CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN SOME SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THREE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA
By

ATAPIA OWAYIBUEKPO ATAPIA
1832-1922

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate
Faculty of Northwestern Theological Seminary
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF THEOLOGY IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Approved:
DR. Samuel Galloza, PhD, D.D.
Thesis Adviser

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the management of conflicts in the administration of secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. It also identifies, discusses and analyses the causes as well as the various ways conflicts manifested in the administration of secondary schools in the state. The effects of conflicts on school administration are equally examined. Quantitative and qualitative data were generated from both primary and secondary sources. The paper shows that administration of secondary schools in the state was hampered by high rate of conflicts. Several types of conflicts were identified in the schools among which were conflicts between management and staff, between staff and students, between the communities and schools, and inter-personal conflicts, to mention a few. The causes of conflicts in schools in the state included inadequate welfare package for workers, forceful and compulsory retirement/retrenchment of workers, administrative incompetence, personality clashes, role conflicts, and non-involvement of students in school administration. The fact that most of the school administrators were not knowledgeable in conflict management, coupled with the absence of laid down procedures for conflict management in most schools contributed to the high rate of conflicts and industrial actions in the schools. The paper concludes that the issue of conflict management in school administration has reached a point where effective use of relevant strategies can no longer be ignored.

DEFINITION OF KEYWORDS

CONFLICT

Conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Conflict on teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined. Katzenbach, Johnson, Algert, and Thomas-Kilmann say that, conflict might escalate and lead to nonproductive results, or conflict can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products.[1] Therefore, learning to manage conflict is integral to a high-performance team. Although very few people go looking for conflict, more often than not, conflict results because of miscommunication between people with regard to their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals, or values. Smith and his research associate opine that Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of nonproductive escalation.

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[1] Katzenbach, J.R., and Smith, D.K. (1992). Wisdom of teams, Harvard Business School Press; Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., and Holubec, E.J. (1986). Circles of learning: cooperation in the classroom (rev. ed.), Edina, MN: Interaction Book Co. "Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want," Am. Soc. Training and Devel. and U.S. Dept. Labor, Employment and Training Admin., 1988; Algert, N.E. (1996) "Conflict in the workplace" in Proceedings: Women in Engineering Advocates Network, Denver, CO., 123–127. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA: (800)624-1765 or available on the World Wide Web.

Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in your environment.[1]

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management involves implementing strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflict at a level equal to or higher than where the conflict is taking place. Furthermore, the aim of conflict management[2] is to enhance learning and group outcomes.[3] It is not concerned with eliminating all conflict or avoiding conflict. Conflict can be valuable to groups and organizations. It has been shown to increase group outcomes when managed properly.[4] While no single definition of conflict exists, most definitions seem to involve the following factors: that there are at least two independent groups, the groups perceive some incompatibility between themselves, and the groups interact with each other in some way.[5]

[1] Smith, K.A. (2000). Project management and teamwork. New York: McGraw-Hill BEST series; Blake, R.R., and Mouton, J.S. (1964). The managerial grid. Houston: Gulf Publishing Co.; Algert, N.E., and Watson, K. (2002). Conflict management: introductions for individuals and organizations. Bryan, Raudsepp, E. (2002) "Hone Listening Skills To Boost Your Career," available on the World Wide Web at http://www.careerjournal.com/myc/climbingladder/20021224-raudsepp.html, accessed on 28 January 2003. Lambert, J., and Myers, S. (1999) 50 Activities for conflict resolution. Amherst, MA: HR Development Press.
[2] Alper, S., Tjosvold, D., & Law, K. S. (2000) Conflict management, efficacy, and performance in organizational teams. Personnel Psychology, 53, 625-642.
[3] Rahim, 2002, p. 208.
[4] Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, 2000; Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Khun & Poole, 2000; DeChurch & Marks, 2001.
[5] Putnam and Poole, 1987

Two example definitions are, "process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party",[1] and "the interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement[2], or dissonance within or between social entities".[3] There are several causes of conflict. Conflict may occur when: A party is required to engage in an activity that is incongruent with his or her needs or interests. A party holds behavioral preferences, the satisfaction of which is incompatible with another person's implementation of his or her preferences. A party wants some mutually desirable resource that is in short supply, such that the wants of all parties involved may not be satisfied fully. A party possesses attitudes, values, skills, and goals that are salient in directing his or her behavior but are perceived to be exclusive of the attitudes, values, skills, and goals held by the other(s). Two parties have partially exclusive behavioral preferences regarding their joint actions.

Two parties are interdependent in the performance of functions or activities.[4]

SUBSTANTIV CUM AFFECTIVE

The overarching hierarchy of conflict starts with a distinction between substantive (also called performance, task, issue, or active) conflict and affective (also called relationship or [the opposite of] agreeable) conflict. If one could make a distinction between good and bad conflict, substantive would be good and affective conflict would be bad.

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[1] Wall & Callister, 1995, p. 517.
[2] Rahim, M. A. (2002) Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. The International Journal of Conflict Management, 13, 206-235.
[3] Rahim, 1992, p. 16.
[4] Rahim, 2002, p. 207.

However, in a meta-analysis of the current research, shows that these two concepts are related to each other.[1] Substantive conflict deals with disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed or the performance itself.[2] This type of conflict occurs when two or more social entities disagree on the recognition and solution to a task problem, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions.[3] Affective conflict deals with interpersonal relationships or incompatibilities.[4] It is generated from emotions and frustration,[5] and has a detrimental impact on group or organizational outcomes.[6] Summarily stated, "relationship conflict interferes with task-related effort because members focus on reducing threats, increasing power, and attempting to build cohesion rather than working on tasks...The conflict causes members to be negative, irritable, suspicious, and resentful".[7] Thus, "[substantive] conflicts occur when group members argue over alternatives related to the group's task, whereas [affective] conflicts result over interpersonal clashes not directly related to achieving the group's function.[8] In De Dreu and Weingart's 2003 meta-analysis,[9] both substantive and affective conflicts are negatively related to team member satisfaction.

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[1] De. Drue and Weingart, 2003, corrected correlation, ρ = .54.
[2] DeChurch & Marks, 2001; Jehn, 1995.
[3] Jehn, 1995; Rahim, 2002.
[4] Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim, 2008.
[5] Bodtker & Jameson, 2001, p. 32.
[6] The information processing ability, cognitive functioning of group members, attributions of group members' behavior, group loyalty, work group commitment, intent to stay in the present organization, and job satisfaction by Amason, 1996; Baron, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 1999; Wall & Nolan, 1986.
[7] Jehn, 1997, pp. 531-532; c.f. Rahim, 2002, p. 210.
[8] Amason, 1996; Guetzhow & Gyr, 1954; Jehn, 1992; Pinkley, 1990; Priem & Price, 1991; c.f. DeChurch & Marks, 2001, p. 5.
[9] ρ = -.32; -.56, respectively.

Additionally, substantive and affective conflicts are negatively related to team performance.[1] It is important to note that 20% (5 of 25) of the studies used showed a positive correlation between substantive conflict and task performance. These relationships show the severe negative impact that conflict can have on groups, and illustrate the importance of conflict management.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Organizational conflict, whether it be substantive or affective, can be divided into intraorganizational and interorganizational. Interorganizational conflict occurs between two or more organizations.[2] When different businesses are competing against one another, this is an example of interorganizational conflict Intraorganizational conflict is conflict within an organization, and can be examined based upon level (e.g. department, work team, individual), and can be classified as interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup. Interpersonal conflict--once again--whether it is substantive or affective, refers to conflict between two or more individuals (not representing the group they are a part of) of the same or different group at the same or different level, if in an organization. Interpersonal conflict can be divided into intragroup and intergroup conflict. While the former--intragroup--occurs between members of a group (or between subgroups within a group), the latter--intergroup--occurs between groups or units in an organization.[3]

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[1] $\rho = -.20; -.25$, respectively.
[2] Rahim, 2002.
[3] Rahim, 2002.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION CUM CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

As the name would suggest, conflict resolution involves the reduction, elimination, or termination of all forms and types of conflict. In practice, when people talk about conflict resolution they tend to use terms like negotiation, bargaining, mediation, or arbitration. In line with the recommendations in the "how to" section, businesses can benefit from appropriate types and levels of conflict. That is the aim of conflict management, and not the aim of conflict resolution. Conflict management does not necessarily imply conflict resolution. "Conflict management involves designing effective macro-level strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and enhancing the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness in an organization".[1] Learning is essential for the longevity of any group. This is especially true for organizations; Organizational learning is essential for any company to remain in the market. Properly managed conflict increases learning through increasing the degree to which groups ask questions and challenge the status quo.[2]

MODELS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

There have been many styles of conflict management behavior that have been researched in the past century. One of the earliest approaches[3] found that conflict was managed by individuals in three main ways: domination, compromise, and integration. She also found other ways of handling conflict that were employed by organizations, such as avoidance and suppression.

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[1] Rahim, 2002, p. 208.
[2] Luthans, Rubach, & Marsnik, 1995, P.47.
[3] Mary Parker Follett (1926/1940.

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EARLY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MODELS

Blake and Mouton were among the first to present a conceptual scheme for classifying the modes (styles) for handling interpersonal conflicts into five types: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem solving.[1] In the 1970's and 1980's, researchers began using the intentions of the parties involved to classify the styles of conflict management that they would include in their models. Both Thomas and Pruitt put forth a model based on the concerns of the parties involved in the conflict. The combination of the parties concern for their own interests (i.e. assertiveness) and their concern for the interests of those across the table (i.e. cooperativeness) would yield a particular conflict management style. Pruitt called these styles yielding (low assertiveness/high cooperativeness), problem solving (high assertiveness/high cooperativeness), inaction (low assertiveness/low cooperativeness), and contending (high assertiveness/low cooperativeness). Pruitt argues that problem-solving is the preferred method when seeking mutually beneficial options.[2]

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[1] Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1964). The managerial grid. Houston, TX: Gulf. And Bodtker, A. M., & Jameson, J. K. (2001) Emotion in conflict formation and its transformation: Application to organizational conflict management. The International Journal of Conflict Management, 3, 259-275.

[2] Thomas, K. W. (1976). Conflict and conflict management. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), Handbook in industrial and organizational psychology (pp. 889-935). Chicago: Rand McNally; Van de Vliert, E., & Kabanoff, B. (1990). Toward theory-based measures of conflict management. Academy of Management Journal, 33, 199-209 and Wall, J. A., Jr., & Callister, R. R. (1995). Conflict and its management. Journal of Management, 21, 515-558.

KHUN AND POOLE'S MODEL

Khun and Poole established a similar system of group conflict management. In their system, they split Kozan's confrontational model into two sub models: distributive and integrative.[1] Distributive - Here conflict is approached as a distribution of a fixed amount of positive outcomes or resources, where one side will end up winning and the other losing, even if they do win some concessions. Integrative - Groups utilizing the integrative model see conflict as a chance to integrate the needs and concerns of both groups and make the best outcome possible. This model has a heavier emphasis on compromise than the distributive model. Khun and Poole found that the integrative model resulted in consistently better task related outcomes than those using the distributive model.

DECHURCH AND MARKS'S META-TAXONOMY

DeChurch and Marks (2001) examined the literature available on conflict management at the time[2] and established what they claimed was a "meta-taxonomy" that encompasses all other models. They argued that all other styles have inherent in them into two dimensions - activeness ("the extent to which conflict behaviors make a responsive and direct rather than inert and indirect impression") and agreeableness ("the extent to which conflict behaviors make a pleasant and relaxed rather than unpleasant and strainful impression").

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[1] Kuhn, T., & Poole, M. S. (2000). Do conflict management styles affect group decision making? Human Communication Research, 26, 558-590.

[2] De Dreu, C. K. W. & Weingart, L. R. (2003) Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis. Journal of Applied Psychology, 4, 741-749. and DeChurch, L. A, & Marks, M. A. (2001) Maximizing the benefits of task conflict: The role of conflict management. The International Journal of Conflict Management, 12, 4-22.

High activeness is characterized by openly discussing differences of opinion while fully going after their own interest. High agreeableness is characterized by attempting to satisfy all parties involved In the study they conducted to validate this division, activeness did not have a significant effect on the effectiveness of conflict resolution, but the agreeableness of the conflict management style, whatever it was, did in fact have a positive impact on how groups felt about the way the conflict was managed, regardless of the outcome.

CURRENT CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Rahim noted that there is agreement among management scholars that there is no one best approach to how to make decisions, lead or manage conflict. In a similar vein, rather than creating a very specific model of conflict management, Rahim created a meta-model (in much the same way that DeChurch and Marks, created a meta-taxonomy) for conflict styles based on two dimensions, concern for self and concern for others. Within this framework are five management approaches: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Integration involves openness; exchanging information, looking for alternatives, and examining differences so solve the problem in a manner that is acceptable to both parties. Obliging is associated with attempting to minimize the differences and highlight the commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party. When using the dominating style one party goes all out to win his or her objective and, as a result, often ignores the needs and expectations of the other party.

When avoiding a party fails to satisfy his or her own concern as well as the concern of the other party. Lastly, compromising involves give-and-take whereby both parties[1] give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision.[2]

HOW TO MANAGE CONFLICT

Overall conflict management should aim to minimize affective conflicts at all levels, attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict, and use the appropriate conflict management strategy--to effectively bring about the first two goals, and also to match the status and concerns of the two parties in conflict.[3] In order for conflict management strategies to be effective, they should satisfy certain criteria. The below criteria are particularly useful for not only conflict management, but also decision making in management.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FROM RAHIM'S CRITERIA

Organization Learning and Effectiveness- In order to attain this objective, conflict management strategies should be designed to enhance critical and innovative thinking to learn the process of diagnosis and intervention in the right problems. Needs of Stakeholders- Sometimes multiple parties are involved in a conflict in an organization and the challenge of conflict management would be to involve these parties in a problem solving process that will lead to collective learning and organizational effectiveness.

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[1] Rahim, M. A. (2002) Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. The International Journal of Conflict Management, 13, 206-235.
[2] Rahim, 2002.
[3] Rahim, 2002.

Organizations should institutionalize the positions of employee advocate, customer and supplier advocate, as well as environmental and stockholder advocates. Ethics - A wise leader must behave ethically, and to do so the leader should be open to new information and be willing to change his or her mind.[1] By the same token subordinates and other stakeholders have an ethical duty to speak out against the decisions of supervisors when consequences of these decisions are likely to be serious. "Without an understanding of ethics, conflict cannot be handled".[2]

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Do not avoid the conflict, hoping it will go away. Ask the participants to describe specific actions they would like the other party to take. It would also be beneficial to have a third party (meaning a non-direct superior with access to the situation) involved. This could be an individual member or a board dedicated to resolving and preventing issues. Lastly, do not meet separately with people in conflict. If you allow each individual to tell their story to you, you risk polarizing their positions.

INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Special consideration should be paid to conflict management between two parties from distinct cultures. In addition to the everyday sources of conflict, "misunderstandings, and from this counterproductive, pseudo conflicts, arise when members of one culture are unable to understand culturally determined differences in communication practices,

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[1] Batcheldor, M. (2000) The Elusive Intangible Intelligence: Conflict Management and Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace. The Western Scholar, Fall, 7-9 ; Behfar, K. J., Peterson, R. S., Mannis, E. A., & Trochim, W. M. K. (2008). The critical role of conflict resolution in teams: A close look at the links between conflict type, conflict management strategies, and team outcomes. Journal of Applied Psychology, 93, 170-188.
[2] Batcheldor, 2000.

traditions, and thought processing".[1] Indeed, this has already been observed in the business research literature. Renner recounted several episodes where managers from developed countries moved to less developed countries to resolve conflicts within the company and met with little success due to their failure to adapt to the conflict management styles of the local culture.[2] As an example, in Kozan's study noted above, he noted that Asian cultures are far more likely to use a harmony model of conflict management. If a party operating from a harmony model comes in conflict with a party using a more confrontational model, misunderstandings above and beyond those generated by the conflict itself will arise. International conflict management, and the cultural issues associated with it, is one of the primary areas of research in the field at the time, as existing research is insufficient to deal with the ever increasing contact occurring between international entities.

COUNSELING

When personal conflict leads to frustration and loss of efficiency, counseling may prove to be a helpful antidote. Although few organizations can afford the luxury of having professional counselors on the staff, given some training, managers may be able to perform this function. Nondirective counseling, or "listening with understanding," is little more than being a good listener—something every manager should be.[3]

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[1] Borisoff & Victor, 1989.
[2] Renner, J. (2007). Coaching abroad: Insights about assets. Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 59, 271–285.
[3] Wall, J. A., Jr., & Callister, R. R. (1995). Conflict and its management. Journal of Management, 21, 515-558. ; Wall, V. D., Jr., & Nolan, L. L. (1986). Perceptions of inequity, satisfaction, and conflict in task in task-oriented groups. Human Relations, 39, 1033-1052.; Henry P Knowles; Börje O Saxberg (1971). Personality and leadership behavior. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.. Chapter 8. OCLC 118832.

Sometimes the simple process of being able to vent one's feelings—that is, to express them to a concerned and understanding listener, is enough to relieve frustration and make it possible for the frustrated individual to advance to a problem-solving frame of mind, better able to cope with a personal difficulty that is affecting his work adversely. The nondirective approach is one effective way for managers to deal with frustrated subordinates and co-workers.[1] There is other more direct and more diagnostic ways that might be used in appropriate circumstances. The great strength of the nondirective approach (nondirective counseling is based on the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers), however, lies in its simplicity, its effectiveness, and the fact that it deliberately avoids the manager-counselor's diagnosing and interpreting emotional problems, which would call for special psychological training. No one has ever been harmed by being listened to sympathetically and understandingly. On the contrary, this approach has helped many people to cope with problems that were interfering with their effectiveness on the job.[2]

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[1] Ruble, T. L., & Thomas, K. W. (1976). Support for a two-dimensional model for conflict behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 16, 143-155. ; Thomas, K. W. (1976). Conflict and conflict management. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), Handbook in industrial and organizational psychology (pp. 889-935). Chicago: Rand McNally; Van de Vliert, E., & Kabanoff, B. (1990). Toward theory-based measures of conflict management. Academy of Management Journal, 33, 199-209. ; Richard Arvid Johnson (1976). Management, systems, and society: an introduction. Pacific Palisades, Calif.: Goodyear Pub. Co.. pp. 148–142.

[2] Kellett, Peter M. (2007). Conflict Dialogue. London: Sage Publications. ; Pinkley, R. L. (1990). Dimensions of conflict frame: Disputant interpretations of conflict. Journal of Applied Psychology, 75, 117-126; Pruitt, D. G. (1983). Strategic choice in negotiation. American Behavioral Scientist, 27, 167-194; Jehn, K. A., Northcraft, G. B., & Neale, M. A. (1999). Why differences make a difference: A field study of diversity, conflict, and performance in workgroups. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44, 741-763; Kozan, M. K. (1997) Culture and conflict management: A theoretical framework. The International Journal of Conflict Management, 8, 338-360.

Assumptions about Conflict

We define conflict as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Within this simple definition there are several important understandings that emerge: Disagreement - Generally, we are aware there is some level of difference in the positions of the two (or more) parties involved in the conflict. But the true disagreement versus the perceived disagreement may be quite different from one another. In fact, conflict tends to be accompanied by significant levels of misunderstanding that exaggerate the perceived disagreement considerably. If we can understand the true areas of disagreement, this will help us solve the right problems and manage the true needs of the parties.

Parties involved - There are often disparities in our sense of who is involved in the conflict. Sometimes, people are surprised to learn they are a party to the conflict, while other times we are shocked to learn we are not included in the disagreement. On many occasions, people who are seen as part of the social system (e.g., work team, family, and company) are influenced to participate in the dispute, whether they would personally define the situation in that way or not. In the above example, people very readily "take sides" based upon current perceptions of the issues, past issues and relationships, roles within the organization, and other factors. The parties involved can become an elusive concept to define.

Perceived threat - People respond to the perceived threat, rather than the true threat, facing them. Thus, while perception doesn't become reality per se, people's behaviors, feelings and ongoing responses become modified by that evolving sense of the threat they confront. If we can work to understand the true threat (issues) and develop strategies (solutions) that manage it (agreement), we are acting constructively to manage the conflict.

Needs, interests or concerns - There is a tendency to narrowly define "the problem" as one of substance, task, and near-term viability. However, workplace conflicts tend to be far more complex than that, for they involve ongoing relationships with complex, emotional components. Simply stated, there are always procedural needs and psychological needs to be addressed within the conflict, in addition to the substantive needs that are generally presented. And the durability of the interests and concerns of the parties transcends the immediate presenting situation. Any efforts to resolve conflicts effectively must take these points into account.

So, is it still a simple definition of conflict? We think so, but we must respect that within its elegant simplicity lies a complex set of issues to address. Therefore, it is not surprising that satisfactory resolution of most conflicts can prove so challenging and time consuming to address. Conflicts occur when people (or other parties) perceive that, as a consequence of a disagreement, there is a threat to their needs, interests or concerns.

Although conflict is a normal part of organization life, providing numerous opportunities for growth through improved understanding and insight, there is a tendency to view conflict as a negative experience caused by abnormally difficult circumstances. Disputants tend to perceive limited options and finite resources available in seeking solutions, rather than multiple possibilities that may exist 'outside the box' in which we are problem-solving.

A few points are worth reiterating before proceeding: A conflict is more than a mere disagreement - it is a situation in which people perceive a threat (physical, emotional, power, status, etc.) to their well-being. As such, it is a meaningful experience in people's lives, not to be shrugged off by a mere, "it will pass…" Participants in conflicts tend to respond on the basis of their perceptions of the situation, rather than an objective review of it. As such, people filter their perceptions (and reactions) through their values, culture, beliefs, information, experience, gender, and other variables. Conflict responses are both filled with ideas and feelings that can be very strong and powerful guides to our sense of possible solutions. As in any problem, conflicts contain substantive, procedural, and psychological dimensions to be negotiated. In order to best understand the threat perceived by those engaged in a conflict, we need to consider all of these dimensions. Conflicts are normal experiences within the work environment.

They are also, to a large degree, predictable and expectable situations that naturally arise as we go about managing complex and stressful projects in which we are significantly invested. As such, if we develop procedures for identifying conflicts likely to arise, as well as systems through which we can constructively manage conflicts, we may be able to discover new opportunities to transform conflict into a productive learning experience. Creative problem-solving strategies are essential to positive approaches to conflict management. We need to transform the situation from one in which it is 'my way or the highway' into one in which we entertain new possibilities that have been otherwise elusive.

Conflict is Normal

Anticipating Conflicts Likely to Arise in the Workplace

Consider your own work environment for a moment:

What are some key sources of conflict in our workplace?

When do they tend to occur?

How do people respond to these conflicts as they arise?

When we solve problems, do we do so for the moment, or do we put in place systems for addressing these types of concerns in the future?

In reflecting upon your answers to these questions, you may begin to understand what we mean by anticipating conflicts likely to arise in the workplace: Normal, healthy organizations will experience their share of conflict, and workplaces experiencing a certain amount of dysfunction will experience it in greater quantities.

Anticipating conflicts is useful in either situation for transforming these situations into opportunities for growth and learning. Consider…

Are there seasonal peaks in our workload that tend to occur annually?

Chart the occurrence of such challenges, and consider whether they can be managed as a normal period of stress and transition. For example, a school had a large population of students who arrived after long bus rides without breakfast, who tended to arrive at school ready to fight. The school identified 10 minutes at the start of the day to give these students a healthy snack, and worked with teachers to pull out students who weren't yet ready for school before they became disruptive. After food and a little counseling, students entered their classrooms in a better frame of mind (and body) to participate.

Do we have channels for expressing normal problems and concerns in a predictable, reliable manner? Staff meeting should be used as a tool for effective problem-solving in a range of situations, including anticipated conflicts. If such channels are perceived by staff as closed, unsafe, and non-productive, they will be replaced by gossip, 'end runs' and back-biting. Are there certain factors in the environment that make problems worse, especially at times of conflict? Take stock of your processes for managing during stressful times. Look at how phones are routed, noise is managed, client lines are queued, distractions are managed, etc. Often, our response during times of stress is to meet less frequently, because 'we have no time to meet.'

And we continue to do things the way we've been doing them, because 'we have no time to create new procedures.' This approach dooms us to repeat the same errors, rather than to learn from the opportunities. Examine your systems for managing problems, including dispute resolution systems, and use times of "harmony" to identify process improvements that can be implemented in times of stress.

Conflict Styles and Their Consequences

Conflict is often best understood by examining the consequences of various behaviors at moments in time. These behaviors are usefully categorized according to conflict styles. Each style is a way to meet one's needs in a dispute but may impact other people in different ways. Competing is a style in which one's own needs are advocated over the needs of others. It relies on an aggressive style of communication, low regard for future relationships, and the exercise of coercive power. Those using a competitive style tend to seek control over a discussion, in both substance and ground rules. They fear that loss of such control will result in solutions that fail to meet their needs. Competing tends to result in responses that increase the level of threat. Accommodating, also known as smoothing, is the opposite of competing. Persons using this style yield their needs to those of others, trying to be diplomatic. They tend to allow the needs of the group to overwhelm their own, which may not ever be stated, as preserving the relationship is seen as most important. Avoiding is a common response to the negative perception of conflict. "Perhaps if we don't bring it up, it will blow over," we say to ourselves.

But, generally, all that happens is that feelings get pent up, views go unexpressed, and the conflict festers until it becomes too big to ignore. Like a cancer that may well have been cured if treated early, the conflict grows and spreads until it kills the relationship. Because needs and concerns go unexpressed, people are often confused, wondering what went wrong in a relationship. Compromising is an approach to conflict in which people gain and give in a series of tradeoffs. While satisfactory, compromise is generally not satisfying. We each remain shaped by our individual perceptions of our needs and don't necessarily understand the other side very well. We often retain a lack of trust and avoid risk-taking involved in more collaborative behaviors. Collaborating is the pooling of individual needs and goals toward a common goal. Often called "win-win problem-solving," collaboration requires assertive communication and cooperation in order to achieve a better solution than either individual could have achieved alone. It offers the chance for consensus, the integration of needs, and the potential to exceed the "budget of possibilities" that previously limited our views of the conflict. It brings new time, energy, and ideas to resolve the dispute meaningfully. By understanding each style and its consequences, we may normalize the results of our behaviors in various situations. This is not to say, "Thou shalt collaborate" in a moralizing way, but to indicate the expected consequences of each approach: If we use a competing style, we might force the others to accept 'our' solution, but this acceptance may be accompanied by fear and resentment. If we accommodate, the relationship may proceed smoothly, but we may build up frustrations that our needs are going unmet.

If we compromise, we may feel OK about the outcome, but still harbor resentments in the future. If we collaborate, we may not gain a better solution than a compromise might have yielded, but we are more likely to feel better about our chances for future understanding and goodwill. And if we avoid discussing the conflict at all, both parties may remain clueless about the real underlying issues and concerns, only to be dealing with them in the future. If you'd like further insights into the conflict styles you tend to use take the Situational Conflict Styles Assessment Exercise on this site.

How we respond to Conflict

In addition to the behavioral responses summarized by the various conflict styles, we have emotional, cognitive and physical responses to conflict. These are important windows into our experience during conflict, for they frequently tell us more about what is the true source of threat that we perceive; by understanding our thoughts, feelings and physical responses to conflict, we may get better insights into the best potential solutions to the situation.[1] Emotional responses: These are the feelings we experience in conflict, ranging from anger and fear to despair and confusion. Emotional responses are often misunderstood, as people tend to believe that others feel the same as they do. Thus, differing emotional responses are confusing and, at times, threatening.

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[1] 1 Adapted from Harry Webne-Behrman, The Practice of Facilitation: Managing Group Process and Solving Problems, Quorum Books, Greenwood Publishing, 1998.

Cognitive responses: These are our ideas and thoughts about a conflict, often present as inner voices or internal observers in the midst of a situation. Through sub-vocalization (i.e., self-talk), we come to understand these cognitive responses. For example, we might think any of the following things in response to another person taking a parking spot just as we are ready to park:

"That jerks! Who does he think he is! What a sense of entitlement!" Or: "I wonder if he realizes what he has done. He seems lost in his own thoughts. I hope he is okay." Or: "What am I supposed to do? Now I'm going to be late for my meeting… Should I say something to him? What if he gets mad at me?" Such differing cognitive responses contribute to emotional and behavioral responses, where self-talk can either promote a positive or negative feedback loop in the situation. Physical responses: These responses can play an important role in our ability to meet our needs in the conflict. They include heightened stress, bodily tension, increased perspiration, tunnel vision, shallow or accelerated breathing, nausea, and rapid heartbeat. These responses are similar to those we experience in high-anxiety situations, and they may be managed through stress management techniques. Establishing a calmer environment in which emotions can be managed is more likely if the physical response is addressed effectively.

The Role of Perceptions in Conflict

As noted in our basic definition of conflict, we define conflict as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. One key element of this definition is the idea that each party may have a different perception of any given situation. We can anticipate having such differences due to a number of factors that create "perceptual filters" that influence our responses to the situation:

Culture, race, and ethnicity: Our varying cultural backgrounds influence us to hold certain beliefs about the social structure of our world, as well as the role of conflict in that experience. We may have learned to value substantive, procedural and psychological needs differently as a result, thus influencing our willingness to engage in various modes of negotiation and efforts to manage the conflict.

Gender and sexuality: Men and women often perceive situations somewhat differently, based on both their experiences in the world (which relates to power and privilege, as do race and ethnicity) and socialization patterns that reinforce the importance of relationships vs. task, substance vs. process, immediacy vs. long-term outcomes. As a result, men and women will often approach conflictive situations with differing mindsets about the desired outcomes from the situation, as well as the set of possible solutions that may exist.

Knowledge (general and situational): Parties respond to given conflicts on the basis of the knowledge they may have about the issue at hand. This includes situation-specific knowledge (i.e., "Do I understand what is going on here?") and general knowledge (i.e., "Have I experienced this type of situation before?" or "Have I studied about similar situations before?"). Such information can influence the person's willingness to engage in efforts to manage the conflict, either reinforcing confidence to deal with the dilemma or undermining one's willingness to flexibly consider alternatives.

Impressions of the Messenger: If the person sharing the message - the messenger - is perceived to be a threat (powerful, scary, unknown, etc.), this can influence our responses to the overall situation being experienced. For example, if a big scary-looking guy is approaching me rapidly, yelling "Get out of the way!" I may respond differently than if a diminutive, calm person would express the same message to me. As well, if I knew either one of them previously, I might respond differently based upon that prior sense of their credibility: I am more inclined to listen with respect to someone I view as credible as if the message comes from someone who lacks credibility and integrity in my mind.

Previous experiences: Some of us have had profound, significant life experiences that continue to influence our perceptions of current situations. These experiences may have left us fearful, lacking trust, and reluctant to take risks. On the other hand, previous experiences may have left us confident, willing to take chances and experience the unknown. Either way, we must acknowledge the role of previous experiences as elements of our perceptual filter in the current dilemma.

These factors (along with others) conspire to form the perceptual[1] filters through which we experience conflict. As a result, our reactions to the threat and dilemma posed by conflict should be anticipated to include varying understandings of the situation. This also means that we can anticipate that in many conflicts there will be significant misunderstanding of each other's perceptions, needs and feelings. These challenges contribute to our emerging sense, during conflict, that the situation is overwhelming and unsolvable. As such, they become critical sources of potential understanding, insight and possibility. 2 Much more can be said about this subject.[2]

Why do we tend to avoid dealing with conflict?

Engaging in dialogue and negotiation around conflict is something we tend to approach with fear and hesitation, afraid that the conversation will go worse than the conflict has gone thus far. All too often, we talk ourselves out of potential dialogue: "Why should I talk to her? She'll bite my head off and not listen to anything I have to say!" OR "I should talk to him about this problem, but maybe it will go away on its own. There's no sense stirring up something that makes us both uncomfortable." OR "If I go to him, I'm making myself vulnerable. No, that's his responsibility - he should come to me and ask me to talk!" Our responses, as noted earlier, tend to include behaviors, feelings, thoughts and physical responses.

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[1] This topic is well addressed in the writings of Professor Deborah Tannen, who has focused extensively on gender differences in communication.
[2] Stella Ting-Toomey, "Managing Intercultural Conflicts Effectively," 1994.

If any of these responses indicates stress factors that make us reluctant to talk things out, we are more inclined to follow the pathway of avoidance. In addition, if we have history with the individuals involved in this conflict (i.e., we've tried to negotiate with them in the past, without success), it will "filter" our perceptions of this situation and make us reluctant to negotiate. In addition, consider that our society tends to reward alternative responses to conflict, rather than negotiation: People who aggressively pursue their needs, competing rather than collaborating, are often satisfied by others who prefer to accommodate. Managers and leaders are often rewarded for their aggressive, controlling approaches to problems, rather than taking a more compassionate approach to issues that may seem less decisive to the public or their staffs. In other circumstances, those who raise issues and concerns, even respectfully, are quickly perceived to be "problem" clients or staff members… they tend to be avoided and minimized. In any of these approaches, negotiated solutions to conflicts are rarely modeled or held in high esteem. Finally, we should keep in mind that negotiation requires profound courage on the part of all parties: It takes courage to honestly and clearly articulate your needs, and it takes courage to sit down and listen to your adversaries. It takes courage to look at your own role in the dispute, and it takes courage to approach others with a sense of empathy, openness and respect for their perspective. Collaborative approaches to conflict management require us to engage in the moment of dialogue in profound and meaningful ways, so it is understandable if we tend to avoid such situations until the balance of wisdom tips in favor of negotiation.

Possible Benefits for conflict management

For School Staff

* Less time is spent on settling student disputes

* Reduces tension among students and staff

* Better staff/student relationships leads to improved school climate

For All Students

* Active involvement in the problem-solving process

* Increases commitment to making solutions work

* Provides positive modeling for solving problems

* Increases student responsibility for solving problems

* Decreases adult intervention in conflicts

* Encourages open communication

* Teaches students positive ways to meet personal needs

For Peer Mediators

* Develops leadership skills

* Enhances communication skills

* Often results in improved academic performance

* Improves self-esteem

* Increases status with peers

* Refines strategies to solve problems

For Families

* Conflict resolution skills learned at school can be used at home with parents and siblings

For Society

* could lead to fewer violent acts

* Constructive conflict resolution skills could be applied to family life and to the work place when students become adults

What is Management?

Management[1] is the process of getting activities completed efficiently and effectively with and through other people.

Management functions:

Planning

Organizing

Staffing

Directing

Coordinating

Reporting

Budgeting

Management roles:

Interpersonal roles Figurehead, Leader, Liaison

Informational roles Monitor, Disseminator, Spokesperson

Decisional roles Entrepreneur, Disturbance handler, Resource allocator, Negotiator

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[1] Mintzberg, Gulick & Urwick 1937 The Nature of Managerial Work and Papers on the Science of Administration

What is administration?

The key to understanding of what administration means lies in the following picture:
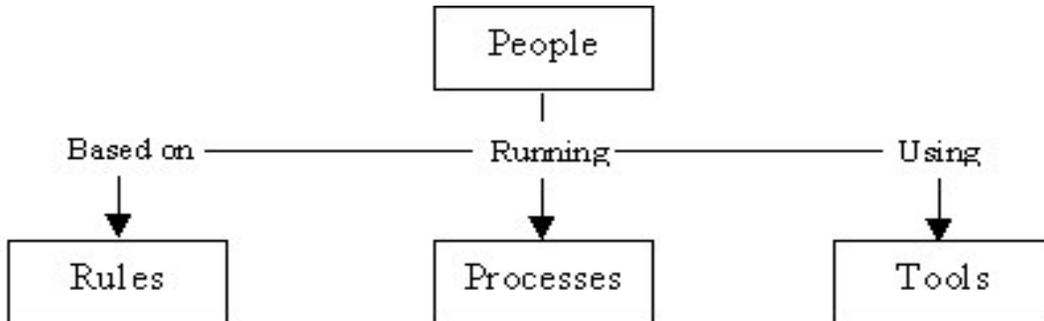
It represents functioning of an organization as "People running processes based on rules using tools" A **process** (aka business process) is a set of activities (operations, tasks) aimed at creating a desirable outcome. Typical examples of processes are sales (convincing a potential customer to buy one of our product/services), service delivery (e.g., fixing a customer problem), purchasing (choosing, buying and paying for things we need), product development, etc.
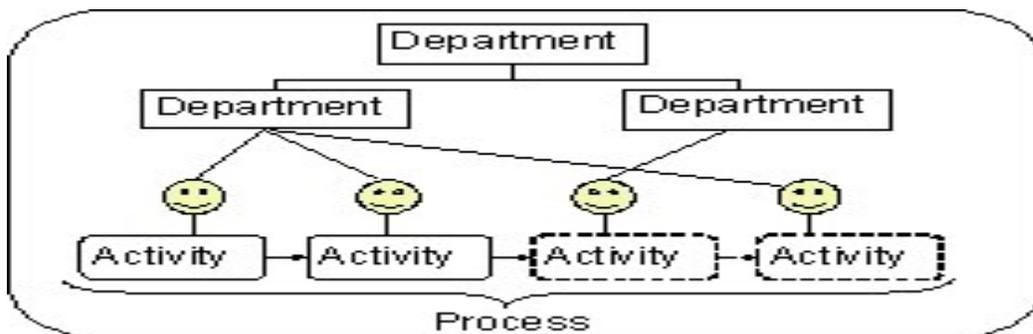
Some activities completed in the frame of a process belong to the category of doing something in the real world, like going to a customer site and fixing some technical problem during service delivery. Others, like getting instructions on where to go and reporting back on amount of time spent for fixing the problem, belong to administration. They are needed to ensure the processes producing desirable outcomes. For example, back reporting is needed for the finance department being able to send an invoice and ultimately get paid. The goal of administration (more exactly administrative activities) is to ensure smooth running of the organization's processes by coordinating people participating in the processes, and providing them with information needed for completing their assignments.

Administration deals with gathering, processing, and communicating information. Practically, everybody working for an organization participates in the administrative activities. Even those who do not hold any managerial position participate when receiving written or oral instructions and reporting back on the outcome of their work. Those who have managerial positions complete much more administrative activities, for example, they are engaged in planning of various processes, and assigning resources to various do it in the real world activities.

The administration is regulated by rules (operational instructions, or procedures) that prescribe or recommend who should be doing what and in what order in each type of the processes. Rules can exist in a written form or as a tradition. They can even be incorporated in computerized tools.

To carry out administrative activities people employ tools. Typical tools here are communication channels, e.g. mail, email, telephone, chats, and information storage means, e.g., paper folders, shelves, boxes, computer servers, information systems etc.

What is Education?

Education is the wealth of knowledge acquired by an individual after studying particular subject matters or experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of something. Education requires instruction of some sort from an individual or composed literature. The most common forms of education result from years of schooling that incorporates studies of a variety of subjects. "Joan knew the importance of an education, so she chose to go to a four-year university after graduating from high school."

The Purpose of Education

Some years ago, when working toward a doctorate in curriculum and instruction at the Babcock University, Lagos, I was much focused on changing education. In fact, it was my fierce desire to find a way to create change that led me back to school. One of my Professors Dr. Ben. Kio introduced me to the concept of Critical Pedagogy.

Through that research I discovered Douglas Kellner, who at that time was the Chair of the Philosophy Department at UT. He became my teacher and advisor by reading his books, and it was Dr. Kellner who led me toward multiple literacies, media literacy, and the use of new technologies to design and deliver a 21st century curriculum.

During that time I wrote a paper on the Purpose of Education. It is a beginning analysis I had to do in order to begin to understand critical pedagogy. It requires much development, but perhaps it has some points we can use to begin to build a vision for education in the 21st century. I studied critical pedagogy for a long time, and necessarily had to conduct a great deal of research into the history of education, the philosophy of education, and the evolution of critical pedagogy, which led me to backtrack philosophy all the way back to Aristotle and Plato. It also required a look into history, the evolution of countries, their economies, governments, and industries. See also Philosophical Foundations.

We must realize, and our students must understand, that we cannot move toward a vision of the future until we understand the socio-historical context of where we are now. Where are we? What events led us to be where we are? How can this inform our development of a vision for the future and how we want to get there?

A clear articulation of the purpose of education for the 21st century is the place to begin. Creating a vision of where we want to go requires us to ask the question - why? What is the purpose of education? What do we need to do to accomplish that purpose?

What school is?

A school is an institution designed for the teaching of students (or "pupils") under the direction of teachers. Most countries have systems of formal education, which is commonly compulsory. In these systems, students progress through a series of schools. The names for these schools vary by country (discussed in the Regional section below), but generally include primary school for young children and secondary school for teenagers who have completed primary education. An institution where higher education is taught is commonly called a university college or university.

In addition to these core schools, students in a given country may also attend schools before and after primary and secondary education. Kindergarten or pre-school provide some schooling to very young children (typically ages 3–5). University, vocational school, college or seminary may be available after secondary school. A school may also be dedicated to one particular field, such as a school of economics or a school of dance. Alternative schools may provide nontraditional curriculum and methods.

There are also non-government schools, called private schools. Private schools may be for children with special needs when the government does not supply for them; religious, such as Christian schools, hawzas, yeshivas, and others; or schools that have a higher standard of education or seek to foster other personal achievements. Schools for adults include institutions of corporate training, Military education and training and business schools. In homeschooling and online schools, teaching and learning take place outside of a traditional school building.

NIGERIA MY COUNTRY

Nigeria my country is located on the western coast of Africa, Nigeria has a diverse geography, with climates ranging from arid to humid equatorial. However, Nigeria's most diverse feature is its people. Hundreds of languages are spoken in the country, including Yoruba, Igbo, Fula, Hausa, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, Ekpeye Kingdom and English. The country has abundant natural resources, notably large deposits of petroleum and natural gas.

The new national capital is Abuja, in the Federal Capital Territory, which was created by decree in 1976. Lagos, the former capital, retains its standing as the country's leading commercial and industrial city. Modern Nigeria dates from 1914, when the British Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were joined. The country became independent on Oct. 1, 1960, and in 1963 adopted a republican constitution but elected to stay a member of the Commonwealth. The First Republic was replaced by the military, which ruled for 13 years. The Second Republic lasted from 1979 to 1983, followed by another 15 years of military rule.

RIVERS STATE MY STATE

Rivers state,[1] Southern Nigeria, comprising the Niger River delta on the Gulf of Guinea. It is bounded by the states of Anambra and Imo on the north, Abia and Akwa Ibom on the east, and Bayelsa and Delta on the west. Rivers state contains mangrove swamps, tropical rainforest, and many rivers. Several Ijo fishing settlements in what is now Rivers— including Abonnema, Degema, Okrika, Bonny, Brass, Akassa, Nembe (Nimbi),

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[1] Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010.

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and New Calabar—became important in the early 19th century because of their trade in slaves and later for the export of palm oil and palm kernels. Incorporated as part of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1885 and Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893, the area became part of the amalgamated British colony and protectorate of Nigeria in 1914. In 1976 some parts of the Ndoni territory in former Bendel state were added to Rivers state.

Fishing and farming are the principal occupations of the region. Plantains, bananas, cassava, oil palms, coconuts, rubber trees, raffia, and citrus fruits are grown. Large deposits of crude oil and natural gas in the Niger River delta are the state's major mineral resources. Major oil terminals exist offshore from Brass and Bonny, and petroleum refineries have been established at Port Harcourt and nearby Alesa-Eleme. Port Harcourt, the state capital and one of the nation's largest ports, is on the southern terminus of the eastern branch of the Nigerian Railway's main line. Most industrial activity in the state is centered in Port Harcourt, which has become one of the nation's leading industrial centres and is the site of a federal university; the University of Port Harcourt (founded 1975). Because the landscape is dominated by the networks of rivers and mangrove swamps, water serves as the principal means of transport through much of the western part of the state. Area 8,436 square miles (21,850 square km). Pop. (2006) 5,185,400.

PORT HARCOURT MY CITY

Port town[1] and capital of Rivers state, southern Nigeria. It lies along the Bonny River (eastern distributaries 41 miles (66 km) upstream from the Gulf of Guinea. Founded in 1912 in an area traditionally inhabited by the Ijo people, it began to serve as a port (named for Lewis Harcourt, then colonial secretary) after the opening of the rail link to the Enugu coalfields in 1916. Now one of the nation's largest ports, its modern deepwater (23 feet [7 metres]) facilities handle the export of palm oil, palm kernels, and timber from the surrounding area, coal from Anambra state, tin and columbite from the Jos Plateau, peanuts (groundnuts) from the northern states, and, since 1958, petroleum from fields in the eastern Niger River delta. Port Harcourt has bulk storage facilities for both palm oil and petroleum. In the 1970s the port was enlarged with new facilities at nearby Onne. Port Harcourt is one of Nigeria's leading industrial centres. The Trans-Amadi Industrial Estate, 4 miles (6 km) north, is a 2,500-acre (1,000-hectare) site where tires, aluminum products, glass bottles, and paper are manufactured. The town also manufactures cigarettes, steel structural products, corrugated tin, paints, plastics, enamelware, wood and metal furniture, cement, concrete products, and several other goods, and it has truck and bicycle assembly plants. Nigeria's first oil refinery (1965) is at Alesa-Eleme, 12 miles (19 km) southeast.

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[1] **"Port Harcourt."** Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010.

Pipelines carry oil and natural gas to Port Harcourt (where there also is a refinery) and to the port of Bonny, 25 miles (40 km) south-southeast, and refined oil to Makurdi in Benue state. Port Harcourt is the site of traditional boatbuilding and fishing industries and has fish-freezing facilities. The University of Port Harcourt (1975) and Rivers State University of Science and Technology (1971, university status 1980) serve the town, and nearby Onne is the site of the Nigerian Naval College. Port Harcourt is the starting point of the eastern branch of the Nigerian Railways main line and also of the trunk highway network serving eastern Nigeria. There is an international airport located 7 miles (11 km) northeast along the road and railway to Aba. Pop. (2005 est.) 972,000.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of some social conflict. Often, committed group members attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting motives or ideologies to the rest of the group (e.g., intentions; reasons for holding certain beliefs), and by engaging in collective negotiation. Ultimately, a wide range of methods and procedures for addressing conflict exist, including but not limited to, negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, and creative peace building. It may be important to note that the term conflict resolution may also be used interchangeably with dispute resolution, where arbitration and litigation processes are critically involved. Furthermore, the concept of conflict resolution can be thought to encompass the use of nonviolent resistance measures by conflicted parties in an attempt to promote effective resolution

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts have become part and parcel of human organizations world over. This indeed is a paradox because of the amount of energy and resources expended by organizations to prevent and resolve conflicts. Flippo attempted an explanation when he remarked that, "a total absence of conflict would be unbelievable, boring, and a strong indication that conflicts is being suppressed".[1] The inevitability of conflict was also established by Harold Kerzner when he asserted that conflict is part of change and therefore inevitable.[2] It is therefore not an aberration to expect conflicts in the administration of secondary schools in Rivers State. The nature and types of conflicts that occur in secondary school administration vary from one school to another. The common types of conflicts usually occur between the students on one hand and the school authority on the other. Other forms of conflict include interpersonal conflicts among staff and as well as the students. Higher levels of conflicts include those that involve the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) and the State Government.

This study was particularly relevant at a time when Rivers State workers (teachers inclusive) had to embark on a prolonged strike over the non implementation of the Harmonized Salary Structure (HSS) announced by the Federal Government. The partial implementation of HSS for workers in the state after a long delay did not help matters. All of these became potential sources of industrial conflicts not only in the educational sector, but also in the entire civil service in the state.

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[1] Flippo. E. B. 1980. Personnel Management. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.
[2] Kerzner, H. 1998. Project Management: A System Approach to Planning, Scheduling, and Controlling. New York: John Willey and Sons, Inc.

The inability of the state government to effect payment of salaries promptly and the subsequent forceful retirement of teachers and other civil servants further aggravated the problem. Some have attributed the problems of conflicts in secondary schools to poor salaries and facilities. In the words of Ademola, (a teacher who became a lawyer) cited by Oladepo the salary was poor to the extent that "… society would not accord me respect as a teacher, for I was regarded as one of the wretched of the earth.[1] When the opportunity came, I called it quit immediately and have had no regrets ever since".[2]

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The economic downturn in Nigeria in the last two decades has led to poor salaries and wages for workers and introduction of minimum wage. The attendant disparity in incomes and inflation has produced great dissatisfaction and agitations among Nigerian workers, which has often resulted in industrial disputes and conflicts in almost every work place. This has become a major concern for school administrators in both public and private sectors. However, such conflicts are more pronounced in state owned secondary schools than in federal schools because of the disparity in salaries and remunerations that exist between the two. Specifically, secondary school workers in Rivers State have had cause to protest against poor pay, and unsatisfactory conditions of service. Most often, the conflicts were suppressed with the neglect of other methods of conflict resolution. Consequently, this has dampened the morale of teachers and other workers in the educational sector in the state. This in effect has affected their performances.

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[1] Oladepo, W. 1985. Teachers' Tale of Woe. **News watch**, June 10, 1985, p. 21.
[2] An investigation into the nature of conflicts, their causes as well as their effects on school administration is important in order to ensure harmony in the state and to facilitate higher productivity.

To accumulate a series of conflicts without devising appropriate means of managing them, is like sitting on a keg of gun powder which could explode at any time. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 1995)[1] lent credence to this point: "conflicts when not dealt with constructively often explode into violence". The attitudes of school administrators in Rivers State have not helped much as some of the conflicts centered on their personality, administrative and leadership style. Just as the principals were involved so also were the other members of staff and the students. The significance of this study is predicated on the need for a peaceful atmosphere conducive for learning and academic exercises. It is against this backdrop that the study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between poor staff welfare and the occurrence of conflicts in secondary school administration?

2. Are secondary school administrators in the state trained in conflict management?

3. What is the role of the government in stemming down the rate of conflicts in the educational sector?

4. What is the role of the Teaching Service Commission in conflict management and resolution in secondary schools in Rivers State?

5. What strategies can school administrators employ for effective conflict management in the state?

6. In which ways can students be involved in the administration of their schools to decrease the incidence of conflicts?

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[1] UNICEF, 1995. Education for Development: A Teacher's Resource for Global Learning. Hodder and Stoughton Educational.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

This study covers randomly selected secondary schools in the three Local Government Areas in Rivers State, namely, Ahoada West, Ahoada East and Ikwerre. The subjects for the study included school principals, some teaching and nonteaching staff members as well as some school prefects. Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. The primary data were generated from questionnaires, interviews and observations, while secondary data were obtained from official documentations. The use of questionnaires was particularly relevant because of the positions of neutrality and anonymity which public officials are expected to assume in the course of discharging their official assignments. It helped the respondents to maintain some degree of anonymity, which was believed to have increased the level of their objectivity. There were 360 public secondary schools in Rivers State at the time of this study. Ten percent of the schools were taken for the study sample; thus 36 schools were selected.

Two sampling techniques were used; purposive and random samplings. A purposive sample is obtained when a researcher uses his expert judgment based on available information to choose the sample for his study. The choice of the principal, a vice-principal and heads of departments was informed by this sampling technique. These categories of officials in the school were purposively selected because of their involvement in the administration of their respective schools. On the other hand, some teachers and non-teaching staff in the 36 schools chosen were randomly selected, with an interval of every third occurring person.

Personal interviews were conducted using twenty-five secondary schools. Twenty principals and forty-five teachers were interviewed. Others interviewed included thirty-six school prefects and fifteen non-teaching staff. Some officials of the Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), Port Harcourt, were also interviewed. Observation method was also found very useful in the course of carrying out this research. The various actors within the school environment; the principal, vice principals, teachers, non-academic staff and the students were carefully observed.

SELECTED REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section is a review of related literature on management and organizational conflicts. There are various uses for the term management, which could mean a different thing to different people in different contexts. Some use the term to mean a field of study or an academic discipline. For the purpose of this study the definition of Sisk and William (1981) will be adopted.[1] They define management as a process of coordinating all resources "through the processes of planning, organizing, leading and controlling in order to attain stated objectives." From this context, management becomes very crucial for the success or failure of a business. Furthermore, it is observed that management as a purposive coordinative process is universal to all forms of group endeavour, that is, it is not only confined to business enterprises, and hence every goal to be achieved through group efforts requires some form of management.

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[1] Sisk, H. L. and William, J. C. 1981. Management and Organization. Ohio-South-Western Publishing Co.

Duncan noted that, "effective coordination does not just happen",[1] but is "brought about by individuals who possess the knowledge and skills to synchronize the actions of numerous people and channel those actions toward a common goal". Persons who accomplish this task are called managers, and the knowledge and skill they use are referred to broadly as the field of management. This is to say that management consists of all organizational activities that involve formation of goals; attainment of the goals, appraisal of performance and the development of mechanisms that will ensure the success and the survival of the organization within the social system. Conflicts affect the accomplishment of organizational goals due to their attending stress, hostilities and other undesirable factors when poorly managed. The issue of conflict management then becomes paramount for goal accomplishment. The term conflict carries a variety of definitions, depending on the usage and the context of its usage. Thesaurus defines conflict as synonymous with dissention,[2] antagonism, opposition, disagreement, discord, combat and encounter. This is echoed by the Advanced Learners' Dictionary which simply puts it as 'being in opposition or disagreement." The view of Rahim was corroborative: "conflict as an interactive process is manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or difference within or between social entities (i.e. individuals, groups, organizations etc).[3]"

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[1] Duncan, W. J. 1995. Essentials of Management. Illinois: The Dryden Press.
[2] Roget's Thesaurus, 1993.
[3] Rahim, M. A. 1992. Managing Conflicts in Organizations. In: P. Fenn and R. Gameson (eds.), Construction Conflict Management and Resolution. London: E and FN Spon.

In Dahrendorf's view, the term refers to tension within the organizational system. One may observe such tension by paying attention to possible incompatibilities among departments, to incompatibilities among staff members or employees, to complexities of the communication network, and even to the organizational structure itself.[1]

Gardiner and Simmons defined conflict as "any divergence of interests, objectives or priorities between individual, groups, or organizations or nonconformity to requirements of a task; activity or process".[2] Duncan opined that conflict implies some types of hostility and perhaps some desires to do harm which may be considered an extreme case of competition. Conflict is different from competition, although competition may result in conflict.[3] Some believe that conflicts may occur without any specific reference to competition, as it could occur as a result of breakdown in the mechanism of decision-making. DeCenzo has this to say: Whenever two people come together, there are bound to be disagreements at time. That's natural. However, sometimes these differences can grow to enormous proportions where they become detrimental to the involved parties and the organization. When that occurs conflict is present.[4]

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[1] Dahrendorf, R. 1959.

[2] Gardiner, P. D. and Simmons, J. E. 1992. The Relationship Between conflict, change and project management. In: P. Fenn and R. Gameson (eds.), Construction Conflict Management and Resolution. London: E and FN Spon.

[3] Duncan, W. J. 1995. Essentials of Management. Illinois: The Dryden Press.

[4] DeCenzo, D. A. 1997. Human Relations, Personal and Professional Development. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

A critical analysis of the definition of conflict as "the struggle over resources or ideas, between two or more parties caused by the perceptions of the contending parties that both or all cannot have what they desire", buttresses the idea of conflict as originating from competition. This is in line with Sisk and Williams' definition of conflict as the process which begins when one party perceives that one or more of its concerns have been or are about to be frustrated by another party. From various points of view, the definition of conflict connotes that a trace of competition cannot be totally ruled out.[1] To some, conflict is synonymous with violence, but to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund conflict is not necessarily synonymous with 'violence' and that conflict occurs not only in situations of violence but conflicts inevitably occur between people over ideas, values, positions and perspectives on a range of issues.[2] In the opinion of Kerzner[3] conflicts can occur with anyone and over anything. Seville's statement on violence and human nature (as cited by UNICEF, 1995) nevertheless stated that it is not part of human nature to be violent and that violence is a learned response to conflict and if violence can be learned, other responses are possible and can be learned as well.

[1] Sisk, H. L. and William, J. C. 1981. Management and Organization. Ohio-South-Western Publishing Co.
[2] UNICEF, 1995. Education for Development: A Teacher's Resource for Global Learning. Hodder and Stoughton Educational.
[3] Kerzner, H. 1998. Project Management: A System Approach to Planning, Scheduling, and Controlling. New York: John Willey and Sons, Inc.

Thamhain and Wilemon in their attempt to define conflict provided both sides of the coin – the negative and the positive side of it. They stated: Conflict is defined as the behavior of an individual, a group, or an organization which impedes or restricts (at least temporarily) another party from attaining its desired goals. Although conflict may impede the attainment of one's goals, the consequences may be beneficial if they produce new information which, in turn, enhances the decision-making, lengthy delays over issues which do not importantly affect the outcome of the project, or a disintegration of the team's efforts.[1]

No matter how hard one tries to define the term, one is prone to agree with Sisk and Williams that, "conflict is one of those phenomena that are experienced by everyone but that can be defined completely and accurately by no one". Several types of conflicts are identified in literature, including intra-personal, intra-group, inter-personal, inter-groups, etc. According to DeCenzo organizational conflicts can take the following forms: horizontal conflict, vertical conflict, and role confusion/conflict. From literature, sources of conflicts can be classified into three, namely, competition for scarce resources, drives for autonomy, and goals divergence as a result of differences in opinion. According to Ivancevich, four factors are known to contribute to conflicts. They are: work interdependence, differences in goals, differences in perceptions, and increased demand

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[1] Thamhain, H. J. and D. L. Wilemon. 1974. Conflict Management in Project-Oriented Work Environments. Proceedings of the Sixth International Meeting of the Project Management Institute, Washington, D.C., September 18–21, 1974.

for specialists.[1] Five stages of conflict were identified by Pondy.[2] These are: latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict, and conflict aftermath. Conflicts have both positive and negative effects on an organization depending on the management and its final outcome. To Zikmann, "effectively managed conflicts can help identify previously undetected problems and attitudes. They can also help clarify uncertainties and improve overall cooperation". Conflicts should not totally be seen as evil, but rather as a challenge to effect change.[3] An organization should not run away from conflicts because they are part of human existence as no one or organization is an island to himself or itself. Conflicts should not be handled with hypocrisy, suppression or pretence. A good approach to its management is highly essential for peace and progress.

FINDINGS, METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the major findings and discussions of data generated from both the primary and secondary sources. The presence of conflicts in schools in the state and awareness of such conflicts by members of staff is undisputable. Considering the 55.3% positive responses and 28.6% negative responses to conflict awareness in the schools as indicated in Table 1 was a proof that a reasonable percentage of workers are aware of the occurrence of conflicts in their schools of which forty-nine persons (16.1%) gave no response.

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[1] Ivancevich, J. M. 1996. Organizational Behavior and Management. Chicago: Irwin.
[2] Pondy, L. R. 1969. Varieties of Organisational Conflicts. Administrative Science Quarterly, pp. 499–505.
[3] Zikmann and Associates. 1992. Successful Conflict Management. In: P. Fenn and R. Gameson (eds.), Construction Conflict Management and Resolution. London: E and FN Spon.

Table 1. Respondents' Awareness of Conflicts in their Schools

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	168	55.3
NO	87	28.6
No Response	49	16.1
Total	304	100

Source: Fieldwork, January 2012.
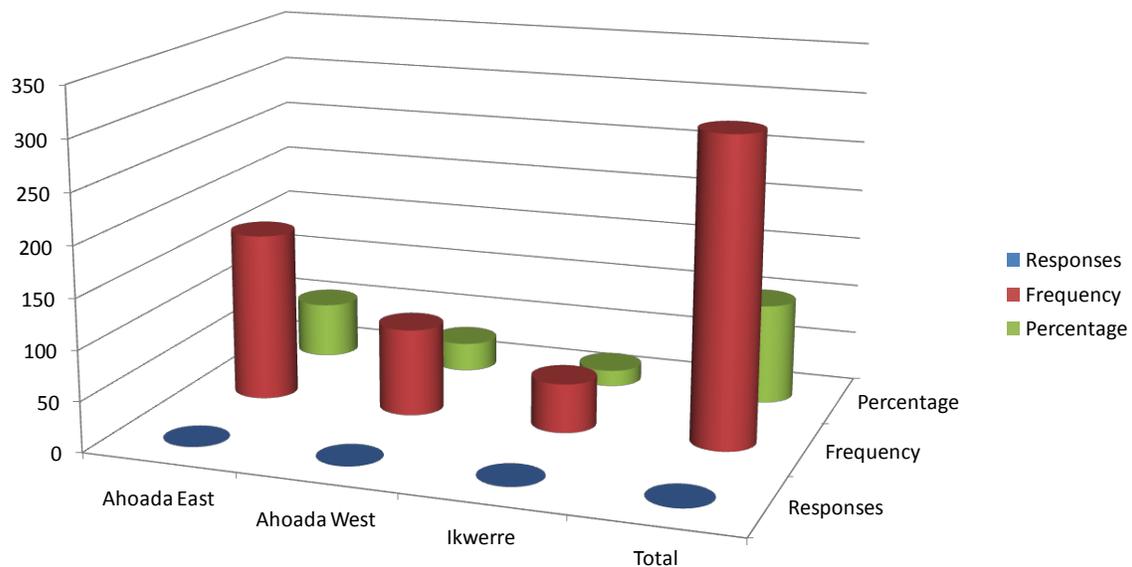
As shown in Table 2, conflicts appeared to occur regularly in schools in Rivers State. As pointed out by experts on conflict management, conflict in itself is not destructive provided it is well managed. The breakdown of responses is presented in Table 2. A total of 172 (56.6%) respondents have witnessed conflicts between 6 and 10 times in the last 5 years.

Fifty-eight persons (19.1%) have witnessed conflicts between 3 to 5 times, fifty-one persons (16.8%) have witnessed it between 1 and 2 times, and only 4 (1.3%) indicated that they did not witness conflicts in their schools.

Table 2 Occurrence of Conflicts in the last 5 years.

Numbers of Times	Frequency	Percentage
0	4	1.3
1-2 times	51	16.8
3-5 times	58	19.1
6-10 times	172	56.6
Cannot recollect	19	6.3
Total	304	100

Source: Fieldwork, January 2012.

Data collected showed that there were several types of conflicts in secondary schools in Rivers State. The types of conflicts identified are ranked as follows: inter-personal conflicts (34.7%), inter-union conflicts (26.7%), conflicts between staff and school administrators (20.9%), conflicts between labour and government (13.6%), others [i.e. students versus staff, or students versus school administrators, students versus food vendors, conflicts between parents and teachers] (13.6%). On a few occasions, there were cases of conflicts between school and the community members. Since inter-personal conflicts ranked the highest among the several types of conflicts that were identified in schools selected for the study, efforts should be made to address it.
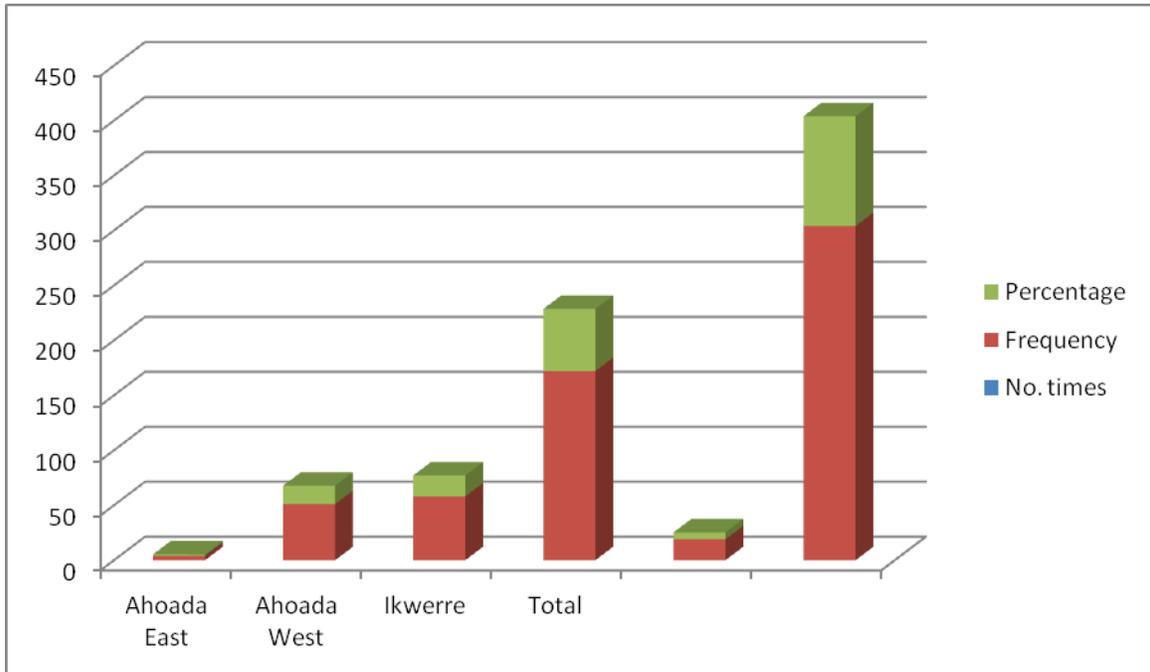
One of the ways to deal with the problem is to organize seminars for workers on how to relate with co-workers in a harmonious way and deal with differences without resulting in conflicts. This is important because regular occurrence of such conflicts will adversely affect productivity in schools.

The following were identified as major causes of conflicts within the school system in the state.

They are listed in order of their importance:

1. Unimpressive Conditions of Service

2. Partial implementation of the minimum wage salaries approved by the

Federal Government for workers

3. Forceful and compulsory retirement/retrenchment of workers.

4. Administrative incompetence of principals

5. Misappropriation and embezzlement of school funds

6. Indiscipline (on the part of both staff and students)

7. Negligence of duty

8. Personality clashes

9. Inferiority/superiority complex

10. Favoritism

11. Role conflicts

12. Misunderstanding of motives

13. Youthful exuberance

Among the various factors that caused industrial conflicts among school workers in the state unimpressive conditions of service ranked highest. Many of those interviewed were of the opinion that there is a positive correlation between poor staff welfare and occurrences of conflicts. They believed that a good welfare package for the staff would go a long way to reduce the incidence of conflicts in schools.

Governments at all levels in Nigeria (federal, state and local) should endeavour to improve the conditions of service of teachers in the country not only as a measure to prevent or reduce conflicts in schools, but also as a measure to restore confidence and dignity to the teaching profession. On the procedure for conflict management, the responses are quite disturbing, as only 19.4% of the respondents affirmed that there existed laid down procedures and mechanisms for conflict management and resolution in their schools in the state. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Every school should try to adopt mechanisms and strategies for managing and resolving conflicts. The current fire brigade approach used by most school administrators in the state cannot continue.

Table 3 Coverage of the Syllabus in a Session

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Never	25	8.2
Hardly over	141	46.4
Often	75	24.7
Always	45	14.8
No response	18	5.9
Total	304	100

Source: Source: Fieldwork, January 2012.

Table 3 shows that majority of the teachers were often unable to cover the syllabus in a session. This is one of the effects of incessant strikes in public schools in Nigeria. This is not peculiar to Rivers State. In the year 2000 public primary schools in the country (Rivers State inclusive) were on a prolonged strike. Several public secondary schools in the state were also on strike during the same period over non-implementation of the newly introduced salary scale (Harmonized Salary Structure) by the federal government.

Table 4. Opportunity to attend Courses in Conflict Management

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Never	220	72.4
Hardly over	42	13.8
Often	22	7.2
Always	8	2.6
No response	12	3.9
Total	304	100

Source: Source: Fieldwork, January 2012.

Out of the 304 respondents on opportunity to attend conflict management courses, 220 (72.4%) indicated that they have never had any opportunity to attend such a course; 42 (13.8%) have hardly done so, while 22 (7.2%) indicated that they have participated often, and only 8 (2.6%) indicated that they participated frequently. Twelve (3.9%) did not respond. It is pertinent that a course on conflict management should not only be introduced in the curricula for student teachers, but that it should be introduced as a regular refresher course for teachers and school administrators. Adequate knowledge in conflict management and resolution in schools will go a long way to sanitize the educational system in the country. Students Representative Council (SRC) is an administrative innovation introduced to resolve conflicts in schools. The SRC provides opportunity for students to air their views on matters that could lead to conflicts in the school; thereby administrative problems are nipped in the bud. It is unfortunate that most of the respondents (78.6%) indicated that there were no such councils in their schools. Only 19.6% indicated that the SRC are in existence in their schools. It is suggested that school administrators in the state should consider introducing SRC in their schools as part of conflict management strategies. The data collected confirmed that in many schools the students had little or no say in the running of their schools even in student related matters. Only 26.8% of the respondents indicated that students were allowed to have input in the running of their schools. School administrators should allow students to make necessary input into school administration especially on matters that concern them.

This is one of the modern management techniques – participative management. Such opportunity will be useful in the prevention of conflicts in schools in the state. Depending on the nature of conflicts and the parties involved, various methods were used which included the use of disciplinary committees, compromise method, intervention of the school authority and elders in the community, and interventions by colleagues. Sometimes the Local Inspectors of Education (L.I.E.) and TESCOM officials' intervention have been called for.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS REPORTED TO THE TEACHING

SERVICE COMMISSION (TESCOM)

Several conflicts in secondary schools in the state have been reported to the TESCOM for intervention and necessary actions. Some of the examples which are typologies of conflicts in schools included:

1. The Western Ahoada County High School communal clash, which occurred in 1997 and 2000, polarized both the staff and the students of Government Girls Secondary School, Ahoada in Ahoada East Local Government Area. The school had to be divided into two, one at the old school site and another at the Government Technical College in Ahoada. Both sites were given recognition by the TESCOM. During the crises, internal and external examinations were disturbed. The West African Examination and General Certificate Examination were held on neutral ground at St. Mark in Port Harcourt. Circulars, directives and instructions were duplicated while issues of common interest to the sites were resolved by inviting the substantive administrators to Port Harcourt.

2. Another type of conflict reported to the commission involved principals and members of their communities. One of the reported cases was that of County Grammar School Ikwerre Etche, in Ikwerre Local Government Area in the year 2000. Due to the decrease in the school population, the school was ordered closed by the State Ministry of Education. The aggrieved community members threatened the life of the principal. The principal fled and the school became disorganized. He operated from outside the town. The community members withdrew their children and wards from the school and sent them to neighboring schools. This remained until TESCOM intervened and invited the two parties for settlement. The community members agreed to return their children to the school; then the school was re-opened. The bad blood already created led to the transfer of the principal to another school.

3. Government Secondary School Joinkerama, in 1998: Conflict arose between the principal and some teachers who were accused of making life difficult for the principal. The teachers became uncontrollable; they further instigated the students against the school rules and constituted authority. The TESCOM set up a committee to investigate the case. The committee came out with a recommendation that the teachers involved be posted out of Iwo to far places.

4. Federal Science College, Ahoada There was crisis between the principal and nineteen teachers over the sharing of royalties that accrued to the school on the proceeds of palm trees on the school land. The teachers were alleged of gross misconduct by the principal. The conflict blew open and the Local Inspector of Education (L.I.E.) and the Ministry of Education had to be involved. The administration of the school was affected as the staff got polarized, some for and some against the principal. Internal examinations could not be held for a term, the staff salary was delayed for some months. The interventions of the TESCOM included sending their officials to conflict ridden schools to investigate, mediate and bring about resolution. In some instances resolution took the forms of issuance of queries, dispersing the staff by posting all or some to other schools, demotion, reinstatement of wrongly dismissed workers, or conversion of some dismissals to retirement; dismissal and sanctions of various degrees depending on the nature of the case as recommended by investigative panels. Where cases were between students and the staff, the Ministry of Education took up the mediation. The consequences of the discussed conflicts on the school and the government have been regrettable. Part of the repercussions on schools was disruption of academic programs, inadequate staffing as results of unplanned transfer, hostility, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities. In some cases school results were withheld or cancelled.

As a result of emergency transfer of subject teachers, qualified teachers were inequitably distributed. In the final analysis, government suffers financial losses from closure of schools, while pupils and their parents suffer un-quantifiable losses. All of these have contributed in one way or the other to a steady decline in the quality of education in the state. Some students resorted to examination malpractices to make up for time lost during conflicts in schools especially those that have led to school closure.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS AND MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Some suggestions and recommendations on conflict management in school administration are made for possible implementation:

1. Seminars, conferences and symposia for the management cadre in the field of educational management should be organized from time to time.

2. Courses in conflict management and human relations should be included in the curriculum for teachers in training as a way of preparing them for conflict management in school administration.

3. The establishment of Students Representative Council (SRC) in each school and the enlightenment of the students on the importance of the

SRC will enhance conflict management strategies.

4. The establishment of the Parents/Teachers Association (PTA) in each school will intimate parents with the school programs. This has become necessary because the PTA now serves an important purpose by bridging communication gaps, which can cause conflicts.

5. Courses in human relations should be introduced into the secondary school curriculum to carry along the students on the issue of tolerance and other acceptable societal behavioral virtues.

6. Government should look into the issue of workers' welfare to avert the incessant industrial actions, and provide adequate facilities in schools.

7. Evaluation standards should be designed for promotions and awards to deserving personnel to promote job satisfaction for schools personnel.

8. Establishment of Disciplinary committees to handle disciplinary matters.

9. Counseling facilities and programs should be introduced in schools.

10. Transparency and accountability from serving officers.

11. Clear job specifications or description.

12. Role definitions to be clearly maintained.

MODEL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SCHOOLS

The dual concern model of conflict resolution is a conceptual perspective that assumes individuals' preferred method of dealing with conflict is based on two underlying themes or dimensions:

1. A concern for self (i.e. assertiveness), and

2. A concern for others (i.e. empathy).

According to the model, group members balance their concern for satisfying personal needs and interests with their concern for satisfying the needs and interests of others in different ways. The intersection point between these two dimensions ultimately lead individuals towards exhibiting different styles of conflict resolution

The dual model identifies five conflict resolution styles/strategies that individuals may use depending on their dispositions toward pro-self or pro-social goals.[1]

1. **Avoidance conflict style**

   Characterized by inaction and passivity, avoidance conflict style is typically used when an individual has reduced concern for their own outcomes as well as the outcomes of others. During conflict, these avoiders adopt a "wait and see" attitude, often allowing conflict to phase out on its own without any personal involvement.[2] Unfortunately, by neglecting to address high-conflict situations, avoiders risk allowing problems to fester out of control.

2. **Yielding conflict style**

   In contrast, yielding or "accommodating" conflict styles are characterized by a high concern for others while having a low concern for one's own self. This passive pro-social approach emerges when individuals derive personal satisfaction from meeting the needs of others and have a general concern for maintaining stable, positive social relationships.

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[1] Goldfien & Robbennolt, 2007.
[2] Bayazit & Mannix, 2003.

When faced with conflict, individuals with a yielding conflict style tend to give into others' demands out of respect for the social relationship (e.g., to maintain group unity) because they believe being "agreeable may be more important than winning".[1]

3. **Competitive conflict style**

Competitive or "fighting" conflict style maximizes individual assertiveness (i.e., concern for self) and minimizes empathy (i.e., concern for others). Groups consisting of competitive members generally enjoy seeking domination over others, and typically see conflict as a "win or lose" predicament. Fighters tend to force others to accept their personal views by employing competitive, power tactics (e.g., argue; insult; accuse; violence) that foster feelings of intimidation.[2]

4. **Cooperation conflict style**

Characterized by an active concern for both pro-social and pro-self behavior, cooperation conflict style is typically used when an individual has elevated interests in their own outcomes as well as in the outcomes of others. During conflict, cooperators collaborate with others in an effort to find an amicable solution that satisfies all parties involved in the conflict. Individuals with this type of conflict style tend to be highly assertive and highly empathetic at the same time.

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[1] Goldfien & Robbennolt, 2007.
[2] Morrill, 1995; Mullins, L. J. 1999. Management and Organizational Behavior. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

By seeing conflict as a creative opportunity, collaborators willingly invest time and resources into finding a "win-win" solution. According to the literature on conflict resolution, a cooperative conflict resolution style is recommended above all others.[1]

5. **Conciliation conflict style**

Conciliation or "compromising" conflict style is typical of individuals who possess an intermediate-level of concern for both personal and others' outcomes. Compromisers value fairness and, in doing so, anticipate mutual give-and-take interactions. By accepting some demands put forth by others, compromisers believe this agreeableness will encourage others to meet half-way, thus promoting conflict resolution.[2] This conflict style can be considered an extension of both "yielding" and "cooperative" strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many principles at work in conflict resolution. When everyone is committed to these principles, resolution at a local level is positive and co-operative. These principles help keep the process fair and flexible:

Acceptance: It is important to accept one another's differences as well as the process and the outcome. Acceptance requires an open mind. People do not always behave the way we want them to behave, things do not always go the way we want them to go, and they do not always end the way we want them to end.

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[1] Sternberg & Dobson, 1987; Jarboe & Witteman, 1996.
[2] van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994.

Generally speaking, people in a conflict work toward consensus, but there are times when the best solution is to reach a compromise, or to agree to disagree.

Accessibility: People who are involved in a conflict should have access to every support available to them, including information about the process and their options. Not only should procedures and protocols be clear and available, the people themselves should be open, approachable, and accessible.

Balance of Power: Successful conflict resolution depends on a "level playing field" or balance of power. This does not mean we should all have the same powers or responsibilities, because in reality we do not. For example, a principal clearly has different responsibilities than a parent, and

a bus driver has different responsibilities than a teacher. We can, however, work together to create an environment where all ideas are equally valued. This allows everyone to share in the process as well as the solutions. If people in conflict can perceive a situation as having balance, they will feel they have an opportunity to have an impact on the outcome.

Building Trust: Trust is built on positive and respectful relationships. Such relationships, whether they exist inside or outside of school, are built with ongoing commitment, honesty, and effort. Many of the principles of successful conflict resolution require trust. Trust is necessary for building the positive, caring climate that is so important to begin any co-operative problem-solving process.

Communication: Good communication is about listening and speaking carefully and respectfully. When resolving a conflict, everyone involved should feel invited and encouraged to ask questions, discuss positions, and explore solutions. They should feel like they can offer and receive criticism without anyone becoming angry or defensive. Logic and consistency are important, but so is making a place for (acceptable) emotion. Body language can communicate as much as or more than the spoken word. It is important to be aware of positive ways to communicate without speaking—by making eye contact, for example, and by appearing open, attentive, alert, and non-threatening.

Fairness: In order to be a success, the informal conflict resolution process must be fair and equitable. Each person involved in resolving a conflict must feel like he or she is playing an active role in a process that is fair for everyone. They should feel like they are helping to find fair solutions and to make fair decisions about a fair outcome.

Motivation: When resolving a conflict, each person must be motivated toward positive, realistic solutions that work for everyone. Sometimes people begin with good intentions, but if those intentions become sidetracked or unclear, it is important to refocus the issues and the goals, and to re-examine the motivations. For example, being motivated to be right, or to be proven right for the sake of being right, is neither positive nor productive. Being motivated to work toward what is best for the student is always a worthwhile goal. Making assumptions about the motivations of others is often a major cause of communication breakdown.

Mutual Respect: When we treat each other the way we would like to be treated ourselves, we create the kind of positive climate that is ideal for resolving conflicts informally.

Recognition of Diversity: It is important to be mindful of how diversity can affect the conflict resolution process. Each one of us has different ways of understanding, and different ways of expressing that understanding. We must accept and respect these differences. Informal conflict resolution is about finding positive solutions that work for everyone. It is not about judging or trying to change each other's minds.

Student Centered: The student is not only the common ground between families, schools, and communities; the student is the reason we are here. Conflict resolution is not about winning or losing. It is about identifying and supporting the needs of students within their learning environments at all times.

Willingness: In order for the informal conflict resolution process to work, everyone involved must be willing to make it work. This means being willing to trust the process, trust one another, and work together toward realistic, attainable solutions.

Before You Begin

Most conflicts can be resolved, and most conflicts are worth resolving. By working together to resolve conflicts, everyone benefits from the results. When no attempts are made to resolve differences in a fair and friendly way, the education of the student and the life of the family can be disrupted. Stress can be placed upon school employees, and resources can be strained.

It is in the best interest of everyone, especially the student, to try to resolve conflicts as quickly and fairly as possible. One way of dealing with conflicts is to ignore them, but this may not produce the desired results. In many cases, a conflict left unresolved could become a larger issue than it was to begin with. Once you have made a decision to resolve a conflict, it is important to explore your options and decide upon the next step. Before taking action in any conflict resolution process, it is worth taking some time to carefully consider the situation and ask these questions.

• What exactly is the conflict about?

• Who is involved in the conflict?

• Is the issue important enough to pursue?

• Is this something that can be worked out by me and the other person or people who are involved in the conflict?

• Am I willing to work this out with the other person or people who are involved in the conflict?

• What would solve the problem for me?

• How would I like to see the conflict resolved?

• What are the benefits of this particular resolution?

• If the conflict has to do with a student, how will that student benefit?

• Do I have all the information I need about the situation, the school, the resources that are available to me, and the policies that may be in place?

If you have decided that it is worthwhile to begin a conflict resolution process, the next step is to decide on an approach. Just as there are many ways to become involved in a conflict, there are many ways to resolve a conflict. Basic elements of problem solving can be found in every approach. The differences have to do with how much control people have over the process, how much control outside parties have over the process, and how formal the process is. Informal conflict resolution involves conversations with the person or people who are most directly involved in the conflict and are most likely to help find solutions. Issues are discussed in a direct and informal way. This can be a rewarding and positive process, and far more efficient than some of the more formal approaches.

The first three approaches to conflict resolution—problem solving, negotiation, and conciliation—are the most local and informal approaches and, therefore, the focus of this handbook. The success of informal conflict resolution depends on people being able to resolve a conflict themselves. The more formal the approach, the more power an outside third party has over the process. In extreme cases, a third party makes a legally binding decision about the outcome.

Problem Solving is the most informal approach. It involves people working together in a voluntary and co-operative way to overcome their differences. In this approach, people have the greatest degree of control over the process and flexibility in the outcome. They do not come to a meeting knowing in advance how they want the problem solved. They are open to ideas and suggestions, and they are willing to find solutions that work for everyone. This approach can only be successful if people are able to agree about what the issues are and are willing to work together to resolve them. Everyone's needs and expectations must be taken into consideration. The benefit is they work it out themselves. No third parties are involved.

Negotiation is similar to problem solving. The difference is that, before they meet one another, people already have solution(s) in mind that would meet their needs. In negotiation, people explore the issues, as well as expectations, motivations, and goals, and they try to find common ground between them. This common ground may be the basis for a successful resolution. In this approach, people generally work things out themselves, but sometimes an outside facilitator may be helpful.

Conciliation is a process that involves the encouragement and support of an outside third party acting as a conciliator to help guide the process. The conciliator must not take anyone's "side." He or she meets with the people in conflict and helps them identify issues, find common ground and shared goals, and look for solutions. Usually the conciliator meets with the disputing parties one at a time before they meet face-to-face on their own.

Sometimes the conciliator acts as a go-between, which is known as "shuttle diplomacy." A conciliator is like a coach on a team, providing feedback and suggestions. The people in conflict remain in control of the process.

Formal approaches to conflict resolution—mediation, adjudication or arbitration, and legal recourse—become necessary when people in conflict no longer feel they can resolve the conflict or control the situation by themselves. Because these approaches require varying degrees of control by outside third parties, they remain outside the scope of this handbook.

Mediation, like conciliation, is a co-operative, voluntary problem-solving process involving an impartial third party. The mediator must be neutral and acceptable to everyone involved in the conflict. The mediator helps define the issues and find solutions that work for everyone. The mediator helps guide the process, but the people in conflict are responsible for resolving it themselves. Mediation is more formal than conciliation.

Arbitration / Adjudication occurs when the conflict is taken to an outside third party for resolution. In arbitration, a third party (or arbitrator) hears both sides of a conflict and then makes a decision or judgment. In adjudication, people are often represented by lawyers, who present their information to an individual, who then makes a decision or judgment. The people in conflict have limited control over the process or the outcome. The judgment may be non-binding or binding.

Legal Recourse is the most formal approach to conflict resolution. In legal recourse, people are typically represented by lawyers who present evidence regarding both sides of the conflict at a public hearing. A judge or jury makes a decision based on the merits of the case. The decision is binding. All approaches to conflict resolution are about resolving differences and working toward solutions. Informal conflict resolution is about building and maintaining an atmosphere of trust and goodwill among schools, families, and communities.

Resolving the Conflict Informally

Once you have decided to begin an informal conflict resolution process—in other words, once you and the other(s) in conflict have agreed to try working things out on your own without the help of a third party—these are the basic steps and guidelines to follow:

Determine who is involved. It is important to identify who is most directly involved in the conflict, and most likely to be able to influence the outcome. (In some cases, for example, a person might be directly involved but have little or no influence or control over that situation.) It may be necessary to gather information about the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the people who are involved, including your own.

Contact the person most directly involved. If that person is not available, leave phone numbers and times when you can best be reached. When you do have an opportunity to have a conversation, voice your concerns calmly and clearly often, conflicts can be resolved at this stage.

Arrange a meeting. If it appears that the conflict cannot be resolved with a simple phone call, the first thing to do is to arrange a meeting. You and the other person or people involved should agree on a time and place that works for all of you.

Prepare. It is important to find out about the protocols and procedures for conflict resolution that may be in place in your local school and school division. Be aware of what options are available, and whom to contact if solutions are not agreed upon. Find out what supports and resources are available within your school, school division, or the community. Gather information. Find out the facts about the conflict. Understand the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the people who are involved. Be prepared to clearly state your concerns, motivations, and goals. Be prepared to listen and offer feedback. Be prepared to ask questions. There may be solutions that you had not even considered.

Meet. It is important to be aware of how you can help create a balanced power situation, a warm and caring climate, and a fair and open process.

Make it clear that you are willing to co-operate to resolve your differences. Agree upon an approach to resolve the conflict. The best place to start is the most informal level, which is problem solving. Make sure you have explored all possibilities

of problem solving before moving to another level. Set guidelines and ground rules. Listen actively. Ask open-ended questions. Check one another's understanding of what has been said. Respect each other's point of view. Look for common ground. Identify the nature of the problem, your goals, and the best way to reach a solution. If a student is involved, stay focused on the benefits for the student. Avoid emotional hooks and unrelated issues. Keep out of the realm of personal attacks.

Conclude the meeting. When the meeting is over, make sure to put the solutions you have agreed upon in writing. This should be in clear language and it should include a plan to carry out these solutions. Set a date to discuss the success of the plan. The meeting may have ended with people agreeing to disagree. If so, it is important to have a conversation about whether the matter will be closed or if further steps in the conflict resolution process will be taken.

Follow-up. Make sure there is a follow-up meeting to discuss the success of the conflict resolution plan. If the meeting does not take place face-to face, a follow-up phone call is recommended. Even if the conflict has not been successfully resolved, a follow-up

meeting or phone call to check in or "touch base" is a good idea. This is the kind of ongoing communication that builds, rebuilds, and maintains the trust that is so important in a positive school environment.

Line of Communication

An important part of understanding informal conflict resolution understands the line of communication in the education system. This means knowing whom to contact, and when to contact them. It is also important that everyone involved in informal conflict resolution follows the "rules" of the line of communication. Starting at the most local level of a conflict means starting with the person or people who have the most direct hands-on involvement with the conflict. The most local level is also known as the point of origin. If the conflict cannot be resolved at the most local level, then the next person in the line of communication can be contacted. If the conflict still cannot be resolved, then the next person in the line of communication can be contacted, and so on. For example, if parent(s) are concerned about a situation that has to do with a classroom, they should first contact the teacher. If the situation cannot be resolved with the teacher, the parent(s) should find out if there is anyone else who should be contacted before contacting the principal. No one should be skipped in the line of communication. The principal should be contacted before staffs at the divisional level are contacted. Divisional staff should be contacted before the superintendent is contacted. Similarly, if a teacher is concerned about a classroom situation that has to do with a student, and if that student could be helpful in resolving the problem, the student should be spoken with before parents are contacted. It is important to keep in mind that these are guidelines and not fixed rules. Each situation is unique, and each parent, student, teacher, and administrator has feelings that need to be taken into consideration.

If, for example, a teacher is not comfortable contacting a parent, or if a parent is not comfortable contacting a teacher, these concerns are serious and should be treated with respect. Creative problem-solving techniques could be useful in these situations. Perhaps the teacher in question would be more comfortable asking the principal to contact the parent. Perhaps the parent would be more comfortable bringing someone along to a meeting with a teacher, and so on.

Roles and Responsibilities

It may be helpful for anyone involved in a school-related conflict to have a basic understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the people in the school system, including students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, superintendents, and school trustees.

- It is the responsibility of each student to engage in the learning process, and to respect the school environment. Each student should feel valued and safe, and should be able to succeed without concern for unnecessary disruption.

- It is the responsibility of parents to work together with educators to ensure their child has a successful school experience.

- Educators are responsible for providing appropriate educational programming and working with parents toward achieving that goal.

- The principal or Head Teacher   is responsible for running the school, overseeing the learning environment, and a wide range of school matters. These include the safety and discipline of students and care and maintenance of the building and grounds.

- Student service administrators have a leadership role in services for students with diverse learning needs.

- The superintendent or directors is the most senior administrator in the public school system. He or she provides leadership in all matters of education and reports to the board of   trustees.

- The **school board** consists of local trustees who are elected to represent their community. Together, trustees make up the school board. The school board determines school division policy and oversees its implementation.

Local Policy

When developing conflict resolution policy, it is essential to consider the unique needs of students, families, and communities. Information should be included concerning protocols and lines of communication, as well as rights, roles, and responsibilities of parents, educators, and members of the school and school division administration. The process should be fair, equitable, and based on open communication. It should be structured such that people in conflict are able to clearly understand the steps and guidelines. It should be flexible enough that people are able to resolve the conflict themselves, as well as move freely among approaches. If necessary, people in conflict should be able to step back and evaluate the situation. In the rare situation where informal approaches do not address the issues at the heart of the conflict, and if people in conflict agree they need to move into a more formal approach, there should be procedures in place that allow for movement into more formal conflict resolution processes.

CONCLUSION

School administration has been adversely affected by lack of knowledge of conflict management. Most administrators handled conflicts by trial and error approach because there were no specific procedures and methods of managing conflicts. In the secondary school system in Rivers State, students were not allowed to participate in decisions affecting them. Most students did not know the importance of a student representative council and they hardly knew how to channel their grievances. In many cases the students just took to the streets to protest against the school authority. The staff members on the other hand were not excluded from all kinds of conflict. Staff and students in conflict resolution rarely explored the use of dialogue as a resolution technique. Finally the issue of conflict management has reached the point where effective use of relevant strategies should be explored and employed.

Proper Education

It is the nicest work ever assumed by men and women to deal with youthful minds. The greatest care should be taken in the education of youth to so vary the manner of instruction as to call forth the high and noble powers of the mind. Parents and school-teachers are certainly disqualified to properly educate children, if they have not first learned the lesson of self-control, patience, forbearance, gentleness, and love. What an important position for parents, guardians, and teachers! There are very few who realize the most essential wants of the mind, and how to direct the developing intellect, the

growing thoughts and feelings of youth.[1]   There is a time for training children and a time for educating youth; and it is essential that in school both of these be combined in a great degree. Children may be trained for the service of sin or for the service of righteousness. The early education of youth shapes their characters both in their secular and in their religious life. Solomon says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This language is positive. The training which Solomon enjoins is to direct, educate, and develop. In order for parents and teachers to do this work, they must themselves understand "the way" the child should go. This embraces more than merely having knowledge of books. It takes in everything that is good, virtuous, righteous, and holy. It comprehends the practice of temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to God and to one another. In order to attain this object, the physical, mental, moral, and religious education of children must have attention.

The education of children, at home or at school, should not be like the training of dumb animals; for children have an intelligent will, which should be directed to control all their powers. Dumb animals need to be trained; for they have not reason and intellect. But the human mind must be taught self-control. It must be educated to rule the human being, while animals are controlled by a master, and are trained to be submissive to him. The master is mind, judgment, and will for his beast. A child may be so trained as to have, like the beast, no will of his own. Even his individuality may be merged in the one who superintends his training; his will, to all intents and purposes, is subject to the will of the teacher.

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[1] White, Ellen G., Fundamentals of Christian Education. 1923. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923. p.15.

Children who are thus educated will ever be deficient in moral energy and individual responsibility. They have not been taught to move from reason and principle; their wills have been controlled by another, and the mind has not been called out, that it might expand and strengthen by exercise. They have not been directed and disciplined with respect to their peculiar constitutions and capabilities of mind, to put forth their strongest powers when required. Teachers should not stop here, but should give special attention to the cultivation of the weaker faculties, that all the powers may be brought into exercise, and carried forward from one degree of strength to another, that the mind may attain due proportions.[1]

There are many families of children who appear to be well trained, while under the training discipline; but when the system which has held them to set rules is broken up, they seem to be incapable of thinking, acting, or deciding for themselves. These children have been so long under iron rule, not allowed to think and act for themselves in those things in which it was highly proper that they should, that they have no confidence in themselves to move out upon their own judgment, having an opinion of their own. And when they go out from their parents to act for themselves, they are easily led by others' judgment in the wrong direction. They have not stability of character. They have not been thrown upon their own judgment as fast and as far as practicable, and therefore their minds have not been properly developed and strengthened. They have so long been absolutely controlled by their parents that they rely wholly upon them; their parents are mind and judgment for them.

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[1] White, Ellen G., Fundamentals of Christian Education. 1923. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923. p.16.

On the other hand, the young should not be left to think and act independently of the judgment of their parents and teachers. Children should be taught to respect experienced judgment, and to be guided by their parents and teachers. They should be so educated that their minds will be united with the minds of their parents and teachers, and so instructed that they can see the propriety of heeding their counsel. Then when they go forth from the guiding hand of their parents and teachers, their characters will not be like the reed trembling in the wind.[1]

The severe training of youth, without properly directing them to think and act for themselves as their own capacity and turn of mind will allow, that by this means they may have growth of thought, feelings of self-respect, and confidence in their own ability to perform, will ever produce a class who are weak in mental and moral power. And when they stand in the world to act for themselves, they will reveal the fact that they are trained, like the animals, and not educated. Their wills, instead of being guided, were forced into subjection by the harsh discipline of parents and teachers.

Those parents and teachers who boast of having complete control of the minds and wills of the children under their care, would cease their boastings, could they trace out the future lives of the children who are thus brought into subjection by force or through fear. These are almost wholly unprepared to share in the stern responsibilities of life. When these youth are no longer under their parents and teachers, and are compelled to think and act for themselves, they are almost sure to take a wrong course, and yield to the power of temptation. They do not make this life a success, and the same deficiencies are seen in their religious life. Could the instructors of children and youth have the future result of

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[1] White, Ellen G., Fundamentals of Christian Education. 1923. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923. p.17.

their mistaken discipline mapped out before them, they would change their plan of education. That class of teachers who are gratified that they have almost complete control of the wills of their scholars, are not the most successful teachers, although the appearance for the time being may be flattering.

God never designed that one human mind should be under the complete control of another. And those who make efforts to have the individuality of their pupils merged in themselves, and to be mind, will, and conscience for them, assume fearful responsibilities. These scholars may, upon certain occasions, appear like well-drilled soldiers. But when the restraint is removed, there will be seen a want of independent action from firm principle existing in them. Those who make it their object to so educate their pupils that they may see and feel that the power lies in themselves to make men and women of firm principle, qualified for any position in life, are the most useful and permanently successful teachers. Their work may not show to the very best advantage to careless observers, and their labors may not be valued as highly as are those of the teacher who holds the minds and wills of his scholars by absolute authority; but the future lives of the pupils will show the fruits of the better plan of education.[1]

There is danger of both parents and teachers commanding and dictating too much, while they fail to come sufficiently into social relation with their children or scholars. They often hold themselves too much reserved, and exercise their authority in a cold, unsympathizing manner which cannot win the hearts of their children and pupils. If they would gather the children close to them, and show that they love them, and would manifest an interest in all their efforts, and even in their sports, sometimes even being a

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[1] White, Ellen G., Fundamentals of Christian Education. 1923. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923. p. 18.

child among children, they would make the children very happy, and would gain their love and win their confidence. And the children would sooner respect and love the authority of their parents and teachers.

The habits and principles of a teacher should be considered of even greater importance than his literary qualifications. If he is a sincere Christian, he will feel the necessity of having an equal interest in the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual education of his scholars. In order to exert the right influence, he should have perfect control over himself, and his own heart should be richly imbued with love for his pupils, which will be seen in his looks, words, and acts. He should have firmness of character, and then he can mold the minds of his pupils, as well as instruct them in the sciences. The early education of youth generally shapes their characters for life. Those who deal with the young should be very careful to call out the qualities of the mind, that they may better know how to direct its power so that they may be exercised to the very best account.[1]

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[1] White, Ellen G., Fundamentals of Christian Education. 1923. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923. p. 19.

Close Confinement at School

The system of education carried out for generations back has been destructive to health and even life itself. Many young children have passed five hours each day in schoolrooms not properly ventilated, nor sufficiently large for the healthful accommodation of the scholars. The air of such rooms soon becomes poison to the lungs that inhale it. Little children, whose limbs and muscles are not strong, and whose brains are undeveloped, have been kept confined indoors to their injury. Many have but a slight hold on life to begin with. Confinement in school from day to day makes them nervous and diseased. Their bodies are dwarfed because of the exhausted condition of the nervous system. And if the lamp of life goes out, the parents and teachers do not consider that they had any direct influence in quenching the vital spark.[1] When standing by the graves of their children, the afflicted parents look upon their bereavement as a special dispensation of Providence, when, by inexcusable ignorance, their own course has destroyed the lives of their children. To then charge their death to Providence, is blasphemy. God wanted the little ones to live and be disciplined, that they might have beautiful characters, and glorify Him in this world, and praise Him in the better world.[2]

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[1] White, Ellen G., Fundamentals of Christian Education. 1923. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923. p. 19.
[2] White, Ellen G., Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students. 1913. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943. 575 pp. [CT]

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