

Conflict among Teachers in Junior High Schools in a Developing Country

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Abstract

The study examined the causes and effects of conflict on teachers' performance in the Tema metropolis of Ghana. Research design used was descriptive survey, with the main data collection instrument being questionnaire. Data was collected from a sample of three hundred and five (305) respondents who were randomly and purposively selected. The data was analysed using SPSS. The results indicate that conflicts were caused by personal and structural factors. The dominant personal factor was differences in perception whilst the dominant structural factor was sharing of common and limited resources. Furthermore, findings indicate that negative effects of conflict were higher than positive effects. The dominant conflict management strategy adopted was integrating whilst compromising was the least adopted. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Ghana Education Service (GES) should organise workshops, seminars and other educational programmes on conflict for teachers.

Keywords: Conflict, Causes of conflict, Effects of conflict, Strategies for managing conflict

1. Introduction

Differences exist among human beings within an organisation and as a result conflict may be an inevitable occurrence. Conflict, an outcome of behaviour (Pathak, 2010), is an integral part of human life and an inevitable part of any organisation. Conflict occurs whenever more than one person is involved in any enterprise or endeavour. This is so because there are differences in opinion or deviation from standard norm (Afzal, Khan, & Ali, 2009), difference in goals, values and aspirations of the different stakeholders and these goals may be incompatible (Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Aeezi & Ajemunigbohun, 2010; Akpotu, Onoyase & Onoyase, 2008) among others. Conflict exists in organisations (Ongori, 2009) and in itself not a bad thing (Kapusuzoglu, 2010) and therefore must not be necessarily reduced, suppressed or eliminated, but managed to enhance organisational learning and effectiveness (Rahim, 2002). According to Armstrong (2009) an optimal level of conflict in an organisation impacts positively on the performance of the organisation.

Conflict in organisations occurs at different levels, is of different form and from different sources (Champoux, 2003). Some types of conflict may be less detrimental or even beneficial to group performance (Jehn, 1995) and thus may have either positive or negative effects on organisational performance depending on the nature of the conflict and the way it is managed (Armstrong, 2009).

Conflict, a state of mind and therefore has to be perceived by the parties involved, (Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991) has been explained as a process by several authors. Appelbaum, Abdallah and Shapiro (1999) believe it refers to a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs and other preferences and desires. Wall and Callister (1995) explained it as 'a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party' (pp. 517) and Dwivedi (2001) described conflict as a process of hampering someone's effort by blockage, causing his or her frustration. Again, Robbins and Judge (2009) as well as Huczynski and Buchanan (2007) on their part explained conflict as a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about. Conflict is inevitable in any organisation (Armstrong, 2009) or institution and therefore it is not an aberration to have conflict in schools.

When conflicts occur they disrupt the congenial environment for academic work. Discussion with some teachers and students in Tema metropolis indicate that there have been reported cases of conflict in their schools. Teachers in junior high schools in Tema metropolis of Ghana are made up of people with differences in ethnic background, marital status, gender, age, academic and professional qualifications, among others. These differences are potential sources of conflict among teachers in the schools which may impact on their performance.

Again, review of literature showed that there have been numerous studies on conflict in organisation (Rose & Shaham, 2002; Peterson & Behfar, 2003; Blay, 2006; Khan, Afzal & Rehman, 2009), but not much studies have been carried out and published with the focus on the Ghanaian context, specifically on conflict and teacher performance. It is for this reason that this study examines the causes and effects of conflict on performance of teachers in Junior high schools in the Tema metropolis of Ghana to bridge the knowledge gap and contribute to empirical knowledge in the field of conflict and teacher performance. The questions then are: what are the causes of conflict in these reported cases of conflict?; what are the effects of the conflict?; and lastly

what type of strategies are adopted in managing them?

The study specifically sought to achieve the following objectives: to examine the causes of conflict in schools; to assess the effects of conflict; to explore the strategies adopted in managing conflict in schools; and to make appropriate recommendations.

This study is of great significance as teachers play important role towards the development of the human resource capabilities of the nation. First, findings from the study will help equip heads of the schools as well as teachers with the various appropriate strategies available for the management of conflict to ameliorate the conflict situations which are bound to arise. Secondly, findings of the study will provide useful information to guide the formulation and modification of policies related to conflict and its management in organisations in general and schools in particular. Thirdly, the findings will help the Ghana Education Service (GES) to structure its training programmes to ensure teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge for effective conflict management. Lastly, results of the study will contribute to the existing limited literature on conflict and its management in schools.

The general applicability of the findings may be limited on the following basis: Scope of the study and conflict management strategies used. The study was limited to only Ghana Education Service (GES), specifically only professional teachers in junior high schools within the Tema Metropolitan area. Literature points out that conflict management can take different forms such as smoothing, yielding and problem solving. However, in this study the researcher depended on only integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising strategies. This study assumed that respondents gave the right responses to the questions and therefore the outcome or results are a true reflection of what is happening.

2. Literature

2.1 Causes of conflict in organisation

There are different causes or sources of conflict. Table 1 shows the causes of conflict as provided by Nelson and Quick (2005).

Table 1. Causes of conflict

Structural factors	Personal factors
Specialization	Skills and abilities
Interdependence	Personalities
Common resources	Perceptions
Goal differences	Values and ethics
Authority relationship	Emotions
Status inconsistencies	Communication barriers
Jurisdictional ambiguities	Cultural differences

Source: Nelson and Quick (2005)

While Robbins (1974) classifies the sources of conflict into three general categories namely, communication, structure and personal variables, Nelson and Quick, 2005; and Salleh and Adulpakdee (2012) indicated that essentially the causes of conflict can be classified into two namely, structural and personal factors.

Table 1 shows that structural factors include specialisation, interdependence, common resources, goal differences, authority relationship, status inconsistencies and jurisdictional ambiguities. The personal factors include skills and abilities, personalities, perception, values and ethics, emotions, communication barriers and lastly cultural differences.

According to Amuhaya (2010) individuals have styles, values, beliefs, principles and slogans in life and these determine their choices and objectives. When these choices and objectives contradict, it means people are interested in different things and this can create conflict. He added that conflict might arise when two individuals or groups interact in the same state of affairs but these individuals see the issue from different perspectives because of different sets of settings, awareness, background, disposition, reason or outlook, and this may cause conflict to arise.

Other causes of conflict in educational institutions at different levels include communication gap between authorities and other workers, rules, procedures and policies (Adeyemi & Ademilua, 2012), sharing of limited resources (Ongori, 2009; Talmaciu & Maracine, 2010), lack of communication and disagreements (Talmaciu & Maracine, 2010), and work interdependence (Amuhaya, 2010). Additionally, other possible causes of conflict are ambiguously defined responsibilities (Saller & Adulpakdee, 2012), different target goals among teachers, and difference in perception (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010; Amuhaya, 2010). Furthermore, inadequate welfare package for staff; forceful and compulsory retirement/retrenchment of employees; administrative incompetence of heads; personality clashes; role conflict; unimpressive conditions of service; favouritism; misunderstanding of motives and non-involvement of students in the administration of the school, lack or inadequate knowledge about management of conflict by administrators together with the absence of laid down

procedures for the management of conflicts in schools (Okotoni & Okotoni, 2003) are all causes of conflict.

2.2 Effects of conflict on employees' performance

Conflict in itself is not destructive provided it is well managed (Okotoni & Okotoni, 2003). Champoux (2003) observed that each conflict has the potential to bring unique problems, benefits and choice that may not have been previously thought of or confronted. According to Iravo (2011) majority of heads of schools are not aware that conflict can be positive and therefore had a negative perception about it.

The effects of conflict on performance of educational institutions are both positive and negative (Amuhaya, 2010). Dipaola and Hoy (2001), referencing Dipaolo (1990), stated that schools had little disruptive conflict and that the conflicts that arise in schools are mainly task (cognitive) and this contributes positively to school improvement. Contrary to this, Khan, Afzal and Rehman (2009) indicated that task conflict adversely affect employees performance and their performance depletes between 24% and 40%.

Liang, Liu and Lin (2007) stated that there is a positive association between task conflict and team performance but on the contrary Lovelace, Shapiro and Weingart (2001) and Khan et al. (2009) indicated there was a negative association between conflict and performance. In a related study, Peterson and Behfar (2003) opined that significant amount of literature show that relationship conflict is detrimental to group performance. Task conflict is closely associated with better decision and optimal performance (Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005; Simon & Peterson, 2000; Jehn, 1995). This is because creativity requires conflict and so as conflict arises it stimulates innovative ideas and constructive arguments (Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005) which result in the better decision.

2.3 Dimensions of conflict handling intensions/management styles

The dimensions or strategies used in managing conflict differ from one author to another. Ramani and Zhimin (2010) stated that from the perspective of administrators, there are five major approaches in resolving conflict in schools. These include having regular meetings for the upset individuals or groups to air their grievances; inviting resource people from the education office; and dialogue with the parties involved in the conflict with the school guidance department. Others are consultation with prefects on regular basis to identify areas of conflict; and punishing those involved in conflict by assigning them with harsh tasks, corporal punishment and suspending the parties involved.

From another perspective Obasan (2011) stated that managers of organisations prefer using compromise, problem solving and dominating strategies to minimise the occurrence of conflict in organisation. Kreitner and Kinicki (2004), referencing Rahim (1985), on their part stated that five different conflict styles are available for handling conflict and these are integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. They added that there is no one best style since each has its strengths and weaknesses.

When using the Integrating (Problem solving) style, Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) stated that parties in the conflict confront the issues and supportively identify the problem, come up with alternative solutions and choose the most suitable one. They indicated that even though this style is suitable in addressing complex issues related to misunderstanding it is not suitable when dealing with issues rooted in opposing value systems. The main advantage according to them is, there is a long lasting impact of outcomes since the fundamental problems are identified and addressed. The weakness is, more time is consumed to arrive at a solution as compared with other styles.

The adoption of Obligation (Smoothing) style described by Robbins and Judge (2009) as accommodating results in the individual neglecting his/her own concerns and interest to enable him/her satisfy the needs or concerns of the other party. It focuses on playing down interests and focusing on commonalities (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004). This style, according to Kreitner and Kinicki (2004), is appropriate and efficient to use when you are likely to get something in return ultimately. Thus, when using accommodating, teachers/heads allow other teacher/head to have their way at the expense of their preference. The advantage one gets is, it encourages cooperation but the disadvantage is that it does not deal with the causal problems. However, accommodating is not likely to be a suitable long-term conflict approach in a committed relationship.

The competing style has been described as a situation when one party in conflict has a high concern for self and a low concern for others when dealing with a conflict situation then the individual has adopted the dominating style (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004, and Robbins & Judge, 2009). It is a way of ignoring the needs and expectations of the other party in the conflict and pursuing one's own interest using forceful tactics (Rahim, 2002) and relies on formal authority to force compliance (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004).

The avoidance style has been explained by Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) and Robbins and Judge (2009) that, one party passively withdraws from the problem or actively suppresses the issue. In this, neither of the parties involved is able to address the conflict but rather individuals simply pretend the conflict does not exist and hope it will 'die a natural death'. Avoiding a conflict neither effectively resolves the conflict nor eliminates it and therefore ultimately, the conflict will have to be tackled. However, under certain conditions, avoidance

may be the most appropriate temporary alternative. Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) indicated that this style is efficient and appropriate to adopt when dealing with issues that are trivial and inappropriate for difficult and worsening issues.

Compromising involves flexibility and negotiation (Robbins & Judge 2009) when the individual shows an intermediate level for the self and others. This style deals with sharing, the willingness to give up something to help make decision that are acceptable to both. There is no distinct winner or loser, and the decision arrived at is likely not to be ideal for either of the groups. Thus, it is give and take where parties are concerned for both self and other (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004). This style, according to Kreitner and Kinicki (2004), is appropriate when parties in the conflict situation have opposite goals or possess equal power. Bradford, Stringfellow and Weitz (2004) stated that in compromise, parties seek solutions to a conflict situation by typically 'splitting the difference' and 'meeting the partners halfway'. Results from a study carried out by Blay (2006) indicated that school administrators are more likely to adopt avoiding and compromising strategies than teachers are. He added that both administrators and teachers in private schools have a tendency to use compromising, avoiding and competing strategies than their counterparts at the public schools.

Collaborating is the situation where the people involved want to satisfy fully the other party's concerns. Collaboration conflict management approach involves exploring and coming up with integrative, win-win solution to issues related to conflict. This approach involves the use of open lines of communication, information sharing and the consideration of each party's goals (Bradford et al., 2004). The objective of parties involved is to address the problem by clarifying differences rather than accommodating different points of view (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Both individuals involved in the conflict honestly look for the most accurate ways to solve the conflict. An important feature is information sharing which enables all stakeholders to identify the common goals and potential solutions that satisfy all (McShane & Von-Glinow, 2000).

3. Methodology

The population for this study was made up of headmasters/mistresses and professional teachers in all public Junior High Schools in the Tema metropolitan area of Ghana. Within the selected schools, teachers were randomly selected and purposive sampling technique was used to choose the heads of the selected schools. Three hundred and thirty (330) questionnaires were distributed and out of this 315 were returned representing a return rate of 90%. Out of the 315, three hundred and five (305) were usable.

The main instrument for data collection for this study was questionnaire. It was made up of three (3) sections. The first section solicited information on demographic characteristics. The second section dealt with data on the causes of conflict using the indicators listed by Nelson and Quick (2005) as causes of conflict. The third section contained the 28 item Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory (ROCI) II questions for gathering data on respondents' conflict management strategies.

Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to encourage them to respond to the questionnaire as accurately as possible. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents and each respondent was encouraged to complete the questionnaire in two weeks. Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 16 was used for data analysis after the gathered data have been validated and coded. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were computed.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented based on the objectives set for the study. The order in which they are presented are: demographical data of respondents, causes of conflict, effects of conflict, and strategies in managing conflict.

4.1 Demographic data

Out of the 315, the number usable where 305 which was made up of 127 (41.6%) males and 178 (58.4%) females. In relation to the age of participants, the youngest participant was twenty (20) years old while the oldest was 59. Majority of the respondents 145(47.6%) fell between ages 31-40 and the least 28 (9.2%) fell between 51 to 60. Participants who were married represented 66.9% (204) of the sample and the remaining 33.1% (101) were not married. Majority of respondents 117 (38.4%) held Teachers' certificate "A" followed by bachelor of education 103 (33.7%). Holders of diploma qualification 78 (25.6%) were the next and holders of masters' degree 7 (2.3%) formed the minority. The fact that respondents have different qualifications made it possible to obtain inputs from people with varied qualifications. Participants' number of years of service ranged between 1 and above 21 years. Results showed that 88(28.9%) of the respondents have been teaching between 11 and 15 years. This implies that the majority of respondents have had many years of working experience and that they could provide valuable input to the study. Two-thirds of participants 204 (66.9%) have been in their current schools for between 1 and 5 years.

4.2 Causes of conflict

Results showed that personal factors play greater significant role in causing conflict among participants than structural factors [$\chi^2_{(13)} = 29.761$, $p = n.s$]. Predominant personal factors causing conflict include differences in perception, diversity of view and ethics and personalities.

Results from this study showed that personal factors play significant role in causing conflict than structural factors. The main personal factor that causes conflict according to findings of this study is differences in perception. This result affirms results of Obasan (2011), who in a study on impact of conflict management on corporate productivity found that the main source of conflict in organization relate to perception. The other causes of conflict identified in this study are diversity of views, personalities, emotions, communication barriers and differences in skills and abilities. This finding that differences in perception of teachers is a main cause of conflict is worth noting. This result is not very surprising because according to Pathak (2010) who after a study on how organizational conflict could be managed indicated that whenever there is some form of differences in opinion, there is the likelihood of conflict. While findings from this study ranked communication barriers as the fifth cause of conflict among teachers, other authors identified it as a main source of conflict. For instance, Edward and Walton (2000) ranked communication gap as the second elicitor of conflict among employees in libraries; Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) in a study on conflict management strategies and administrative effectiveness in Nigerian universities found communication gap to be the major cause of conflict and in an earlier study, Olorunsola (1997) found poor communication as a major source of conflict.

Structural factors that result in conflict include sharing common and limited resource, authority relationship, goal differences, status inconsistencies, high interdependence, jurisdictional ambiguity and specialization. Sharing of common and limited resources being the dominant cause of conflict affirms the outcome of a study on organizational conflict and its effect on organizational performance by Henry (2009) who found that the major cause of organizational conflict is limited resources and interdependence. Teachers compete for limited resources at school and as one does not get what he wants at the right time or quantity, it results in conflict. While this study identified differences in goals to be the third ranked cause of conflict. Amuhaya (2010) in a study on conflict resolution in organisations of public educational institutions in Kenya found that most conflicts in educational institutions are caused mainly by differences in goals. The creation of common goals between employees enhance social cohesion and interpersonal trust in organization (Ozkalp, Sungur & Ozdemir, 2009) and this may reduce conflict in organization.

4.3 Effects of conflict

The effects of conflict was measured using correlated t test analysis. Results on this are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlated t Test Analysis on Comparison between Positive and Negative Effects of Conflict

Teachers (n=305)					
Type of Effect	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	t	Sig
Positive	27.12	8.79			
Negative	31.17	14.75			
Total			304	3.431	.001

As depicted in Table 2, mean score recorded on positive effect of conflict is 27.12 with a standard deviation of 8.79. Mean score of negative effects on the other hand is 31.17 with a standard deviation of 14.75. These means were subjected to Correlated t test analysis and results revealed that a significant difference exist between positive and negative effects of conflict [$t_{(304)} = 3.431$, $p < .05$]. Mean score of negative effect (31.17) is higher than mean score of positive effects (27.12). This implies that conflict results in more negative effects than positive effects. Some of the negative effects respondents cited include waste of resources, lack of cooperation, increase hostility and aggressive behaviour, diverts energy for work, creates negative climate and lower staff morale. Positive effects identified include improve quality of decision, encourages generation of new ideas, motivates change, stimulates innovativeness/creativity and encourages in-depth investigation.

Respondents of this study are of the view that conflict has both positive and negative effects. This is in conformity with findings of Hotepo et al., (2010) and Amuhaya (2010). This implies that if conflict is well managed effectively it can positively affect teachers. However it was identified that respondents believe conflict results in more negative effects than positive effects. Some of the negative effects of conflict are waste of resources, lack of cooperation and low teacher morale. The positive effects they believe include improved quality of decision, generation of new ideas, motivate change and encourage in-depth investigation.

4.4 Effects of conflict on performance

Chi square analysis was used to examine the effects of conflict on performance. It was also found that conflict affects performance of teachers in various ways. Results on the effect of conflict on performance are presented in

Table 3.

Table 3. Chi Square Analysis of Comparison between Positive and Negative Effects of Conflict

Teachers (n=305)					
Areas of Work Affected	Positive	Negative	df	χ^2	Sig
Curriculum planning and organization	101(33)	83(27)			
Planning and organizing teaching	101(33)	157(52)			
Classroom management and organization	97(32)	153(50)			
Professional knowledge and attitude	104(34)	73(24)			
Assessment practices	98(32)	128(42)			
Grading, marking and giving feedback	107(35)	121(40)			
Use of assessment information	88(29)	140(46)			
Discipline and guidance	108(35)	146(48)			
Extra-curricular activities	84(28)	151(50)			
Home-school cooperation	71(23)	132(43)			
Links with external organization	70(23)	134(44)			
Staff relationship	112(37)	154(51)			
Teacher-student relationship	117(38)	134(44)			
Total			12	67.714	.000

Results in Table 3 revealed that negative effects of conflicts are significantly more and greater than positive effects [$\chi^2_{(12)} = 67.714$, $p = n.s.$]. Aspects of work which participants opined affected conflict positively include Curriculum planning and organizing and professional knowledge and attitude. Other aspects of work negatively affected by conflict include planning and organizing teaching, classroom management and organization, assessment practices, grading, marking and giving feedback, use of assessment information, discipline and guidance, extra-curricular activities, home-school cooperation, links with external organization, staff relationship and teacher-student relationship.

Participants were of the view that conflict affect work performance negatively but it is equally necessary at times. Unlike Adomi and Anie (2006) who, using survey and a descriptive design in a study to investigate patterns of conflict management in Nigerian University libraries, found that majority of respondents perceive conflict as positive, outcome of this study indicates that negative effects of conflicts are significantly more than the positive.

As Khan, Afzal and Rehman (2009) in a study on the impact of task conflict on employee performance indicated, employees' performance is adversely affected by conflict just as Henry (2000) indicated, outcome of this study also confirm that conflict has both positive and negative effects on organization and therefore if it is not properly managed will affect the organization adversely in terms of poor performance, lack of cooperation and wasting of resources.

4.5 Strategies in managing conflict

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to measure the conflict managing strategies. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of Conflict Management Strategies

Teachers (n=305)					
Management Strategy	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
Integrating	1.121	.092	.342	12.130	.000
Obliging	.917	.104	.264	8.794	.000
Dominating	.1.063	.090	.349	11.787	.000
Avoiding	.974	.090	.323	10.800	.000
Compromising	.702	.148	.145	4.731	.000

Results in Table 4, showed that the dominant conflict management strategy adopted by participants is Integrating [$t = 12.130$, $p < .05$]. This strategy controls 34.2% variability in conflict management among participants [$Beta = .342$].

The next dominant conflict management strategy adopted is Dominating [$t = 11.787$, $p < .05$]. Dominating as a conflict management strategy is responsible for 34.9% changes in conflict management among participants [$Beta = .349$]. This is followed by adoption of Avoiding as a conflict management strategy [$t = 10.800$]. It also controls 32.3% variability in conflict management among participants [$Beta = .328$]. The next major conflict management strategy adopted is Obliging [$t = 8.794$, $p < .05$]. Obliging controls 26.4% changes in

conflict management among participants [$\beta = .264$]. The least conflict management strategy adopted is Compromising [$t = 4.731, p < .05$]. Compromising is responsible for only 14.5% variability in conflict management among participants.

It is worth noting that a minimal level of conflict in school will help towards the achievement of its goals. Unnecessarily high level of conflict is dysfunctional and therefore needs to be managed. Outcome of the study show that respondents employ various strategies to deal with conflict in schools, with integration attracting the highest response, followed by dominating and avoidance. Integration allows parties in conflict confront the issues and supportively identify the problem, come up with alternative solutions and choose the most suitable one (Kreitner & Kiniki, 2004). This finding from the study corroborates that of Ozkalp, Sungur and Ozdemir (2008) who in a study aimed at determining Turkish managers' conflict style identified that the first style mostly used by managers is integrating. The adoption of this style by teachers is good and appropriate because according to Aycan Kanungo, Mendonca, Yu, Deller, Stahl, & Kurshid (2000) integrating style is the most desired conflict management style because it is most likely to result in a win-win solution. The use of this technique ensures long lasting impact since the fundamental cause of the problem is identified and addressed as such teachers and schools should therefore strive to maintain this style in managing conflict. While this study identified dominating as the second preferred strategy for managing conflict, an outcome of a study by Obasan (2011) listed it as a third option used in minimizing the incidence of conflict in organizations.

Avoidance which was ranked third corroborates the findings of a study by Hotepo et al. (2010), who in an empirical study of the effect of conflict on organizational effectiveness in Nigeria found avoidance to be the third preferred conflict management strategy after bargaining and collaborating as this study identified. According to Kreitner and Kiniki (2004) people who adopt avoidance is interested in self regardless of the impact or effect the outcome will have on other parties involved in the conflict. Contrary to the finding in this study which places avoidance as a third option in managing conflict, Henry (2009) and Ghaffar, Zaman and Naz (2012) in different studies found that avoidance was not given priority as an option in conflict management at all. The adoption of this strategy in managing conflict as found from this study is suitable because according to Appelbaum, Abdallah and Shapiro (1999) in certain circumstances managers may be wise to avoid conflict.

Unlike the results of this study which show that compromise is the least strategy adopted by teachers, results of a study conducted by Henry (2009) and Obasan (2011) showed that most conflicts in organizations are resolved using compromise. Also Ghaffar, Zaman, and Naz (2012) and Ozkalp, Sungur and Ozdemir, (2009) found that compromising approach is the second preferred style of principals for conflict in schools and managers respectively.

Results of the study show that respondents are of the view that more than one approach can be used in resolving conflict and this is in agreement with the result from a study by Henry (2009). Teachers therefore have a choice to select the most appropriate style in managing conflict in schools effectively considering the situation so that conflict will not have an adverse effect on the teacher's performance. Finally, participants were of the view that conflicts do affect/retard work performance but it is equally necessary at times and secondly conflict cannot be avoided at work places.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results, analysis and discussions, it can be concluded that conflict cannot be avoided and do exist in schools. The cause of conflict is categorised into two main factors –personal and structural. The major personal factors include differences in perception, personality, diversity of views and ethics. That of the structural factors responsible for conflict include sharing of common resources, authority relationship, goal differences and specialisation being the least.

Conflict has both positive and negative effects and therefore teachers and their heads should work towards achieving positive effects and minimising the negative effects of conflict.

6. Recommendation

In order to manage and minimise the negative effects of conflict on teachers, the following recommendations are proposed:

Given the fact that conflict plays a role towards teacher performance, GES must organise more workshops, seminars and conferences to educate teachers on matters related to causes and effects of conflict as well as the strategies available for its management. This will help them know more about the positive and negative impact conflict has and the strategies available for managing conflict to ensure conflict is minimised in the school.

In order to ensure teachers deal with conflict situations effectively, it is recommended that information should be disseminated to all teachers to prevent communication gap, which was identified to be one of the sources of conflict. Again, heads of schools should encourage open communication policy so that all teachers would have the right information at the right time and this will minimise conflict because as stated by Iravo

(2011) communication and training in conflict management are essential in effective management of conflict. He added that when schools open communication channels, conflict situations could be contained and prevented from degenerating into unmanageable conflicts that destroy productivity and unity among school members. In addition, proper communication procedures should be put in place to resolve conflict when they arise.

Employees compete for the limited resources which result in conflict and as such it is recommended that these resources should be increased, made available and distributed fairly and this is likely to reduce the competition and thus conflict in schools.

To manage conflict successfully in schools, clear procedures should be outlined and all staff made aware of it so that when any conflict arises the people involved can follow it to resolve the conflict.

7. Suggestions for further study

The topic has focused on causes and effect of conflict in the Tema metropolis of Ghana. It is recommended that further study be carried out in other areas of the Greater Accra region. Also, a comparative study between junior high schools and senior high school should be done to identify if any differences exist between teachers teaching at different levels in the education sector.

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