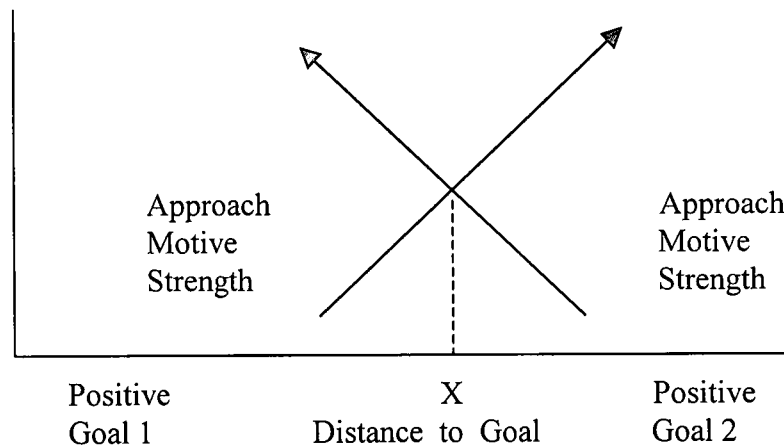


Figure 3.1 Model of Motive Strength - Approach-Approach Conflict

(Vechio , 1995:476)

According to Vechio , several types of intrapersonal conflict can be identified , depending on the nature of choices . Approach-approach conflict arises when an individual must choose between two attractive alternatives . For example , a principal faces an approach-approach conflict when he must choose between two highly qualified applicants for a position . Approach-approach conflict poses a problem only for a brief

period of time . If we illustrate such a situation in terms of the strength of each motive in approaching a desired goal , as in Figure 3.1 , we can see that a person would initially be caught between the two alternatives (position X in the graph) However , even slight movement in the direction of one of the choices is enough to break the deadlock and lead to the selection of an option . An interesting feature of approach-approach conflict is the change that occurs in the individual's attitude toward the rejected option . Often , the individual rationalises that the chosen option is inherently better (Vecchio , 1995:473) .

3.3.1.2 Avoidance-avoidance Conflict

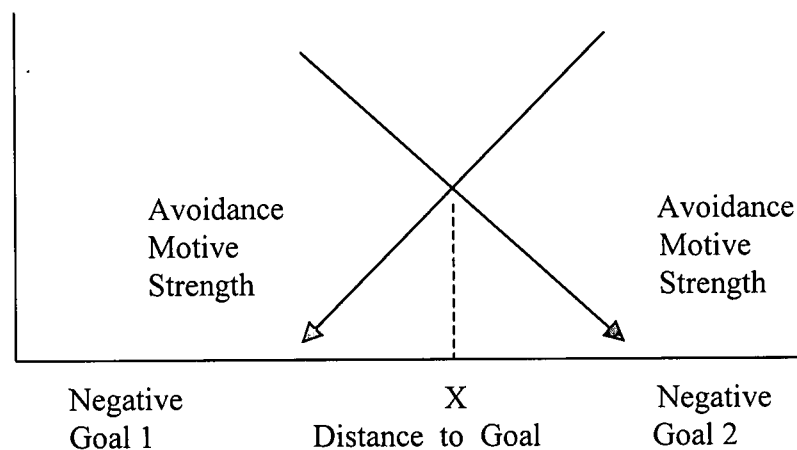


Figure 3.2 Model of Motive Strength - Avoidance-Avoidance Conflict

(Vecchio , 1995 : 476)

Avoidance-avoidance conflict involves a choice between two equally attractive options : for example , a teacher may be faced with a dilemma when he has to decide whether to accept a retrenchment package or accept redeployment to a remote posting . The net result is that the teacher is caught between two options . Faced with an avoidance-

avoidance conflict , most people will vacillate between the two options , without resolving the conflict (point X in Figure 3.2) . However , if one of the motives becomes stronger , the conflict can be resolved . Thus , if the teacher is the sole breadwinner , he may decide to accept redeployment to ensure continued employment .

People who are trapped in avoidance-avoidance situations sometimes have another option for dealing with their conflict - leaving the situation . It is not always possible to quit one's job . Avoidance-avoidance conflict is difficult to resolve as this conflict places the person in a situation of trying to maintain the distance between opposing outcomes (Vecchio , 1995:476) .

3.3.1.3 Approach-avoidance Conflict

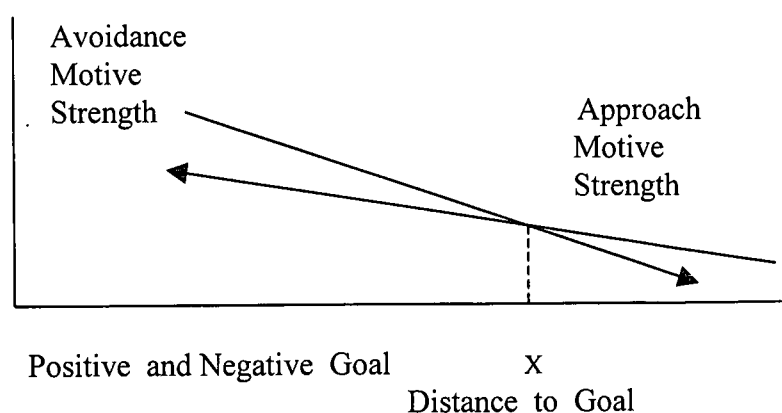


Figure 3.3 Model of Motive Strength - Approach-Avoidance Conflict
(Vecchio , 1995:476)

In an approach -avoidance conflict , the individual must decide whether to approach or avoid a single goal that has both positive (attractive) and negative (unattractive) qualities. This is not an uncommon circumstance in schools , where many goals have mixed

outcomes for an individual . For example , a conflict could arise when a teacher is offered promotion to an attractive position that involves reporting to a person with whom it is difficult to work . If the motive to avoid conflict is stronger than the motive to approach it , the person will be caught at a point where the strengths of the motives are roughly equal (point X in Figure 3.3) As the person moves toward or away from the goal , the relatively stronger motive takes over and brings the person back to a point where he vacillates .

The resolution of an approach-avoidance conflict requires the strengthening of one motive over the other . Then it is possible for a person to reach his goal . This can be accomplished if the goal is made more attractive or if the individual rationalises to overcome the conflict (Vecchio , 1995:476) .

In a school , intrapersonal conflict is often caused by such things as poor time-management , underestimation and overestimation of one's personal skills and being assigned tasks that do not match one's goals , interests , values or abilities . Other causes are the inability to say no to requests , a lack of self-confidence and being perceived as lacking control in handling organisational responsibilities . All of these issues are complicated by doubts about how others see and evaluate us (Hanson , 1996:263) .

3.3.2 Interpersonal Conflict

This is conflict which arises because of the differences between individuals . This form of conflict involves some form of clash stemming from the personal motives of those involved and is the most common and visible type of conflict in school (Hanson , 1996:263) . Conflict mostly arises out of fundamental differences concerning priorities , activities and policy matters of the school which may have a long history (Van der Westhuizen , 1991:305) .

Interpersonal conflict at work is evident at both a personal and organisational level . In the latter instance , conflict has been shown to affect the performance of the organisation or unit as a whole . At a personal level the negative effects of interpersonal conflict are most likely to be stress-related . This is worrying as teachers , because of interpersonal conflict , may be hindered in fulfilling their educational objectives . It is therefore imperative for managers to deal with interpersonal conflicts for the sake of the organisation and the individual (Edelman , 1993:3) .

In schools interpersonal conflicts occur for a variety of reasons , including the following :

3.3.2.1 Personal differences

Conflicts emerge because of individual idiosyncrasies and personal value systems . The chemistry between some people makes it hard for them to work together . Factors such as education , experience and training mould each individual into a unique personality with a particular set of values . Hence , when individuals are incorrectly perceived by others

as abrasive , untrustworthy , or strange , these personal differences can create conflict (Robbins , 1991:517) . For example , a head of department at a secondary school comments on a colleague :

When Mr.Pillay and I are on the same committee , we just try to get on with the work , keeping everything as formal as possible . It's difficult to say why we don't get on , we just seem to irritate each other .

The majority of clashes are between two people who approach the same situation in different ways . For example , a deputy principal who is very rigid in his thinking would find it difficult to work with someone who is very flexible . Similarly , an intense , highly energetic teacher would find it difficult to work in a team with a sluggish teacher . An individual may clash with someone because he has different opinions or beliefs or because of his personal habits . However , it is possible to work with people we dislike if we simply follow the appropriate rules governing formal relationships (Edelman , 1993:12) .

3.3.2.2 Limited resources

When a school's resources , which include budget allocations , assigned teaching posts , space or facilities are insufficient , there is competition among teachers for resources and this may result in conflict . For example , a teacher in a science department may request permission to attend a regional conference sponsored by a national science teachers' association . His head of department has also asked to attend , but there is not enough money in the budget to pay expenses for both . If the principal approves the departmental head's application in place of the teacher's , he may be accused of favouritism . Such a

situation causes bad feelings between the teacher and departmental head and between the teacher and principal .

3.3.2.3 Goal divergence

When two individuals in the school must work together, but cannot agree on how to do so , the source of conflict is goal divergence . For example , the school principal and the director of special education have differing views as to how mainstreaming issues are to be settled (Owens , 1996:236) .

3.3.2.4 Age differences

Age-based stereotypes influence our perception of and reaction toward those with whom we work and that can be a source of conflict . Recruitment policies for many organisations favour the young and schools tend to also favour younger teachers for promotion and teaching positions . This is no doubt fuelled by stereotypical notions of younger people being more inventive and flexible : older people are seen as conservative and inflexible . Real age differences do exist : older workers tend to be more experienced and are often in senior positions but younger workers tend to have more up-to-date training and knowledge . Conflict may arise when a younger employee is selected for a promotion post which is also competed for by older employees . For example , in a school equal status colleagues of different ages may feel that their greater experience or knowledge give them the natural edge for a promotion post . When a junior colleague beats them to it , older teachers feel aggrieved . The more experienced person may fail to respond to a possibly more knowledgeable , but inexperienced , younger principal . This hostility can be a source of an ongoing conflict between a senior teacher and a younger

principal . It may be difficult for older employees to work alongside younger colleagues because they may feel that they will be perceived as being inefficient if they ask their younger colleagues in senior management positions for advice .

3.3.2.5 Misusing power

Managers with an excessive need or desire to exert control over others may misuse their legitimate power , that is , the power which evolves from their position of authority . People who have illusions of grandeur are also likely to abuse legitimate power or use coercive power excessively . They tend to believe that their status is higher than it really is and may attempt to exert control when it is not entirely appropriate to do so .

As Chris , a teacher , comments :

The head of my department seems to think he runs the school . Although he has a perfect right to run his own department as he sees fit , some of his decisions run counter to the school's policy . He puts you in a difficult position though because you know he will go out of his way to help you if you agree with him (Edelman , 1993:34) .

In the above situation teachers were aggrieved with the head of department because he was meddling in matters which were out of his area of jurisdiction .

3.3.2.6 Misperceptions and misunderstandings

Conflicts are seldom clear-cut : each party has his own perception and understanding of an event and this may differ markedly from that of another . For example , an English teacher protests to the principal that she is being treated unfairly because she teaches 135

pupils each day , whereas an English teacher across the hall has only 115 pupils . The aggrieved teacher may not be aware of the fact that the principal has valid reasons for the disparity in the teaching loads of the two teachers .

If a principal criticises a teacher's efforts in public , it would seem to be a clear example of mismanagement . A colleague who refuses to do his work is placing an unfair burden of responsibility on someone else . However , most situations are more ambiguous . Was the criticism intended ? Is the colleague's role clearly defined or is he unaware of his responsibilities ?

Firstly , a careful analysis of the situation is required and , secondly , it is important to try to understand the viewpoint of the other person . It might be necessary to confront the other person , both to let him know that you found his behaviour undesirable and to establish his intention . You might find that his behaviour was unintentional and the conflict can be easily resolved (Edelman , 1993:15) .

3.3.3 Intragroup Conflict

When members of a unit , for example , subject committees or management committees , formed for a specific purpose , cannot agree on issues , intradepartmental or intragroup conflict often occurs (Hanson , 1996:262) . Intragroup conflict differs from interpersonal conflict in that it may occur between more than two people . Since people differ in terms of values , beliefs , attitudes and behaviour , interpersonal conflict is usually present in groups : for example , when teachers of the communication , languages and literacy

studies department at a secondary school cannot reach agreement on the allocation of classes and periods among themselves .

3.3.4 Intergroup Conflict

Intergroup conflict refers to conflict between two or more groups with different values , goals or needs (Patrick and Raymond , 1996:688) . Intergroup conflict underpins much of modern , complex organisation life . More than ever there is greater interdependence between groups in organisations . This interdependence can help move organisations toward the accomplishment of mutual goals , or , it can breed hostile and disruptive conflict (Blake , Sheperd and Mouton , 1974:193) .

The accomplishment of a school's goals is dependent on the inputs of various groups connected with the school such as subject committees , management committees , sports committees , teacher unions and the governing body . The organisation is a system of co-operative , interdependent units and one individual cannot perform all its tasks . Division of labour and specialisation is necessary so that individuals and groups can co-operate to get tasks accomplished . However , according to Khandwalla this leads invariably to conflict (1977:541) . Groups have different goals , needs , values and approaches and sometimes these differences lead to conflict . The focus of this Section will be conflict between departments , between staff and management , between two unions and finally conflict between staff and parents . Examples of intergroup conflicts and the reasons for their existence will be examined .

3.3.4.1 Interdepartmental Conflict

The potential for conflict is enhanced when two or more departments depend on a common pool of scarce resources such as space , equipment and capital budget allocations (Robbins , 1990:421) . In schools the possibility of conflict is increased if members of one department perceive that their needs cannot be met from available resources while another department's needs are satisfied . For example , the business education department requests money to buy two additional typewriters to replace two that are worn out . The request is denied , but the physical education department receives money to purchase additional sports equipment . The business education teacher complains that “ the business education department never gets any support from the principal .”

Another cause of intergroup conflict in schools is when groups compete for a scarce resource such as space . This kind of conflict has been witnessed on several occasions , for example when the cricket coach and the band leader are both scheduled to use the football field at the same time . The essence of the conflict is that each group attempts to place its own goals and interests ahead of the other (Hanson , 1996:263) .

3.3.4.2 Conflict between staff and management

The authoritarian management style of many principals has been cited as a major source of conflict between staff and principals . A teacher made the following remark with regard to management practices :

One other thing that has made many teachers become militant is the management style . You find that everything has been operated in the top-down fashion . Most

of the principals use a traditional , autocratic approach . They are not team managers , but more of a task manager , and not sensitive to the needs of the teachers and pupils (Govender , 1996:56) .

Jenkins points out that it is a peculiar phenomenon that secondary schools , which are relatively small , professionally driven organisations , are overbureaucratic with overdeveloped hierarchies . She contends that they have been bedevilled by a belief in hierarchical control and in the unassailable power of the school leader . A survey carried out by Jenkins among middle managers of schools confirms impressions that the school leader is a powerful dominating figure . Researchers into British secondary schools are puzzled by the power position of the principal in British schools and are concerned with the detrimental effects such dominance may have on the smooth running of the school (Jenkins , 1991:45) .

There is ample evidence that hierarchy has a bad effect on teacher's satisfaction and that emphasis on bureaucracy leads to conflict within schools (Jenkins , 1991:470) . The hierarchical pyramid , with power and authority centralised in the school principal , is often a source of conflict in our schools as well . For example , conflicts often occur when the principal attempts to control the behaviour of teachers . Frequently teachers complain of the principal and his top management being responsible for all important decisions . Teachers constantly complain that they are not consulted and involved in decisions affecting them . The monopoly of judgement is in the hands of the top hierarchy . Only it can make policy . Teachers feel marginalised and this can lead to

teachers challenging authority , which often results in clashes between teachers and management .

Anderson agrees that the conflict between bureaucratic discipline and professional expertise is to be expected (1968:115) . This friction , often called line-staff conflict , is the result of differences in orientation . The professional is oriented toward the protection of his client's interests , whereas the bureaucrat is responsible to the organisation and must uphold its interest . For example , the recent rationalisation in education forced principals to increase the number of learners in classes . Teachers are thus faced with larger classes , which is the cause of stress for them as they find it difficult to cope with so many learners. Whilst the principal justifies his actions by saying that he has to ensure his school functions with its available human and material resources , staff feel that their needs and the needs of the learners have been compromised .

The source of authority in schools may also generate conflict . The principal's authority is inherent in his position and is enforced through rule and procedure . Professionals rely on their training and expertise as the basis of their authority but the bureaucrat is governed by directives laid down by his superiors . The professional is disciplined by adherence to professional standards and a code of ethics and the bureaucrat by organisational policies , rules and regulations (Anderson ,1968:115) .

The bureaucratic approach of school principals is a major source of discord in schools . Interviews with teachers often reveal the negative effects of bureaucracy : top-down decisions are still most common ; school leaders stress their power of veto ; all major

initiatives are led by senior staff while the rest may be consulted , but are rarely given the power to act (Jenkins , 1991:48) . This is frequently interpreted by staff members that principals do not trust them .

3.3.4.3 Conflict between teacher unions in schools

Schools have recently become highly politicised and teachers increasingly use teacher unions to express their frustrations and dissatisfaction . Likert and Likert point out that the widespread unionisation of teachers has not been accompanied by an adequate structure for communication , interaction , and problem-solving involving teachers and their unions on the one hand and school administrators and governing bodies on the other (1976:218) . In South Africa , for example , teacher strikes have increased in number , duration and bitterness . Striking itself intensifies conflict since it causes teachers and unions to develop even more hostile and bitter feelings toward school principals and the governing bodies . Indeed strikes may also increase antagonism between teachers .

In many schools teachers belong to different unions , namely , the most popular being the more militant South African Democratic Teacher's Union (SADTU) and the more conservative National Association of Professional Teachers Association of South Africa (NAPTOSA) . Govender , in his research on teacher militancy in South Africa , noted two strands of professionalism in South Africa : conservative professionalism and radical professionalism (1996:90) . This dichotomy is the source of the ongoing conflict between the supporters of the two opposing unions in schools .

NAPTOSA has consistently maintained that the interests of the child must be protected at all costs and that industrial action should not interfere with the daily education programme. Hence , teachers supporting strike action in normal teaching time are accused of unprofessional conduct . SADTU , however , opposes this view , insisting that an important part of teacher professionalism is fighting for acceptable conditions of service , without which teachers are unable to work effectively . For example , a teacher appraisal approach which only grades , without developing teachers , may well adversely affect the quality of teacher performance in the classroom : it is sometimes necessary in protecting the interests of the learners , the interest of teachers have to be first addressed (Govender , 1996:90) .

SADTU and NAPTOSA treat issues differently and this has caused bitterness and hatred between their members during times of industrial action . When SADTU embarks on strike action (for example , for increased salaries) , teachers belonging to NAPTOSA report for duty . As a result teachers , who have been friends for many years , suddenly find themselves on opposite sides of the conflict and , as the strike continues and economic pressures mount , relations between them are strained even more : teachers of the non-striking union may be accused of “piggybacking” . Such deterioration in working relationships will adversely affect the educational process .

3.3.4.4 Conflict between teachers and parents

Parental anxiety about standards of work may also cause friction in schools . Parents are protective toward their children and may complain that they are overworked as far as the amount of homework set . Frequently they comment on the work itself as being

inappropriate . Yet on the other hand , parents tend to grow anxious if they feel that their children are being underworked and then may protest that too little homework is being set . This kind of complaint is especially damaging to the morale of teachers , since they are accused of laziness and a lack of concern about whether learners learn or not . Complaints about under or non-setting of homework may come directly to the principal . This handling of the problem leaves the teacher feeling she has been unjustly reprimanded and increases the rift between her and parents .

The teacher's role is widely regarded as having the potential to become a classic conflict situation . The diffuse nature of the role and the teacher's exposure to conflicting expectations , increase the possibility of conflict (Grace , 1972:13) . A teacher's role is diffuse rather than specific : teachers are involved in socialising children ; motivating , inspiring and encouraging them ; transmitting values to them ; awakening in them a respect for facts and a sense of critical appreciation . Moreover , everyone readily has opinions on what the teacher should do . The result is that teachers are faced with conflicting expectations concerning role performance .

An individual usually has a reasonably clear idea of how his role should be performed , but it is also apparent that no role exists in a social vacuum . Each role is articulated in a network of other roles representing positions with which the individual interacts . The role of the teacher may also be seen as part of a network in which the roles of learners , principals , colleagues , heads of department , superintendents and parents hold important positions in the role set (Grace , 1972:6) .

Each position in the role set has its own expectations and when these expectations do not agree a potential role conflict situation arises . In the case of a teacher , conflict may arise because outsiders or members of his own role set may disagree with the teacher's conception of his own role . For example , parents may insist that teachers concentrate on basic subjects and examination successes . This will bring conflict with progressive teachers , who feel that they should concentrate on personality and holistic development of the child (Grace , 1972:6) .

3.3.4.5 Reciprocal task interdependence

In reciprocal task interdependence , some inputs of a particular group become the inputs of the other group . Reciprocal task interdependence is probably best exemplified by the relationship between senior and junior teachers . Junior teachers prepare their learners for the senior grade . Intergroup conflict arises from reciprocal task interdependence over differences in performance expectations . For example , the senior mathematics teacher may be dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of work done by the junior mathematics teacher as she feels that the learners were not adequately prepared for their present grade . The senior teacher has to teach sections that should have been completed the previous year before proceeding with the new syllabus ; otherwise the learners will not understand the new work . This situation can cause much frustration and lead to conflict (Feldman and Arnold , 1983:213) .

3.3.4.6 Task ambiguity

When it is unclear which group is responsible for what , intergroup conflict is likely to occur . This lack of clarity over job responsibilities is called task ambiguity . It frequently

leads to hostility between groups . Important job duties are unclear : each group becomes upset with each other for what it perceives to be the other's shortcoming . For example , members of middle management become agitated when level one teachers take over their responsibilities (Feldman and Arnold , 1983:213) .

3.3.4.7 Differences in Orientation

The ways in which employees go about their work and deal with others vary considerably across functional areas of the organisation . Firstly , functional groups differ in their time perspectives . For , example , the guidance counsellor has much longer-range goals than teachers teaching examination subjects . The teachers of examination subjects can be easily evaluated by the pass rate at the year-end examinations , while the guidance counsellor can only be evaluated by the good citizens she produces and this takes a considerably long period of time . Secondly , the goals of different functional groups vary greatly . The goals of a second language teacher differs from that of the mathematics teacher . While the mathematics teacher has to ensure that the required quantity of work , prescribed by the syllabus , is completed in a given time , the second language teacher has much more flexibility as his syllabus is dictated by the pace at which his learners progress . Thirdly , the interpersonal orientations of people in different departments vary . The speech and drama teacher may encourage a level of informality amongst his learners as his subject lends itself to such an approach ; the English teacher , on the contrary , may demand a more formal approach from her learners . These differences in work orientation may lead to frustration and misinterpretation of behaviour as when English teachers may misjudge the speech and drama teacher as being lenient with his discipline .

3.3.4.8 Reward Systems

A major source of intergroup conflict is the way in which an organisation monitors group performance and distributes resources such as money and equipment : for example , teachers often complain that the science and mathematics departments always get the lion's share of the budget . This unfair allocation of funds causes conflict as the perception is created that the other school subjects are less important .

Principals sometimes use competition between groups as a way of motivating teachers : comparisons are made between departments . While the rationale behind this strategy may be to motivate teachers , it often has the opposite effect of demotivating the group who are not recognised . Often professional jealousy between teachers causes much hostility (Vecchio , 1995:472) .

3.3.4.9 Culture

The writer has observed that the shift from a predominantly Indian school to a centre of multicultural learning presents many obstacles and challenges . The majority of teachers from historically Indian schools are not trained to deal with multicultural learning . In many instances , learners from ex-Department of Education and Training schools (Ex-DET), which controlled the education of Africans before 1994 , are also disadvantaged when enrolling in ex-House of Delegates schools (ex-HOD), which controlled the education of Indians before 1994 . Many learners do not qualify to advance to Grade 10 as they have not covered the subjects offered . As a result learners either repeat Grade10 or drop to Grade 9 in their quest for better quality education . This has proved detrimental

as most learners fail as they still are unable to cope . This has led to frustration and many learners drop out of school .

The issue of English Second Language Teaching for secondary schools has also caused problems . Historically , the medium of instruction at ex-DET schools in KwaZulu Natal had been Zulu and in ex-HOD schools it had been English . This factor has been one of the major obstacles to implementing multicultural learning . The writer himself had mediated a volatile conflict situation between a group of frustrated , disadvantaged learners and a language teacher . The learners had accused the teacher of being racist by alleging that she only focused attention on Indian learners and gave them higher marks in tests .

The shift from a single language classroom towards integrated diversity poses many challenges to educators and learners alike . In particular , Indian educators were trained only to deal with Indian children on a personal and communal level . The change is therefore difficult as there are cultural , racial and class differences among learners , who are diverse ethnically and culturally . Very little has been done by either education authorities , school management personnel , teacher training institutions or teacher unions to equip educators with skills to deal with multicultural classrooms and learning .

Teaching methods are frequently a source of conflict at schools . Teachers become frustrated when English Second Language learners and slower learners cannot cope . As a result several learners have also become victims of abuse .

3.3.4.10 Gender differences

Gender impinges upon working relationship in many ways . Women in male-dominated organisations may encounter difficulties by being excluded from social activities as well as from decision-making . Men still dominate in positions of economic privilege and higher status : men are regarded as being dominant and women “muted” . These sex-role stereotypes advantage men and disadvantage women . For instance , men are rewarded for assertive and aggressive behaviour while women are rewarded for compliant and passive behaviour (Edelman , 1993:13) .

Women in managerial positions may experience special difficulties in their relationships at work if their male colleagues or subordinates feel threatened by them . Many men still find it difficult to work with women as equals . The potential for conflict increases when men strive to maintain their dominance by resorting to “putdowns” involving blame : ‘If only we’d asked a male colleague to do it ’ ; dismissal : ‘That’s typical of a woman ’ or patronage : ‘You really think she can manage it ’ . One of the most serious problems relating to gender in the workplace is when men resort to aggressive behaviour or sexual harassment to maintain their assumed position of dominance over women (Edelman , 1993:51) .

3.3.4.11 Communication

One frequently cited source of conflict is communication difficulties . Perfect communication is defined as creating a mental picture in the mind of the receiver in exactly the same detail as intended by the sender . This is certainly rarely achieved , hence there will be many opportunities for misunderstanding to develop in the

communication process . Inadequate and unclear communication , incorrect , distorted and ambiguous information stimulate conflict and create hostility . For example , a principal may fail to communicate clearly to subordinates regarding who will be responsible for performing a distasteful task while he is away on vacation . Upon his return , he may find that the subordinates are “at each other’s throats ” and that the task remains undone (Vecchio , 1995:470) .

3.4 Conclusion

It is evident from the preceding discussion that conflict in schools can take many forms and stem from many sources . The various levels and causes of conflict discussed in this Chapter are merely representative of some of the conflicts experienced in schools . If school principals and teachers in Phoenix are to manage conflict effectively , it is important for them to know the factors that precipitate organisational conflict .

3.5 Summary

In this Chapter the researcher presented an overview of the common causes of conflict experienced in schools and thereafter examined more fully the different levels and causes of conflict in schools . In the next Chapter the researcher will present a description of the theories of conflict and apply the relevant strategies to some of the conflict situations discussed in this Chapter .

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Introduction

Managers should develop certain attitudes and skills , if they are to be effective when dealing with conflict to which they are party and between members of staff (Everard and Morris , 1996:97) . In this Chapter the writer will discuss three strategies for dealing with conflict , namely , the win-lose strategy , the lose-lose strategy and the win-win strategy . The writer will focus on the patterns of behaviour which individuals use for conflict resolution by referring to the grid model of Kenneth Thomas . An understanding of the various strategies for dealing with conflict and conflict handling styles will equip principals and teachers in Phoenix schools to manage conflict effectively . Finally the writer will look at specific conflict situations experienced at schools in order to illustrate how theories of conflict resolution may be used to manage conflict in schools .

4.2 Strategies for dealing with Conflict

Morse and Ivey are of the view that a major problem in schools today is the relative ineffectiveness of how conflict is dealt with (1996:61) . Often , conflicts are resolved in terms of "I win - you lose" . The teacher or principal may demand compliance by forceful disciplinary measures , but all too often learners will end up feeling resentful and at times hostile . Similar results may occur if the style of management of a principal is top - down or autocratic toward the staff .

Participants in a conflict situation may approach conflict in various ways . The basic three strategies for dealing with conflict are : win - lose , lose - lose and win - win .

4.2.1 Win-lose methods and orientation to Conflict

One win-lose method is exemplified by a typical exercise of authority . When a principal says , “ You must do what I say because I am the boss ” , he is exercising the positional power bestowed upon him by the organisation . This authority allows him to reward and punish teachers because they fall within his area of control . A second method is mental or physical power used by managers to get subordinates to comply by threatening dismissal . A third win-lose method involves not responding to an individual . For example, when a principal at a staff meeting requests for volunteers for a committee to organise the matric farewell dance and no one responds , because staff are not in favour of this function , he loses and everyone else wins . A fourth win-lose method employs majority rule by voting on issues (Filley , 1975:22) .

Win-lose , in one form or another , appears to be the common strategy for resolving conflicts . Bargaining , negotiating , compromise and similar approaches to the handling of conflict are , essentially , forms of win-lose confrontation . What are the consequences when the win-lose approach to conflict is used ?

A win-lose approach to conflict is characterised by one basic element , that is , the contesting individuals or groups see their interests as being mutually exclusive ; their own interests are of vital concern and no compromise is possible . One must fail at the expense of the other . People who are involved in a conflict situation and have a win-lose orientation believe that the issue can be settled in one of three ways : a power struggle , intervention by a third party with greater authority , or fate (Owens , 1996:241) .

The win-lose approach has two consequences : for individuals this approach leads to antagonism and often deep hostility . The result is that the conflict can snowball into such proportions that the possibility of finding a mutually acceptable solution ceases.

When groups involved in conflict are intent on winning , any other outcome , such as finding a mutually acceptable solution , is ignored . Contesting groups begin to exhibit certain characteristics : as the conflict starts and the group sets out to win, there is an immediate increase in group loyalty and team spirit , members close rank against the “enemy” , spirits go up and everyone starts working hard .

This closing of ranks and inflexibility (winning at all costs) has serious consequences . Differences of opinion among members , which can lead to new and better solutions , are not tolerated as are questioning of decisions and requests to re-examine decisions . In fact members , who dare question decisions , are pressurized to support decision takers , to conform , to be loyal to the group , or get out . At this stage the group begins to function ineffectively , as it ignores diversity of opinions and the broad involvement of members which are both essential for creative problem solving (Likert and Likert , 1976:61) .

A second development in a win-lose struggle is that leadership in the group becomes more concentrated and a clear-cut power structure emerges . Often , it is an aggressive member or one , who expresses himself clearly and well , who takes over . Sometimes those , who like fights , emerge in leadership positions . They are left to do the questioning and thinking .

One of the most harmful consequences of a win-lose struggle is the distortion it creates in the judgement and perception of the opposing group . Perception is the key to behaviour : the way people see things determines the way they will act . If their perceptions are distorted , the distortions are reflected in their behaviour . Members of a group may see their solutions as superior , while that of the opposing group is inferior . Even where a superior decision is produced , which is measurable , the opposition may fail to perceive and accept its superiority . All capacity for objectivity is eliminated in the struggle (Likert and Likert , 1976:61) .

Perceptual distortions are not only limited to the solutions generated , but also extended to each group's view of the other : members of one group develop and express hostile attitudes to members of the other ; confidence and trust disappears , to be replaced by hostile distrust of suggestions and behaviour . This perceptual distortion , arising in a win-lose struggle , aggravates the conflict .

Perceptual errors occur also in the way groups view their leaders . Individuals , who were generally seen as mature , competent , intelligent and well-intentioned before the conflict , are now viewed differently once they start serving as representatives for their groups . Now leaders are either seen as superb by their own group or as incompetent , irresponsible and untrustworthy by the other group (Likert and Likert , 1976:62) .

Distortions also occur in studying proposed solutions . Members of a group fail to see the similarities in their solutions and only see the differences . In fact , it becomes difficult or even impossible to see merit in solutions put forth by the opposing group . Thus

agreement becomes impossible and the conflict intensifies . Any sign of questioning the position of one's own group or attempts to support the proposals of the opposing group is seen as "backing down" . Winning becomes everything and objectivity is forgotten . Group leaders are also put under pressure by each group to win . They dare not take an objective point of view . Since victory is sought at all costs , they dare not recognise the strength of the "enemy's" position or admit the weaknesses in their own solution . There is immense pressure not to be objective or innovative or to seek the best solution but to win by debating and probing for weaknesses in the other group's proposal . The representative who wins for his or her own group becomes a hero . If the losing representative has displayed any behaviour which may be construed as capitulating to the enemy or weakness in negotiating , he may be viewed as a traitor . Thus , both winner and loser discard objectivity in their role as representatives and never engage in unbiased problem solving and evaluation of solutions (Likert and Likert , 1976:63) .

Win-lose confrontations exacerbate the hostile , bitter attitudes that conflicting parties hold toward each other . This intensification of hostility makes it even harder to resolve conflict constructively . It is therefore not surprising that the win-lose approach to dealing with conflict is great when individuals aim to satisfy their own needs for either achievement , status , recognition , power or affiliation (Likert and Likert , 1976:67) . The win-lose approach is widely used to resolve conflicts in schools , for example in bargaining , negotiating , slowdowns , strikes and win-lose battles between unions and management . There is no need to continue this widespread use of the win-lose approach with all its costs and negative consequences .

The use of win-lose or of other ways of dealing with conflict are learned through the processes of socialisation . Since these inadequate methods of coping with conflict are learned , then more effective ways of dealing with conflict such as the win-win approach can also be learned . The win-win methods produce solutions satisfactory to all parties , and hence resolve conflict more constructively (Likert and Likert , 1976:69) . This approach will be dealt in greater detail later in this Chapter .

4.2.2 Lose-lose methods and orientation to Conflict

These methods are aptly named because neither party really accomplishes what it wants or , alternatively , each party gets part of what it wants . Lose-lose methods are based on the assumption that half a loaf is better than none and personal confrontation in a conflict is better than avoidance . Whilst a compromise might sound positive and is sometimes necessary when parties need to settle a dispute , it is , however , an unfortunate second best to win-win strategies (Filley , 1975:23) .

A second lose-lose strategy involves side-payments . In essence , this means bribing someone to take a losing position . A third lose-lose strategy calls for submitting an issue to a neutral third party . For example , when two heads of departments ask their principal to decide on an issue about which they are in conflict . They avoid confrontation and problem-solving in favour of a process which each hopes will yield at least some benefit to himself (Filley , 1975:24) .

A fourth lose-lose strategy involves resorting to rules to resolve an issue . These rules may already be in existence or are established to resolve the conflict . For example , when

a teacher requests leave for an appointment and the principal uses an existing rule to deny the request . Similar to arbitration , some rule-based strategies lead to win-win resolutions, while others lead to lose-lose outcomes . Rules are used to simply avoid confrontation (Likert and Likert , 1976:24) .

The win-lose and lose-lose methods of dealing with conflict have several characteristics in common . Each party sees the issue only from its own point of view , rather than looking at the problem in terms of mutual needs . There is a clear “we-they” distinction between the parties , rather than a “we-versus-the-problem” orientation . Each party directs its energies toward either total victory or total defeat . The conflicts are personalised rather than depersonalised by looking at facts and issues objectively . These methods focus on the immediate disagreement and do not focus on human relations and the long-term effects of differences in the organisation .

4.2.3 Win-win methods and orientation to Conflict

In contrast to win-lose and lose-lose strategies which focus on the attainment of a solution, win-win problem-solving strategies focus on ends or goals (Filley , 1975:25) . Owens is of the view that a win-lose approach to conflict tends to be the least productive, while a win-win approach , in which both parties win something though not necessarily equally , tends to be the most productive (1996:242) .

Win-win strategies take two basic forms: consensus and collaboration .

4.2.3.1 Consensus

Consensus strategies apply when a final solution to a problem is reached which is not acceptable to everyone . Decisions reached by consensus do not polarise parties and involve little arguing about means and ends of solving the problem . Consensus decision-making requires that participants focus upon defeating the problem rather than each other, avoid voting and trading , seeks facts to resolve problems , accept conflict as helpful and avoid self-oriented behaviour which does not take into consideration the needs of others (Filley , 1975:26) .

4.2.3.2 Collaboration

Collaboration or integrative problem solving is a conflict resolution strategy that attempts to find a solution that reconciles , or integrates the needs of both parties . (Feldman and Arnold , 1983:229) It is a process in which the parties work together to define the problem and then engage in mutual problem solving . Both parties have a vested interest in the outcome and are convinced they can develop final positions that represent the convictions of both (Blake , Sheperd and Mouton , 1974:90) .

There are two preconditions for integrative problem solving to work . Firstly , there must be a level of trust between parties . Without this trust , the parties will be unlikely to reveal their true preferences and will suspect each other of presenting inaccurate information . Secondly , integrative problem solving is time consuming and will not work effectively for a quick settlement . However , integrative problem solving benefits the organisation as it yields decisions based on the inputs and perspectives of both opposing

groups . It also creates a sense of ownership and commitment to the solution arrived at (Feldman and Arnold , 1983: 229) .

Industry has given us the lead in respect of conflict resolution . Most of the suggestions made by industry are also relevant and applicable to managing conflicts in schools . Blake, Sheperd and Mouton in their study of managing intergroup conflict in industry , have sequenced the decision-making process through a series of steps (1974:90-93) . The writer will now describe this model in further detail as he believes that it has relevance for principals and teachers in Phoenix schools to manage conflict .

4.2.3.2.1 Problem definition

The problem to be solved needs to be defined . In win-lose problem solving , each group defines the problem in isolation without taking into consideration the views of the other group . In integrative problem solving , the problem is not defined prior to contact . It is developed by and through the conflicting groups . Both groups or their representatives together search out the issues that separate them and , by mutual effort , the problems that demand solutions , are identified . By approaching the problem this way , each group explores what it regards as “facts” . This review , assessment and evaluation of these “facts” ensures that they are agreed and understood by both parties (Blake , Sheperd and Mouton , 1974:90) .

4.2.3.2.2 Full problem review

The second step involves a full review of the basic definition of the problem and is accomplished through as many members of the groups as is possible . It communicates

the fundamental facts and issues to all members who will eventually commit themselves to a final position . This stage provides an opportunity to group members to bring up new facts and also to test these against old facts . This process ensures that the final definition of the problem is valid .

4.2.3.2.3 Developing a range of alternatives

The next step involves developing a range of possible alternatives for dealing with each of the previously defined and identified problems . The aim of this step is not to develop fixed positions from each side's point of view . Another aim is to understand the alternatives presented by members acting out of another group's frame of reference . This step normally allows for the identification of alternatives that otherwise might not have been seen . It also ensures that a range of alternatives will be investigated rather than one, or worse , only two alternatives that could result in a win-lose situation .

4.2.3.2.4 Debate of alternatives by the whole intergroup

This step presents an opportunity to the groups to understand and to put into perspective the reasons and rationale for each alternative . Joint deliberation ensures that additional alternatives that have been missed or which emerge , can be evaluated and placed in the appropriate context .

4.2.3.2.5 Searching for solutions

This step involves an exploration by the group for possible solutions to each of the alternative issues . The focus should be upon selecting for consideration solutions that are good and acceptable , rather than bad and unacceptable . The aim is to test those

alternatives that seem realistic and feasible and which the groups mutually feel have the potential of an effective solution to the problem .

4.2.3.2.6 Exploration and evaluation of solutions by the intergroup

In this phase the groups explore and evaluate each of the proposed solutions in terms of both quality and acceptability . This stage allows for testing additional solutions which may not have been previously discovered .

4.2.3.2.7 Weighing alternative solutions

This step involves members ranking the tested solutions in a sequence from better to poorer . This can be done quickly if the previous steps were completed satisfactorily . If difficulties arise at this point , then group members may explore each solution and its possible advantages and disadvantages in depth . Then the ranked solutions are presented to the groups for review , discussion and selection . The solution that seems best in the light of all facts and events can then be screened from the rankings .

This model is only one of several possibilities for achieving effective integrative problem solving . The important feature of this sequence , however , is that the conflicting groups define the problem , search for alternative solutions and evaluate each possible solution for the problems identified . Integrative problem solving succeeds in bringing conflicting parties to the conference table when all other approaches fail and will keep them hard at work seeking to find or create mutually acceptable solutions . In this way conflicting groups will attempt to solve the problem in terms of the best interests of all rather than in terms of the narrow-minded goals of a few (Likert and Likert , 1976:141) . Integrative

problem solving is the highest level of win-win conflict management because it equips the groups with new skills and new understandings that they can use in the future to solve problems (Owens , 1996:243) .

4.3. Conflict Handling Styles

What resolution tools can a manager call upon to reduce conflict when it is too high ? Different people use different methods in managing conflict . However , Robbins believes that most of us show a certain dominant style of handling conflict such as avoiding , accommodating , compromising , competing and collaborating (1991:518) . Managers should consider each a “tool” in their conflict-management “tool chest” . While managers might be better at using some tools than others , the skilled manager knows what each tool can do and when it is likely to be most effective . One of the first direct steps to managing conflict successfully should be a review of one’s typical style .

The grid model of Kenneth Thomas (1976:900) identifies five conflict handling styles as a consequence of two critical behavioural dimensions , namely , the assertive dimension which indicates a conflicting party’s desire to satisfy its own preferred solution , and a co-operative dimension which indicates the party’s desire to satisfy its own concerns (Owens , 1996:245) . These dimensions are shown in Figure 4.1 .

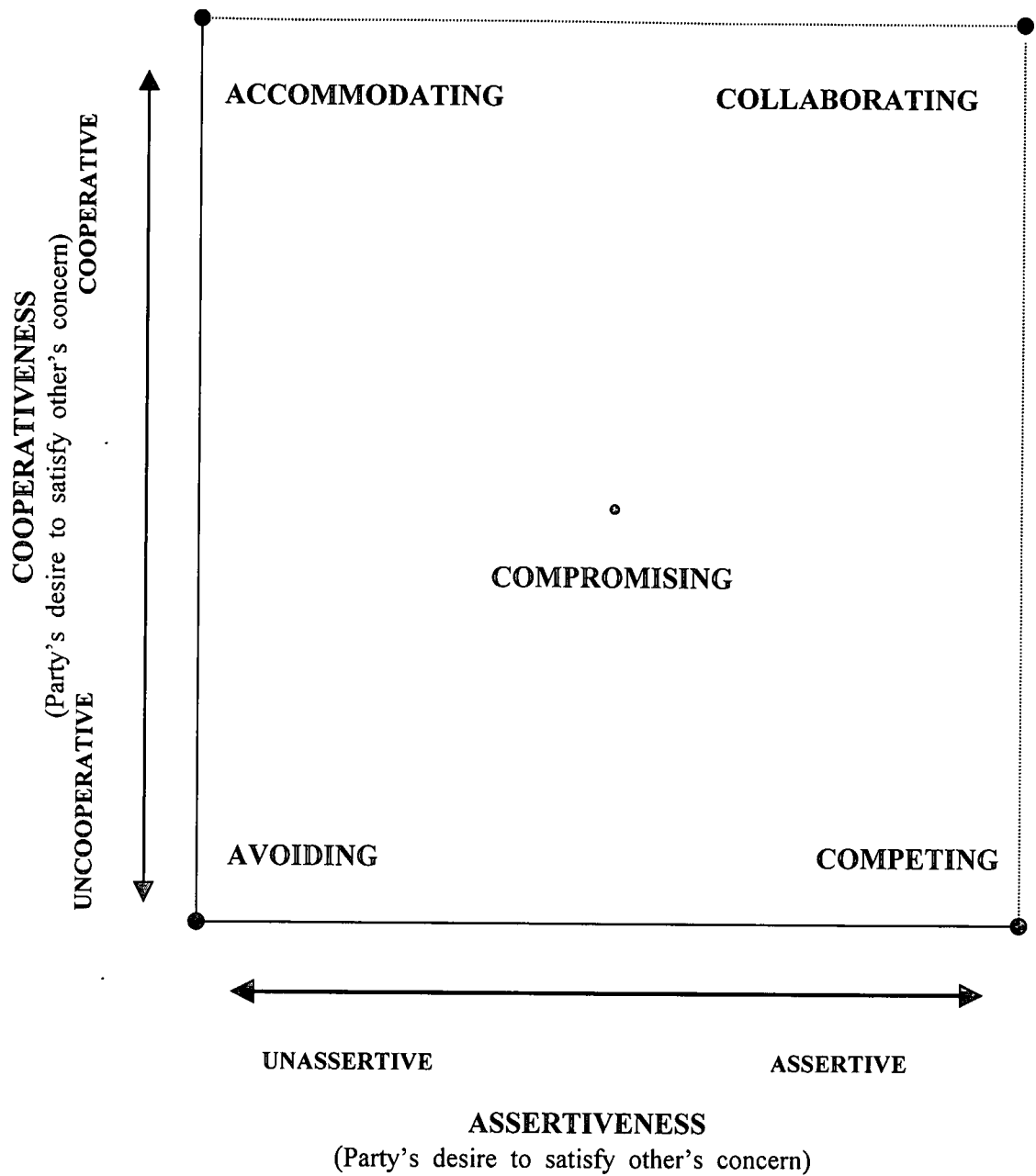


FIGURE 4.1 : CONFLICT HANDLING ORIENTATIONS OF KENNETH THOMAS .

Owens believes that there is no one best way of managing conflict under all conditions . All five styles are useful in some situations . The effectiveness of a given conflict handling style depends on the requirements of the specific situation and the skill with which each approach is used (1996:242) .

4.3.1 Avoiding style

This style is both low on the assertiveness and co-operating dimensions . A person using this style is not interested in satisfying his own or the other person's needs . Avoidance behaviour involves side-stepping conflict , postponing confrontation , hoping the problem will go away or pretending it does not exist . It causes stress to all parties and may result in communication problems (Everard and Morris , 1996:100) . This strategy may be effective under certain circumstances . For example , a manager may decide to stay out of a disagreement to avoid escalating the conflict during a particular phase of its development . Later , when he judges the time is right , he may take a more active role in finding a productive solution .

Experienced managers are aware that immediate action is not always necessary because some problems dissipate over time or are resolved by other organisational processes . For example , an intense conflict between two teachers may require intervention by the principal . But if the principal knows that one of the individuals will soon be transferred or promoted to another position , it may be advisable to ignore the situation and let the impending changes resolve the difficulty (Vecchio , 1995:482) .

Sometimes this strategy will include passing the buck , for example , to the governors , so that someone else has to deal with the problem . Deputy principals avoid dealing with conflict by referring the matter to the principal . This style is appropriate and useful for trivial issues which will pass away of their own accord , when you see little chance in satisfying your concerns , when the possible damage of confrontation outweighs the benefits of a solution or during an explosive situation when you need time to think , to let people cool down , to gather information and discuss the issue with others (Nathan , 1996:156) .

4.3.2 Accommodating style

This type of behaviour is unassertive and co-operative . This style involves making concessions to avoid conflict . Accommodating behaviour may be motivated by a desire to be altruistic . You might use this approach when it is important that nothing rocks the boat and you want to maintain a working relationship even at some sacrifice on your part. This option is most viable when the issue under dispute isn't that important to you , or when you want to build up credits for later issues or when you are outmatched or realise that you are wrong . However , one must be guarded that overuse of this approach can cause other people to lose respect for you or your opinions , to take advantage of you , and discipline may suffer (Everard and Morris , 1996:101) .

4.3.3 Competing style

Competing is an aggressive and uncooperative style in which one party tries to achieve his or her goals and prevents the other from doing so . If you use this approach you try to overpower those involved by forcing them to accept your solution to the conflict . Your

methods will include attack , use of power or position and intimidating the opposition . This strategy is often used when someone stands up for what he believes to be right or simply tries to score a personal victory . It involves bringing emotional , intellectual , hierarchical or any other form of power to bear in order to get your own way and implies a lack of respect for other people's interests . It often breed resentment , "back stabbing " and deviousness or , if your opponent is of equal status , a shouting match (Everard and Morris , 1996:100) . The competing or forcing style works well when you need a quick resolution on important issues where unpopular actions must be taken ; when commitment by others to your solution is not critical ; when there is an emergency calling for quick , decisive action and when you know you are right and the other party is not prepared to listen to reason or will take advantage of any attempt to compromise or solve the problem.

4.3.4 Compromising style

Compromising behaviour is assertive and co-operative and involves partial satisfaction of both parties' desire by seeking a middle ground . To succeed at compromising , both parties must be willing to give up something . Compromise can be a viable strategy when conflicting parties are almost equal in power , when it is desirable to achieve a temporary solution to a complex issue or when time pressures demand an expedient solution . Everard and Morris , however , believe that a compromise culture leads to wheeling and dealing that may be at the expense of principles and values (1996:101) .

4.3.5 Collaborating

The collaborating style represents a combination of assertiveness and cooperativeness . Collaboration is the ultimate win-win solution . All parties to the conflict seek to satisfy their interests and concerns by open and honest discussion , active listening to understand differences and careful deliberation over a full range of alternatives to find a solution that is advantageous to all . Creative approaches to conflict resolution , for example , the sharing of scarce resources , may lead to both conflicting parties being materially better off . For this style to be useful , trust and openness are required of all participants . Managers using this approach view conflict as a problem to be solved . They are not frightened of conflict , but view it as a challenge . They value both relationships and goals and are prepared to work together to find a solution which goes as far as possible towards mutual satisfaction . Collaboration is the best option when the pressures are minimal , when all parties seriously want a win-win solution and when the issue is not so important as to be compromised .

Each of the styles of conflict resolution may be appropriate in different circumstances . Effective conflict-resolving behaviour is based on having the skills required for each and in knowing when each style can most effectively be used (Filley, 1975:58) . Although many managers may be tempted to consider some styles of conflict management more effective than others (for example , collaborating versus avoiding) , it must be noted that each style works best in certain situations . Hanson believes that when examining various approaches to conflict management , the contingency approach is applicable (1996:272) . He contends that it is essential for managers to be selective in matching characteristics of specific situations with the various strategies available . As situations change , the most

appropriate strategy changes . None of the strategies is appropriate for every situation , even collaboration . Collaboration often represents an ideal condition not reflected in the 'war zones' we sometimes find ourselves in . Some of the important considerations affecting strategy choices include time available , existence of emergency conditions , emotional and ego involvement , resources already invested , frequency with which the choices arise , and the need to work with other parties after a choice is made .

4.4 Application of a strategy to a case study

4.4.1 Problem-solving in a school situation

An actual school example may serve to illustrate how the problem-solving approach to conflict resolution can be applied to school life . The writer will take from Chapter 3 the example of disparities in workload (a common problem among teachers) to illustrate how the problem-solving strategy may be used to resolve the conflict .

The first step would be for the teacher and the department head to discuss the issues concerned and attempt to understand how the problem arose . From the teacher's point of view , the issue is unequal teaching loads , but other issues are likely to emerge as the problem is further discussed . The teacher with the lower load may have been allocated fewer learners because he has learners with learning disabilities , or the differences in class sizes may have occurred because some learners changed grades or they were transferred to other schools . Understanding how a problem arose often helps defuse emotions the problem arouses .

The next step would be for both parties to search for shared values . The value advocated by the complaining teacher in the example is that teaching loads should be equalised . The department head is unlikely to disagree with this but may argue that other values must also be considered . Adjusting class sizes to allow teachers to spend more time with learners with a learning disability is one such value .

If the disparities resulted as a consequence of grade changes or transfers , then the question is whether the learners should have been reassigned in order to balance the teacher's workloads . Most principals are not willing to transfer learners from one class to another after the first week of school or during the course of the year merely for the purpose of balancing teaching loads , unless the disparities in class sizes are sizeable . This is a case when competing values must be weighed . Which is more important : equalised workloads or maintaining stability in the learner's class assignment ? Some principals are willing to tolerate some workload disparities in order to maintain stable learner schedules . The teacher and department head must discuss and agree as to how large the differences in workloads should be before the decision is made to reassign learners .

When common values have been identified , potential solutions are examined in the next step . In the example under discussion , one possible solution is to formulate a clear policy regarding adjustments in class size for teachers with difficult-to-teach learners . If the differences in workloads resulted from learner transfers , assigning new incoming learners to the teacher with the lower load will reduce the disparity . However , with a

difference as large as the one in the example , this method is not likely to produce equal workloads in the near future .

The next step would be for the parties to agree to a solution to the problem . In this case , the solution must also be approved by other teachers , since they will be affected by it . If they reject it , they will be responsible for proposing an alternative that is acceptable to all.

The above example illustrates that the key to resolving conflicts that arise in work settings is to find a set of values about which competing parties agree . Usually , those involved in disputes do not disagree regarding basic principles , but difficulties are often experienced in reaching agreement about which values should receive priority (Seyfarth , 1996:246) . By using the problem-solving strategy , conflicting parties are brought to the table to find or create mutually acceptable solutions .

4.5 Principal's encounter with conflict: Western Canada

According to Fris conceptualisations about conflict and its management often come from studies conducted in non-educational settings and little of this information has been verified as applicable in school settings (1992:66-76) . Moreover , some of the findings from school studies are inconsistent with findings from non-educational settings . He , therefore , recommends that more research is needed to validate and extend information about the management of conflict in educational organisations . An investigation is underway in Western Canada to develop a substantial set of data (from a sample of a projected 60 cases) concerning school principals' experiences with conflicts and to test

this against existing conceptualisations of conflict management . The investigation is designed to provide descriptions of important incidents in principals' experiences with conflict , to identify patterns in those experiences and to relate the findings to existing theory .

At this stage the writer will be reporting the findings of the first phase of the investigation which was conducted by Fris in a Western Canadian urban school system . (It must be noted that Fris did not mention the specific school system that he was referring to in his journal article .) Fifteen principals of elementary and secondary schools were interviewed and they provided detailed descriptions on non-routine conflicts they had encountered . An analysis of the principals' responses suggest three important things about the principals' management of conflicts . Firstly , the principals tended to treat conflicts as problems to be solved collaboratively . This approach suggests a preference for a win-win orientation to conflict management rather than a win-lose orientation . Secondly , the strategies used by principals suggest that attitudinal restructuring is a favoured conflict resolution tool . Attitudinal restructuring activities are those that have the objective of influencing relationships between parties , including competitiveness . Thirdly , records of interviews point also to the importance of being prepared to change a management style when the circumstances of conflict change : sometimes the conflict situation may necessitate abandoning a collaborative approach and switching to forcing tactics . The investigation concluded that suburban Californian principals prefer compromise and collaboration as against avoidance , accommodation and force . These three general findings , concerning principals' ways of dealing with conflict , provide support for parts of the Kenneth Thomas model of conflict management behaviours .

The three general findings of Fris' investigation will assist in developing the skills of teachers and principals in Phoenix schools to manage conflict effectively . The interview responses of teachers revealed that most of the principals and teachers showed a preference for the win-lose orientation in conflict management rather than a win-win orientation . Interviews with teachers also revealed that most principals were not equipped to manage conflict effectively because they adopted an autocratic management style . The findings of Fris' investigation will assist both teachers and principals in Phoenix schools to re-evaluate their conflict management skills . The writer suggests that the investigation carried out by Fris in Canada could be used in workshops with teachers and principals in Phoenix in order to equip them with skills to manage conflict effectively.

4.6 Summary

The preceding Chapter has provided a description of the theories of conflict management and the conflict handling styles that managers use when resolving conflicts . The researcher also attempted to show how these strategies could actually be used in resolving a conflict situation in a school . In the next Chapter the researcher will analyse the responses from the structured interviews he had conducted with teachers , principals and chairpersons of school governing bodies .

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CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Introduction

As a union mediator to conflict in schools , the writer has observed that the key figures in education did not know how to do their jobs when it came to conflict resolution . Principals , teachers and parents in governing bodies frequently called for the intervention of third parties such as superintendents of education and unions to address conflicts that are experienced at their schools . It is precisely as a result of this observation that the writer interviewed principals , teachers and parents in governing bodies to ascertain whether they were equipped to deal with conflict in schools . This empirical research was specifically done in order to find proof that principals , teachers and parents in governing bodies in Phoenix did not know how to handle conflict and to project some sort of a training programme for them in conflict resolution .

The focus of this Chapter will be to describe the instrument the writer used to collect data and to analyse the findings . Thereafter , the writer will compare his findings with those of other researchers whose studies were discovered in the review of literature .

5.2 Methodology and collection of data

This study was qualitatively based on the writer's own observation , face-to-face interviews , anecdotal material and a review of current literature . The writer conducted the formally structured interview in the Phoenix region and the sample comprised of six secondary schools and four primary schools . This sample took into consideration the interviewee's gender , position at a primary/secondary school , size of the school and the socio-economic status of the community . The structured interviews (Appendices 1 , 2

and 3) were conducted in three phases . In the First Phase ten principals participated in the interviews . In the Second Phase ten Level One educators were interviewed and in the Third Phase ten chairpersons of governing bodies were interviewed . The interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes each . Each of the participants was asked to respond to formally structured questions . Follow-up and probing questions were added as needed , and written annotations were compiled while the interview was in progress , with the anonymity of participants assured .

The qualitative Structured Open-Ended Interviews (Appendices 1 , 2 and 3) were administered to teachers , principals and parents in governing bodies . Participants were posed questions to ascertain whether their schools managed conflict effectively , whether there was a need for training in conflict resolution , what they thought of a projected conflict resolution training programme , what form it should take and who should be involved in the training programme . The responses of participants were evaluated by qualitative content analysis .

5.3 Findings

The following bar graphs (represented by percentages) represent the statistical analysis of questions 1.2 ; 2.2 and 3.1 of the structured interview .

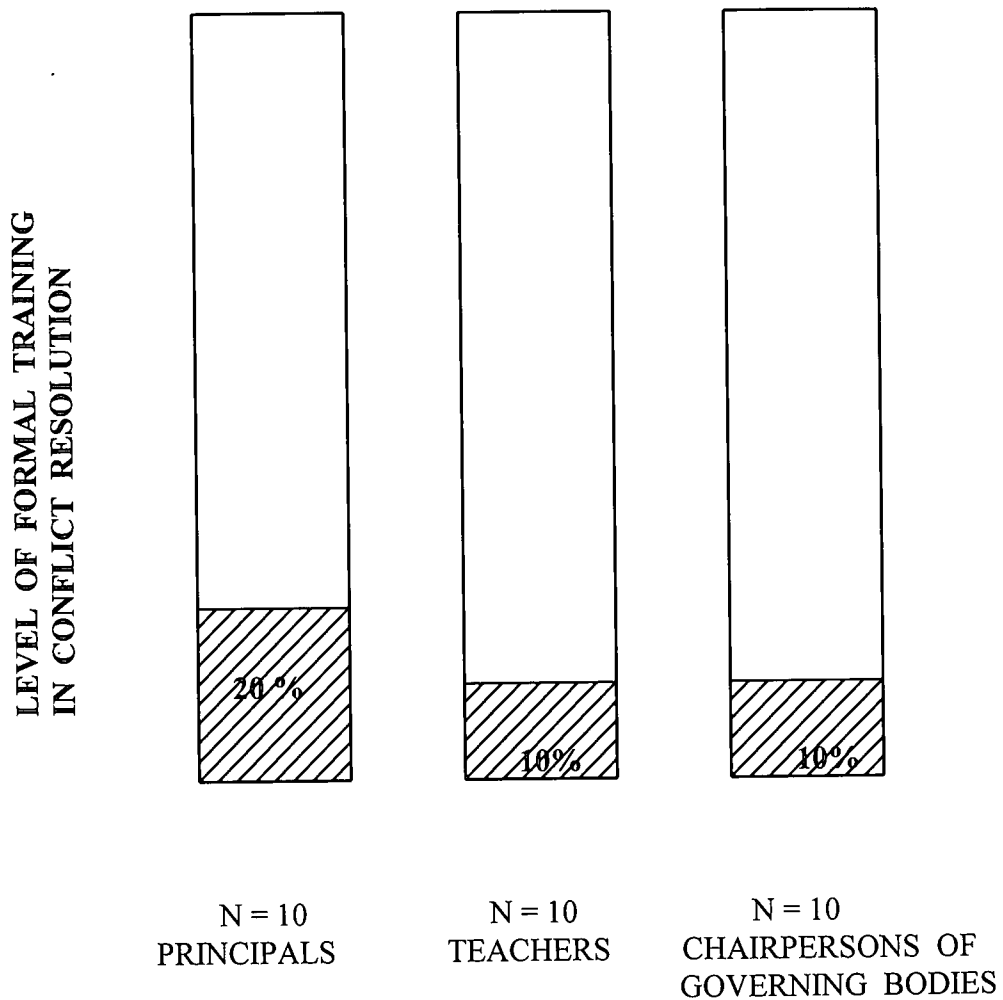


Figure 5.1

Formal training in conflict resolution .

From Figure 5.1 it can be deduced that only 20% of the principals , 10% of the teachers and 10% of chairpersons of governing bodies have some sort of formal training in conflict resolution pertaining to school management . The other respondents indicated that much of what they have learnt or used to manage conflict had come via experience or

trial and error . Most of the principals and teachers indicated that their training merely focused on academic and classroom skills and this training did not equip them with skills to deal with conflict . There was also no further in-service training in the area of conflict resolution which they strongly believed was an important facet of their job .

5.3.1 Data analysis (Appendix 1) : Conflict resolution from a principal's perspective .

The majority of the participants felt that most of the conflict between teachers and principals could be avoided if both principals and teachers were trained in conflict resolution . They also indicated that conflict resolution for members of the management team (that is , principals and school governors) should become a requisite . They suggested that training in conflict resolution should take the form of in-service training , through workshops , seminars and a formal training programme organised by the Department of Education . The participants felt that both teachers and members of the management team should be involved in these conflict resolution programmes and that these programmes should be conducted by superintendents of education , teacher unions , management consultants and academics from institutions who had relevant expertise in the field of management . Most of the principals also felt that teacher unions should play an important role in making their membership aware of their rights and responsibilities concerning conflict management . In addition to informing members of grievance procedures and channels of communication , teacher union representatives should also be part of the conflict resolution team of a school . However , principals felt that union officials should be trained in conflict handling skills if they were to make a constructive and objective contribution to the resolution of conflicts .

5.3.2 Data analysis (Appendix 2) : Conflict resolution from a teacher's perspective .

Most of the participants indicated that conflicts were not managed effectively in their schools . They cited the following reasons : lack of formal training in conflict resolution , favouritism , lack of objectivity and the inability of conflicting parties to separate issues from personality . All of the participants strongly believed that teachers and principals should be trained in conflict resolution . They suggested that training programmes should take the form of in-service training , using seminars and workshops with simulated conflict situations . They felt that these programmes should be conducted by the Department of Education officials . The participants also felt that all stakeholders , that is , teachers , members of management , superintendents of education and parents on school governing bodies should be involved in conflict resolution training programmes . On the question of whether parents on the school governing body should be a part of the conflict resolution team of the school , most teachers had reservations about this . They felt that parents should be excluded from professional matters and where teachers were directly implicated in a dispute .

5.3.3 Data analysis (Appendix 3) : Conflict resolution from a governing body chairperson's perspective .

Four of the participants felt that principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies did have satisfactory skills for dealing with conflicts at school . Six of the participants expressed the view that teachers , principals and parents on governing bodies did not have the necessary skills to manage conflict at school . They felt that most conflicts could be easily managed or avoided if stakeholders were trained in conflict resolution . The participants indicated that regulations and policies from the Department of Education

were not sufficient to eliminate conflict at schools . The participants concurred that teachers , learners , members of the management team and parents on governing bodies should be trained in conflict resolution . Formal training in conflict resolution would enable all stakeholders to deal with conflict constructively and in a mature manner : stakeholders would be trained to be level-headed , to separate emotion from fact : a more professional ethos would be created in schools and personality clashes avoided .

Most participants indicated that there was a need for training in human relations . Skills such as communication , conflict handling approaches and creating an appropriate atmosphere for constructive conflict management are essential skills to be incorporated into a conflict resolution training programme . Participants felt that such a training programme should not be a one-off session , but rather it should be an ongoing part of the school's programme . The participants also agreed that parents on governing bodies , teachers , members of the management team , representatives of councils of learners and union representatives should be involved in conflict resolution training programmes .

5.4 Conclusion

The response from the survey that was conducted by the writer revealed that principals , teachers and parents in governing bodies are not equipped to deal with conflict effectively. In fact , the interviewees were anxious to learn more about conflict resolution. They felt that formal training in conflict resolution would enable them to deal with conflict effectively . The writer believes that his survey has presented sufficient proof for the need to devise a training programme in conflict resolution to specifically address the needs of Phoenix schools .

5.5 Summary

The main focus of this Chapter was on the data obtained from the Structured Interviews , evaluating the extent to which principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies are equipped to deal with conflict at schools . In the next Chapter , the writer will be presenting a conflict resolution management plan and proposing suggestions on the various forms a conflict resolution training programme could take .

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Introduction

Girard and Koch are of the opinion that conflict resolution processes such as negotiation, mediation and consensus building should be studied , observed , modelled and practised before they can be effectively used (1996:77) . A deep understanding of methods of conflict resolution and a high level of skill in conducting these processes are essential . The overall goal of a conflict resolution training programme should be to engage the participants in exercises and simulations that will begin to develop their understanding of concepts and their skill in applying them .

The writer has ascertained through his survey as well as from his experience as a union mediator that principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies in Phoenix schools did not know how to deal with conflict in general and in particular they could not manage structural conflict , inter-staff conflict and inter-departmental conflict which occurred in their schools . The writer was , therefore , motivated to resolve this problem experienced in Phoenix schools . He studied the relevant literature in conflict in order to provide some solutions to principals and teachers in Phoenix . The writer believes that a conflict resolution training programme is needed in Phoenix schools to train both principals and teachers in conflict resolution . The conflict resolution training programme that the writer will discuss in this chapter comes from literature , his own experience as a union mediator and also from overseas researchers . It has been specifically designed to meet the needs of Phoenix schools .

The writer will be referring to a conflict curriculum developed and adopted by Bibb Middle School which could be used by principals in Phoenix to deal with conflict constructively . This is a staff development model designed to bring about the school-wide implementation of a conflict curriculum/conflict management programme . Thereafter , the writer will suggest the various forms a conflict resolution training programme may take by referring to strategies used by overseas institutions .

The writer believes that Bibb Middle School is a fitting example for Phoenix schools since it had experienced similar conflict situations . Bibb Middle School had frequently experienced conflicts which occurred as a result of inter-staff conflict , inter-faculty conflict and conflicts as a result of a traditional hierarchy of authority . The common causes of the conflicts experienced at Bibb Middle School were similar to the problems experienced in Phoenix schools which was discussed in Chapter 3 . The principal and staff of Bibb Middle School agreed that they did not have the skills and knowledge in conflict resolution and that there was a need to develop their skills in conflict resolution . Consequently , they embarked on designing a staff development programme to deal with conflict resolution . The conflict management plan designed by Bibb Middle School is relevant for Phoenix schools as it addresses our main problem : the lack of knowledge and skills in conflict resolution by teachers , principals and parents on governing bodies in Phoenix schools . The model designed by Bibb Middle School is a useful example of a conflict management plan which principals in Phoenix could modify and use to meet the needs of their schools in dealing with conflict effectively . This model should not be viewed as a prescription for Phoenix schools , but rather as a starting point .

6.2 Devising a Conflict Management Plan

School principals should prepare and create a climate to equip teachers and learners for conflict prevention and for conflict resolution . Johnson believes that principals should implement an intervention programme for school conflict that not only has permanence , but also allows for renewal and change (1996:602) . The following details a plan that was implemented at Bibb Middle School . (Johnson , 1996: 602 - 615) . It must be noted that the researcher does not indicate where Bibb Middle School is situated and the school's actual name has been changed .

6.2.1 Blueprint for a Conflict Management Plan - Staff Development

The first task of the principal of Bibb Middle School was to provide an opportunity for the staff to identify conflict as a school issue . This was done through a formalised strategic planning process that included informal brainstorming sessions during staff meetings . Once conflict was identified as an issue to be studied and the staff at Bibb Middle School had accepted the need to develop skills and knowledge in conflict resolution , planning progressed by drafting several questions , the answers to which would build sustained support for the staff development plan . The list included the following questions :

- 1) What does staff believe regarding the amount and role of conflict in the school ?
- 2) Are staff satisfied with the school environment ?
- 3) What are staff's perceptions of how their school is viewed by those outside the school , e.g. , parents , community and other educators ?

- 4) What behaviours and attitudes reflect staff acceptance and resistance to planning changes in the school ?
- 5) What are staff's priorities regarding school programmes ?

Answers to the above questions were gathered through individual interviews with members of management and staff , a series of small group and large group discussions and the administration of survey instruments .

Individual interviews were conducted during the school day with each teacher and management team member . Each person's duties was covered by a substitute during the interview so that planning and break times were not sacrificed . An interview guide was developed to structure the questioning . It contained open ended questions regarding the amount and kinds of conflict a teacher was likely to encounter in the school environment. It also included questions that asked for a self-assessment of conflict resolution skills , ideas about what would improve the individual's conflict management effectiveness and whether conflict was generally a problem for both the individual and for Bibb Middle School . Interviews were recorded for later transcription .

All teachers participated in small group meetings in which they were asked to discuss their concerns regarding conflict and the prospect of implementing a conflict curriculum for students . These small groups were organised according to the grade levels of special subject teachers (music , art , home economics and science) . Teachers were requested to respond to questions regarding conflict relevant to the special needs of their group . Data from the meetings were recorded in written notes taken by an observer .

After the interview and survey , data was analysed and prepared for presentation . The staff and the management met to review the results and discuss the implications for the school . The purpose of the meeting was , firstly , to graphically portray the problem areas of the school and secondly , to overcome resistance to the staff development plan and the necessary changes in conflict management procedures . At this meeting staff were in total agreement that some sort of staff development was needed before implementing a conflict reduction plan at Bibb Middle School .

6.2.2 Developing the Conflict Curriculum

It is important that all participants be involved in adopting or developing this phase of the project . Adopting a new conflict curriculum will represent a change in the school and some individuals may resist the change efforts . However , their concerns must be addressed by presenting alternatives to their objections and understanding their viewpoints.

The contents of the curriculum were derived from needs expressed in the teacher interview sessions , a review of conflict management literature for business and education, and a review of conflict resolution curricula developed for school use . Materials and activities that would have suitable application for the school were selected , adapted or developed . Principals in Phoenix will find the conflict curriculum adopted by Bibb Middle School as a useful guideline for drawing up a conflict curriculum for their own schools.

The survey conducted by the writer revealed that principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies in Phoenix schools did not have the slightest idea as to what form the training programme in conflict resolution should take . They were , however , very anxious to acquire more knowledge on this subject . The writer , therefore , strongly believes that following conflict curriculum used by Bibb Middle School will serve as a valuable example which principals in Phoenix could modify and use to meet the needs of their schools to deal with conflict .

1. Overview of conflict curriculum

Introduction

Group organisation

Student responsibilities

2. Environment for managing conflict

Self concept

Connecting and relating

Team building

Co-operation

Communication

3. Knowing conflict - Definition

What is it ?

What is it about ?

Power

Status

Resources

Rights

4. Beginnings of conflict

Differences

Thinking , feelings , goals , and how goals achieved

Beliefs and values

Structures that frustrate

Miscommunication

5. Defining the conflict situation (congruence)

Identify

Perceive and conceptualise

6. Responding to conflict - What do we do about it ?

Alternative behaviours

Avoiding

Integrating

Practice assertive behaviours

Dominating

Recognise aggressive behaviours

Obliging

Recognise passive behaviours

Compromising

Deciding what to do

7. Pitfalls to decision making

Fair fighting

Peer pressure

Unreasonable risks

8. Managing conflict

Escalating or de-escalating the conflict

Changing the goal but meeting the need (goal transformation)

Strategies for a common goal

6.2.3 Staff development for Conflict Curriculum

The staff development plan for the conflict curriculum should meet the needs of the individual school . Time must be allowed for individual and group study of the curriculum. The staff at Bibb Middle School felt that provision should be made for added compensation when staff development takes place outside regular employment hours . It should not take place during teacher planning periods or breaks . The staff at Bibb Middle School believed that if teachers were expected to make a professional commitment to the programme , then school leadership should make a professional commitment to the teachers .

Any staff development programme should provide for the acquisition of knowledge and skills . It should not be a one-off occurrence , but an ongoing exercise . Knowledge needs to be revisited , skills needs to be re honed and adjustments to the programme must be allowed for . The following is a suggested implementation model (Johnson , 1996:613-615) .

6.2.3.1 Presentation of Knowledge and Theory

In order to understand the conflict curriculum , knowledge of the theory of conflict management in organisations is required . This entails acquainting all school personnel with organisational conflict management literature as well as the contents of the conflict curriculum . It also means making all participants aware of the various potential conflict roles in the school - students , teachers , principals and parents . Since much of the information will be new to everyone , several days of intensive effort and study time is

needed . Background reading , case studies , lectures , and discussions are useful formats for acquiring conflict knowledge and theory .

6.2.3.2 *Role -Play*

Conflict management requires application of knowledge through effective methods and techniques . School personnel frequently experience conflict situations . Knowledge of how to respond and how to recognise the various stages of the conflict process usually come from experience . Experience includes observing others manage conflict and trial and error . Modelling different methods and techniques in simulated situations expands one's awareness of possibilities and provides an opportunity for evaluating current practices .

6.2.3.3 *Protected Practice - Small Group*

The first opportunity to try out new knowledge and develop new skills should be in a non-threatening environment with no consequences for errors . A small group of four to five participants provides a convenient and an effective environment to try conflict resolution strategies . Each group member should rotate the roles of conflict manager and conflict participant in skill building exercises . Through discussion with other members , members should be able to gain an insight into their own competencies .

6.2.3.4 *Practice and Feedback - Individual*

Skill development at this stage is still practice . Though it may be perceived as more threatening , it is still without consequence . At this stage observers are encouraged to reinforce or critique performance and offer suggestions for improved techniques based on

relevant knowledge and theory . At this stage proficiency in applying conflict management should be attained .

6.2.3.5 *Coaching*

The coaching stage is an extension and continuation of the previous training stages . A teacher or administrator is paired with a partner and they are given opportunities to observe each other in their professional practice environment .

An important consideration , particularly when dealing with conflict , is that the model is not linear ; it is cyclical . The school personnel should be committed to revisiting the model at any point to respond to changes resulting from new learners , new teachers and administrators and events . Therefore , conflict management skills and knowledge should be frequently tested , examined , and modified to accommodate to the changing school environment .

The conflict intervention programme which was implemented by Bibb Middle School will be of great assistance to principals in Phoenix who are presently finding it difficult to manage conflicts that occur at school . The writer's own observation as a union mediator, as well as the responses to the survey conducted , revealed that most of the teachers and principals in Phoenix schools did not have any formal training in conflict resolution . The interviews , too , showed that principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies did not have an idea how to plan a staff development programme to develop skills and knowledge in conflict resolution . The approach used by Bibb Middle School will serve as a useful example for principals in Phoenix schools to develop skills and knowledge in

conflict resolution . The conflict management plan adopted by Bibb Middle School should be examined by principals in Phoenix and modified to accommodate the needs of their schools .

6.3 Recommendations for addressing areas of potential conflict in schools .

6.3.1 Conflict Resolution Curriculum

Girard and Koch are of the view that schools and departments of education must decide where conflict resolution fits into the professional preparation curriculum (1996:123-125). Conflict resolution can be applied in different ways in schools , therefore , school personnel must determine both what they would like to see accomplished with respect to a conflict resolution curriculum and what they believe is initially possible . Just as conflict resolution can be integrated into schools in different ways , so too can it be incorporated into professional programmes by means of either small or expansive initiatives . It can be included as part of pre-service preparation , graduate programmes , or in-service training. Conflict resolution can be taught as a part of methods , classroom-management , communication , in counselling or administrative classes . It can be included within a course in as little as an hour , with the aim to introduce an awareness of conflict resolution as an emerging field , or in a larger segment that allows for an exploration of some of its foundational concepts and skills . It can be a separate one-unit or three unit course , or a full certificate programme .

The experiences of eleven colleges and universities that participated in the Conflict Resolution in Teacher Education Project in the United States sheds light on both the importance of planning and the way in which circumstances determine choices about

course and unit design . For example , one faculty integrated conflict resolution into a course , Discipline and Classroom Management for the In-service Teacher , that combined twenty five hours of conflict resolution skills with material on co-operative discipline . Another faculty incorporated material on intercultural conflict and conflict resolution into a course called Minorities in Education . Other courses into which conflict resolution was added included Adolescent Development , Classroom Management , and Student Teaching .

The above-mentioned examples of conflict resolution courses will assist principals in Phoenix as it illustrates what aspects may be incorporated in a conflict resolution curriculum and the type of topics that may be included in the conflict resolution training programme . In Chapter 3 the writer discussed the issue of multicultural learning as a source of conflict in Phoenix schools . Principals in Phoenix could design a course for their schools to specifically deal with this issue , for example , by incorporating material on intercultural conflict and conflict resolution and calling it : *Multicultural learning in our school* . This course could be aimed at teachers , learners and parents on governing bodies to deal with the problems that arise out of teaching and learning in multicultural schools and classrooms .

In addition to integrating conflict resolution education into other courses , faculties have also developed complete courses on conflict resolution . The writer has mentioned a few of these courses to further illustrate what form a conflict resolution course may take . It was evident from the writer's survey that principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies did not have an idea how to approach a conflict resolution training programme . A

few of the courses described below designed by universities in the United States will illustrate some topics which principals in Phoenix could emulate to meet the specific needs of their schools in respect of conflict resolution .

- . *Introduction to Conflict Resolution for the Student Teacher* . The University of Delaware has developed a seminar option prior to its first school assignment (Girard and Koch , 1996:125) .
- . *Violence Prevention Strategies for Schools* . Emporia State University in Kansas has developed this programme of discussion , ideas and strategies for coping with violence and conflict in schools (Girard and Koch , 1996:125) .
- . *Course Sequence* . Texas Wesley University has developed four graduate courses as part of a new specialisation in conflict resolution . These courses include Conflict Resolution , Negotiation , Mediation , and System Design in Schools (Conflict Resolution) (Girard and Koch , 1996:125) .

6.3.2 Strategies for resolving Structural , Inter-staff and Inter-departmental

Conflict

In Chapter 3 the writer identified the reasons why structural , inter-staff and inter-departmental conflict occurred in Phoenix schools . From his experience as a union mediator the writer had observed that principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies did not know how to manage these conflicts . This lack of knowledge in conflict resolution skills motivated the writer to study the available literature on conflict in order to make a meaningful contribution to address the issue of conflict resolution in Phoenix schools . The writer will now propose conflict resolution strategies , suggested by overseas researchers , which principals in Phoenix could use to deal with structural ,

inter-staff and inter-departmental conflicts experienced at their schools . Since the strategies for dealing with inter-staff and inter-departmental conflict overlap and are pertinent to both types of conflict , the writer will group together inter-staff and inter-departmental conflict resolution strategies .

6.3.2.1 Inter-staff and Inter-departmental conflict resolution strategies

6.3.2 .1.1 Mutual Problem-solving

Robbins is of the opinion that mutual problem-solving is the soundest method for resolving intergroup conflict (1990:427) . The writer supports this viewpoint as he has experienced in many cases during mediation between teachers and principals that when conflicting parties come face to face with the underlying causes of conflict and share responsibility for seeing that the solution works , there is a greater likelihood of resolving differences . Often , individuals in conflict situations adopt a win-lose attitude : they lose sight of the fact that their main purpose is to resolve the problem rather than to score points . Conflicting parties need to confront one another and talk about their problems without becoming emotional or violent . It is not uncommon in professional organisations to see individuals lose their composure during conflict by making threats , exchanging verbal abuse or becoming violent . This type of militant behaviour is becoming the norm in Phoenix schools for addressing disagreements . It has to be stopped . Principals in Phoenix schools must practice and encourage mutual problem-solving as a strategy for conflict resolution . Individuals must be reminded that the potential exists to achieve a better solution through collaboration . The writer has described the mutual problem-solving approach as a strategy for conflict resolution in detail in Chapter 4 . Principals in

Phoenix will find this strategy useful to manage inter-staff and inter-departmental conflicts at their schools .

6.3.2.1.2 Code of conduct

Among advice given to teachers for preventing conflicts is that of abiding by and enforcing a strong code of professional behaviour . If teachers would live and work by such a code , any further advice would be superfluous . The South African Council for Educators (SACE) has established a professional code of conduct which governs the behaviour of its members . The writer believes that it is not sufficient to have a code of conduct on paper which is not practised . There is a need for principals and union leaders in Phoenix schools to discuss the code of conduct set up by SACE with teachers and to make them aware of it in the hope that they will accept a high code of professional conduct . Implementing a code of conduct for teachers in Phoenix will be a proactive conflict resolution strategy which principals should use to eliminate or minimise conflict at their schools .

It is recommended that teacher organisations and governing bodies in Phoenix also have their own codes of conduct as a strategy for conflict resolution . Such a code would clarify important aspects of the relationship between teachers , principals , parents on governing bodies and union representatives within the context of appropriate legislation and provide examples of good and bad practice . Certainly , governors should be reminded that despite all their powers , they must leave the day-to-day running and management of the school to the principal and staff .

The writer interviewed a principal of a secondary school in Westville who was rather proactive in curbing conflict . She enlisted the service of a lawyer to draw up a code of conduct , in consultation with the governing body , which clearly defined the role functions of the principal and staff on the one hand and that of the governing body on the other . This code of conduct which demarcated the boundaries , rights and responsibilities of the governing body and the management of the school , helped considerably to minimise conflict . Adopting a code of conduct for all those involved in school governance will contribute immensely to conflict resolution . Principals and teachers in Phoenix often complain about the interference of governing bodies in the professional running of the school . Principals in Phoenix could emulate the conflict resolution strategy used by the principal in Westville by clearly demarcating the role functions of the governing body and the school management in order to prevent or minimise conflict . They could do this exercise through a joint effort of both staff and the governing body or they could enlist the expertise of a lawyer to draw up the code of conduct .

There is a need for teachers' unions in Phoenix to devote careful attention to the development of a code of ethics as a proactive conflict resolution strategy to prevent conflict in Phoenix schools . Such a code should alert its members to the ideals , duties and obligations of the teaching profession and to their proper conduct as individuals in relationships with learners , parents and colleagues . This code of ethics , which will serve as a conflict resolution strategy , should , therefore , be exacting enough to deter the members from unprofessional and otherwise undesirable behaviour which may result in unnecessary conflict .

6.3.2.1.3 Rules and procedures

The establishment of rules and procedures is a fairly direct approach to managing intergroup conflict . This approach works well if the rules and procedures are set up before the conflict arises . These rules and regulations should be discussed by and agreed to by the group so that they can take ownership of the decision and abide by it . It is a potentially useful technique which principals in Phoenix schools could use to prevent conflict or defuse tensions . As an example , consider a teacher who expects the school clerk to attend immediately to his duplicating , ignoring the fact that she has other pressing administrative chores . To avoid the potential conflict in this situation , set times on set days of the week may be reserved for handing in work for duplicating .

6.3.2.1.4 "Open door" policy

Principals in Phoenix should adopt an "open door" policy towards other stakeholders as an approach to conflict resolution . They should create an ethos in school which allows for teachers , learners and parents to consult them at any time to discuss a problem when it arises . Such an approach would make them accessible to members of staff , learners and parents. Principals should constantly seek feedback from subordinates on their orders and pronouncements . This approach would help to dispel any misperceptions or misunderstandings which could result in unnecessary conflict .

6.3.2.1.5 Structures to deal with conflict

Principals in Phoenix should establish structures to deal with conflict immediately and sympathetically , such as a "hotline" , a suggestion box or an appeals system . Establishing an appeals system would entail intervention by a senior teacher in the school

to resolve conflicts at lower hierarchical levels . The senior studies the conflict and enforces a solution - something the disputants cannot do on their own . The appeals system provides the right of formal redress . It must be noted that the authority that superiors have over conflicting parties is important enough so that it can be cited as a separate conflict resolution technique .

6.3.2.1.6 Managing diversity and conflict

Teachers in Phoenix often complain of principals being biased towards a particular union. The unbiased attitude of principals is imperative when dealing with teachers belonging to different organisations , particularly in the case of SADTU and APEK . There is also a need for teachers to exercise tolerance towards each other , even though they may belong to different organisations and hold different views . Principals in Phoenix should use every available forum to inform staff on the need to recognise the freedom of association and the need for peaceful co-existence .

6.3.2.1.7 Role clarification

Principals in Phoenix should ensure that role definitions are clear and are given in greater detail so that teachers know what to expect from each other . The Minister of Education has , in terms of section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act , 1998 , determined the terms and conditions of employment of educators (1999: 3c-3c - 15) . The Act defines the core responsibilities and duties of educators , heads of departments , deputy principals and principals . Principals should discuss the core duties and responsibilities with staff so that they are made aware of their duties and responsibilities . This exercise would assist in decreasing task ambiguity and therefore create less grounds for conflict .

6.3.2.1.8 Changing interaction patterns

If the basis of the conflict between the conflicting groups of teachers in Phoenix schools is lack of trust or suspicion of motives, an effective conflict resolution strategy would be for principals in Phoenix to bring the parties together and let them get to know each other, their aspirations, disappointments and needs so that their behaviour can be understood in context. If, on the contrary, conflict is rooted in differences in values or principles, then increased interaction will most likely exacerbate the situation. In such a situation separating the parties, such as not appointing them to the same committees, can be helpful in avoiding conflict (Hanson, 1996:270).

6.3.2.1.9 Conflict “sponge”

At times, for the smooth functioning of the school, principals in Phoenix may attempt to redirect the tensions and conflictive behaviours toward themselves, thus clearing the atmosphere and enabling more productivity to take place at lower levels. This conflict resolution strategy entails principal's assuming responsibility for a troublesome event that had taken place in the school. Becoming a “conflict sponge” is not an easy task but can be a useful conflict resolution tool when used with circumspection.

6.3.2.2 Structural Conflict Resolution Strategies

6.3.2.2.1 Participative Management Style

Teachers often call for greater representation of stakeholders in the running of schools . In his research , Govender found that teachers viewed the involvement of key stakeholders in the formulation of educational policy and its implementation as vital (1996:82) . In order to minimise or prevent conflict , principals in Phoenix should adopt a participative management style which allows for communal decision-making . This approach allows for the interests of all parties involved to be carefully considered before decisions are made . All parties can state their particular points of view regardless of their status and through communication , expel any doubt or misunderstanding , which may result in conflict (Squelch and Lemmer , 1994:154) .

6.3.2.2.2 Dump hierarchies

According to Likert and Likert status can have a serious negative effect upon a group's capacity to resolve disagreements effectively (1976:157) . Individuals at upper levels in a hierarchy express themselves more freely than do those at lower levels . Principals should create an atmosphere during conflict resolution where members of the group feel comfortable in expressing their ideas fully and freely . Hierarchical status creates a barrier and stifles the willingness of group members to speak . Individuals in leadership positions are often unaware of the impact of their status on discussions and interactions in the conflict resolution process . Principals in Phoenix should take full advantage of the contribution that diversity can make to creative problem-solving . By allowing for the

participation of all stakeholders in the problem-solving process , the principal will be able to procure variety of ideas from which he can select the best solution .

Teachers in Phoenix complain frequently that they are not involved in discussions or that decisions are taken by senior management without consultation . Teachers are frustrated by the top-down manner of management as it promotes insecurity and emphasises power. Principals in Phoenix need to get out of their minds the belief that schools can only be structured in one way : through roles , hierarchy and status . We need to take a cue from business and flatten the hierarchical pyramid . The concept of self-managing teams has been a feature of some manufacturing companies for a considerable time (Jenkins , 1991:51) . Effective companies devolve power to high performance teams within the organisation . These teams are supported , not directed by senior management . They turn the hierarchy upside down .

When we talk about “teams” in education , we are not referring to departmental units which can become bureaucratic and rigid but a group of employees who are assigned to manage , for example , intergroup conflict . Teams may be created to manage long-term , continuous intergroup relations or to examine a specific problem on a short term basis . The main purpose of teams is to tackle recurring problems resulting from intergroup conflict and to develop solutions for managing conflict (Vecchio , 1995: 486) .

Self-managing teams are responsible for dealing with tasks that have conflict inherent in them , for example , teacher appraisal or time-tabling which often lead to much

controversy in schools . These teams are highly autonomous , highly developed groups of people who have almost total control over their work area and can be useful in managing conflict . Principals in Phoenix should consider the idea of using self-managing teams both as a strategy to prevent conflict , and also as a way forward for they involve a real devolution of power to staff and can serve as a building block for the organisation . The top-down models of management are archaic and it is foolhardy for senior managers in schools to believe that they have a monopoly of leadership skills . The writer has observed in his school that when the principal relinquishes the reins , qualities of leadership emerge from all levels and types of staff .

Breaking down hierarchies means letting go of power . Post heroic leaders let go . They are not afraid of giving their power away to staff : they empower staff . The post-heroic leader is there to facilitate , to educate and to inspire colleagues (Jenkins, 1991:52) . The problem in schools is that principal's find it difficult to give up power . The result is a power struggle between management and staff and invariably this results in conflict . It is a constant complaint from teachers in Phoenix that they feel alienated from the school because ownership lies with the principal and senior management . It is recommended that school principals in Phoenix hold regular staff meetings to democratise school governance through maximising participation as it would help to eliminate or minimise conflict . Workshops should be organised with the relevant role-players to set up structures and discuss governance structures . By adopting such a management style , principals in Phoenix would ensure greater accountability and transparency in the management of school matters and also keep conflict under control .

6.4 Conclusion

The literature survey of conflict management and the data from the sample of principals , teachers and parents who were interviewed , revealed that there was a need for a training programme in conflict resolution specifically designed to assist with the prevention and resolution of conflict in Phoenix schools . Following this need , the writer attempted to provide a theoretical understanding of conflict ; and also provided practical suggestions on the different ways conflict resolution may be applied in schools in Phoenix . The writer's suggestions with regard to the implementation of a conflict resolution training programme for principals , teachers and parents on school governing bodies may be a positive contribution towards reducing and preventing conflict in schools , which is both undesirable and counterproductive . Research has revealed that the effectiveness of a conflict resolution programme improves when the philosophical orientation for conflict management is articulated , understood , and implemented by members of school management , teachers and parents on school governing bodies (Johnson , 1996:600) .

The writer believes that schools in Phoenix should seriously consider developing and implementing a conflict resolution programme for learners . Assaults on fellow learners , teachers and property are commonplace in Phoenix schools , but often these conflicts go unresolved . Many learners are not presented with the opportunity to develop the attitudes and skills to productively handle the conflicts they face in the course of their lives . Much of their knowledge of handling conflict is acquired haphazardly and in contexts such as television , videos and movies , which emphasise destructive methods . As our classrooms are becoming increasingly more diverse , conflict episodes in schools are increasing in amount and intensity . It is , therefore , important that schools explore the

possibility of designing and implementing a conflict curriculum for learners to address this problem of multicultural schools and classrooms (Johnson , 1996:600-601) .

The responses from the Structured Interviews also revealed a lack of conflict resolution training at teacher preparation institutions . The writer believes that more research is required in designing programmes to teach conflict resolution at teacher preparation institutions in the form of formal pre-service and in-service training .

6.5 Summary

This Chapter dealt with a conflict resolution training programme and the writer made suggestions that will be useful to education stakeholders in eliminating conflict .

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APPENDIX 1

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

(Face-to-face)

1. CONFLICT RESOLUTION FROM A PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

- 1.1 How do you feel about conflicts between teachers and principals ?
- 1.2 Do you have any formal training in conflict resolution pertaining to school management ? If yes , please elaborate .
- 1.3 What form should the training in conflict resolution take ?
- 1.4 Who do you think should be involved in this conflict resolution programme ? Why ?
- 1.5 What role do you think unions should play in conflict resolution ?

APPENDIX 2

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

(Face-to-face)

2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION FROM A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

- 2.1 From your experience at school , do you think that conflicts are managed effectively ? Briefly explain .
- 2.2 Should teachers and principals be trained in conflict resolution ?
- 2.3 What form should this training programme take ?
- 2.4. Who should form part of this training programme ?
- 2.5 Should the school governing body be part of the conflict resolution team of the school ? Please elaborate .

APPENDIX 3

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

(Face-to-face)

3. CONFLICT RESOLUTION FROM A GOVERNING BODY

CHAIRPERSON'S PERSPECTIVE.

- 3.1 Do you think that principals , teachers and parents on governing bodies have the necessary skills to deal with conflicts at school ? Explain .
- 3.2 Who do you think should be trained in conflict resolution ?
- 3.3 Why do you think so ?
- 3.4 What type of conflict resolution skills should a training programme incorporate ?
- 3.5 How long should the conflict resolution training programme take ?
- 3.6 Who do you think should form part of a conflict resolution management team at school ? Why ?