CONFLICT MANAGEMENT OF WOMEN PRINCIPALS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN HAMMANSKRAAL, GAUTENG

by

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I declare that **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT OF WOMEN PRINCIPALS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN HAMMANSKRAAL, GAUTENG** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE   DATE
(Mrs S M Kgomo)

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I dedicate this dissertation to all members of my family. They all steered me during my study.

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SUMMARY

The purpose for this study was to analyze conflict management according to the challenges experienced by the women principals in the Hammanskraal area in the Gauteng Province when they attempt to maintain superior- subordinate relationships in primary schools. The objectives of the study were identified as follows:

1. Literature investigation into the nature of conflict management and the feminist theoretical perspective regarding the under-representation of women in the higher managerial positions in the public institutions

2. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect information with regard to conflict management from a woman principal, two heads of the departments and two educators in a primary school in the Hammanskraal area, Gauteng Province. The findings supported the literature review that women principals are more effective in the area of conflict management than are the male principals.

3. The study has recommended that women should be afforded an opportunity to occupy the principalhood in the schools.

KEY WORDS

Conflict

Conflict management

Intra-individual conflict

Inter-personal conflict

Intergroup conflict

Strategy

Feminism

Collaborative style

Avoidance style

Accommodation style

Compromise

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) has influenced the formulation and implementation of quite a number of related legislation which ensure that women are no longer discriminated against due to their sexual orientation. There is a new breed of women managers and or principals through out the country.

Being managers though, women principals are faced with challenges which require them to be innovative, skilled and knowledgeable in the public management of the school. Women principals are expected to command good communication and conflict management skills in order to maintain healthy working relationships in the school environment. Women principals are particularly good in supporting colleagues, and this quality therefore defines them as being transformational leaders who are visionary and democratic.

Conflict management is a component of public management which must be thoroughly articulated in order to guide newly appointed principals on the effective processes of maintaining good working relationships with the heads of the departments (HOD), teachers, the learners, the parents, the school governing body (SGB) and other stakeholders.

Effective conflict management ensures the smooth functioning of the school. It is along this requirement that this research study aims at analysing conflict management of women principals in superior-subordinate relationships in primary schools in order to suggest recommendations necessary to improve it.

1.2   BACKGROUND

Women continue to be under-represented within the educational leadership and other areas of executive management (Reynolds, 2002:51). Feminists in Australia, New Zealand and Scandinavia have previously relied upon state-centric equal management opportunity claims to redress the under-representation of women in leadership. Research on women's management styles suggest that woman principals are more caring, collaborative, communicative, consensus oriented and student curriculum focused than man principals (Reynolds, 2002:60). Moreover, women's style of leadership tends to be more transformational than authoritarian. Transformational leaders engage others in decision- making, they share power and information, and in this process they as well provide a type of leadership that involves all parties involved in a conflict (Sandra & Gloria, 1996). According to Kruger (1996:454), women are more oriented towards innovation than men.

Problems faced by women managers who are operating in male-dominated organizations have recently attracted the attention of social scientists from a wide variety of academic disciplines. Central to these analysis is a concern about women managers, their exercise of power and power relationships they develop with colleagues. Women managers are, for a number of complex reasons generally denied access to the levels and kinds of power

that are necessary for the successful performance of their roles. Similarly, even when women managers acquire a measure of power, they are constrained by societal norms and intra-organisational pressures in ways that make it difficult if not impossible for them to successfully exercise their power (Jeong, 2000:69).

Women in educational administration have had to face a number of deterrents that men do not encounter (Grogan, 1996:25). This is due to the reason that gendered subject positions are constituted in various ways by images of how one is expected to look and behave in certain situation. Women leaders were seen either as exceptional women or as deficient men. Women are morally mature and are well able to make decisions which are based on ethical considerations.

Despite the fact that most teachers are women, the large majority of administrators employed within school districts are men (Reynolds, 2002:51). This indicates a condition that where most decision making occurs, it is usually dominated by men. Despite many positive developments within the South African context, women remain disadvantaged in terms of career advancement because management of public schools is still dominated by men. Women principals showed a greater concern with individual differences in the learners than did the male principals. Women principals were also concerned with the social and emotional development of the child (Davidson & Burke, 1994:148). Women have been characterized as tractable subordinates, compliant, different from men, desiring pleasant social relations, consequently afraid of conflict and were holistically task- oriented in nature. On the other hand, women have long been troubled by these myths

about the notion of their leadership and the images it conveys to the communities in general (Blackmore, 1999).

Within the South African context, management has traditionally been male-dominated in that most senior positions responsible for decision making were reserved for men. Equal opportunity policies which were developed immediately after the enactment of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) have led to a significant increase in the representation of women in the high level management positions (Wolpe, Quinlan & Martinez, 1997:195). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is based on the principles of employment equity and human dignity.

1.3   CONFLICT AND WOMEN EDUCATION MANAGERS

Conflict is an established factor in the organizational life. Conflict is a condition which results when two or more individuals' ideas clash and or when people compete over scarce resources. "When individuals or groups in the organization clash over some issue that, at least to them, is important, conflict occurs" (Hodgetts, 1990:339). Research suggests that conflict may have both functional and dysfunctional impacts. This was supported by Hodgetts (1990:340) who contends that "conflict is not always bad, but when it leads to a deterioration of cooperation, trust and loyalty among the personnel," it becomes bad.

Conflict is a complex component of organizational behaviour and is affected and regulated by a host of other factors. Socio-economic background of individuals is such a factor which must be considered in the educational institutions. Conflict is not always

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bad, but should be viewed as a given set of conditions which women leaders must always encounter in their daily tasks as managers (Whitfield, 1994:4). In fact conflict management demands the protection of the leaders and those around them with a dramatically increased understanding of the conflict resolution skills and procedures. Situations where conflict is absent are always characterised by the dominance of a certain group by the other.

In today's complex and ever changing world, conflict is a fact of life (Whitfield, 1994:4). Conflict can cause a great deal of injury and or a great deal of good, depending on the management style of an organization (Whitfield, 1994:4-5). And yet, conflict between supervisors and subordinates in organizations is inevitable. Whether it is functional or dysfunctional, conflict management is determined by the conflict management strategies which are designed to address it. Thus, conflict management strategies used by some managers seek to reduce conflict, others seek to eliminate it and yet others seek to increase it.

The management of conflict is absolutely essential to the effectiveness and competitiveness of organizations. The lack of proficient conflict management has a pervasive detrimental impact on relationships which develop within the organizations and the productivity they fulfill. Well managed conflict is a key to creativity, communication and goal achievement (Dipaola & Hoy, 2001:239). Conflict is required for the establishment and maintenance of trust, which are both the glue that holds teams together and the oil that facilitates their functioning. Without effective conflict management, the trust that glues the organization together and the oil that lubricates its operation do not develop. The absence of an effective

conflict management results in the organization limping and failing to achieve the ranks of the excellent (Mayer, 1995:80).

Women principal's leadership styles are less hierarchical, more democratic and usually communicate better with teachers (Blackmore, 1995:56). The leadership styles are in accord with the new management approaches which rely mostly on the holistic, collaborative and non-hierarchical leadership qualities. These leadership qualities have been identified as characteristic to women principals (Sally, 1997:353). Researchers have noted that men are somewhat more competitive in conflict management, while women on the other hand, prefer to avoid conflict (Kruger, 1996:457). According to Shautz (1995:213), female principals are sensitive to personality clashes, intuitive about possible problems and work hard at maintaining relationships within the organizations. Shautz (1995:213) continues to mention that female principals have greater preference of the activities which are related to instructional leadership and communication and they tend to avoid authoritarian solutions. This characteristic defines women principals as more competent leaders than men principals are, because Hodgetts (1990:306) has written that "leaders who engage in authoritarian leadership tend to be heavily work-centered, with much emphasis given to task accomplishment and little to the human element." These leaders have a limitation in that they view workers as some sort of factors necessary for production than as individuals in their own entities. Shautz (1995:213) contends that women principals tend to encourage the empowerment of teachers, involve teachers in the decision making process and tend to provide immediate feedback on performance in a collaborative style of leadership.

1.4   GENDER EQUITY REPORT

The previous South Africa dispensation was discriminatory, in that Africans were not provided adequate socio-economic opportunities. Women were also not given the equal opportunities as their counterparts, men. Since the enactment of the Constitution for the Republic of South Africa, discriminatory laws were eliminated from the society. The Bill of rights contained in the Constitution for the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996, Section 9(1)-(5)) distances the state and its institutions from any forms of discriminating against people on the ground of their race, sex, religion and others. Gender equality at the work place is enforced by a legislation called the Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998) and as a result, South African women are currently being represented in the higher management positions in different public sectors, including the schools.

1.5   PROBLEM FORMULATION

Based on the background given so far, this study investigates the conflict management strategies which women principals in primary schools in South Africa apply in order to maintain the superior-subordinate relationships. The broad research question can be formulated as follows:

- How do women principals in primary schools manage conflict in the superior- subordinate relationships?

The following sub-problems are formulated:

- What does literature review illustrate about the women in the educational leadership and their management styles in the conflict management?
- How does a woman principal in a primary school at Hammanskraal, Gauteng Province resolve conflict within the superior- subordinate relationship?
- What are the recommendations which can be drawn from the study with regard to the improvement of conflict management in the school environment?

1.6   AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The research is aimed at exploring the strategies used by women principals in managing conflict in order to maintain the superior-subordinate relationship in the primary schools.

The study aims to:

- Investigate the literature regarding women in educational leadership and their management styles in conflict management;
- Explore the experience a woman principal in a primary school at Hammanskraal, Gauteng Province with regard to conflict management in the superior- subordinate relationships, and
- Make conclusions and recommendations for the effective conflict management in order to improve the leadership qualities of women principals.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research method was used in this inquiry. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:3) described qualitative research method as a design which typically investigates behaviour when it naturally occurs in non-contrived situations. As it has already been reported above, investigation of the problem was conducted by means of both a literature overview and an empirical investigation. Literature study is meant to gain a broad overview of the phenomenon, which in this regard, is conflict management. Literature study also provides a framework for the empirical investigation.

Purposive sampling is used to select the participants who are conversant with the topic under discussion. In this regard, one female principals, two heads of the departments and two educators from a particular primary schools in Hammanskraal were selected as the participants who could provide this study with rich information related to the conflict management styles of the women principals in the superior- subordinate relationship in primary schools. This female principal was selected on the basis of her experience of 8 years in the position. Data collection strategies for this study were individual interviews with the principal, the heads of departments and the teachers, respectively. The technique of data collection include semi-structured interviews and the use of field notes.

Data analysis for this study, on the other hand, was conducted through a thorough study of both the field notes and interview transcripts. The transcripts were reduced through a procedure known as coding which will be explained in detail in the chapter on research design.

1.8   LIMITATIONS

Since the research is limited to a small sample which of course is typical of the qualitative research, its findings cannot be generalized. However, the findings do suggest patterns that are useful and understandable.

1.9   CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1 serves a general introduction of the study. It includes problem formulation, aims and methodology of the study.

Chapter 2 outlines with the definition and the conceptualization of conflict management.

Chapter 3 outlines conflict resolution according to the feminist theoretical perspective approach.

Chapter 4 discusses the research design which was used for the study. The researcher's aim is to observe and interview a woman principal, two heads of the departments and two educators concerning their modes of maintaining healthy working relationships at schools.

Chapter 5 presents the findings for the study.

Chapter 6 provides the conclusions and recommendations for the study.

1.10 CONCLUSION

The success of gender equity reform lies primarily in providing women an opportunity to compete for managerial positions in the organizations. Access to these leadership positions will enable them to exercise the effective conflict management skills and strategies. Women principals should be trained to manage conflict in optimal ways. Women have the capacity to manage conflicts as they develop in the organizations due to the reason that they are able to implement the participatory or problem solving models which are effective in handling conflict. Conflict should always be identified and accordingly managed so that its destructiveness to the organizational processes is prevented. Dealing with conflicts which develop in the superiors- subordinate relationships is not a simple task. It is the most difficult challenge which requires managers, especially the woman managers to acquire adequate training in the area of conflict management.

CHAPTER 2

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

2.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher has defined conflict management as one of the components of management. Conflict management is a managerial function which must be equally treated with other functions such as the following: leading/directing, planning, communication, staffing, controlling and budgeting. Conflict management in its own right is a complex entity which must be conceptualised accordingly. In this regard, this chapter examines the literature concerning constructive conflict management in the work place as a means to promote individual and organisational learning and growth. The chapter will examine the nature of conflict management through a number of its respective concepts.

In an attempt to do so, this chapter is divided into a number of sections as follows:

- Conflict management
- Conceptualization of conflict
- Definitions of conflict
- Theoretical perspectives of conflict
- Classification of conflicts
- Conflicts in the work place: an example
- Strategies for the elimination of conflicts at the work place

2.2   CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management is a concept which is composed of two constructs, namely, conflict and management. Conflict shall be detailed later whereas management maintains that the activities of an organization are accordingly coordinated, planned and executed in a manner which produces the required and expected results. Good management is able to provide the communities with services and products which they have paid for (Stevenson, 1999:15). The author (1999:15) continues to state that "in every case, the operations manager must coordinate the use of resources through the management process of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling." When these processes have been accordingly achieved, then proper management is resultant. Management is the process which is conducted by a single entity, usually at the top of the organization, in order to address the complexity of the organization in performing its different activities which are intended for the improvement of the quality of life of the communities.

Conflict management on the other hand, is the process through which management encourages the interaction of differing knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the effective running of organizations. Conflict management involves negotiation which can simply mean bringing diverse groups into deliberating on the problems of the organization. Management of conflict is absolutely essential to the effectiveness and competitiveness of organization because "the lack of proficient conflict management has a pervasive detrimental impact on productivity and career fulfillment" (Mayer, 1995:80).

Conflict management typically focuses on the armed aspects of the conflict towards bringing the fighting to an end, limiting the spread of the conflict and thus containing it. In this instance, conflict management must be viewed as a process aimed at bringing a consensus between the conflicting parties.

Conflict management is necessary for the interpersonal relationship management in the work place. Managers must always ensure that the interpersonal relationship among the employees is maintained because according to Kuye, Thornhill and Fourie (2002:158), this relationship has the ability to maintain and improve the employee's feelings of self-worth and competence, it gives feedback on specific actions and their respective effects, it ensures that employees use the appropriate consequences in order to manage their actions, it provides employees with clarity with regards to the requirement of their jobs and that it clarifies the results and measurement criteria with regard to their tasks. This relationship brings forth a positive working environment in the work place.

Conflict management is a communicative process because it attempts to understand the sources, types of conflict and their impacts upon the work environment. D'OoSteerlinck and Broekaert (2003:222) contend that managing conflict constructively and developing effective conflict resolution procedures encourage the development of values, attitudes, knowledge and civic standards in the institution. People usually conflict each other immediately they perceive that they have differences. In the conflict management analysis, public managers are expected to facilitate harmony between people with different views and cultural standing. Uline, Tschannen-Moran, and Perez (2003:783) say that effective conflict management is a prerequisite to management because it "breathes

life and energy into relationships and production." It is true that parties who are engaged in a friction have limited time for the positive production of organizations.

Managers must be able to identify the possibility of conflict and manage it before it becomes destructive. Proper management of conflict can minimize the negative effects and maximize the positive effects of an institution. It is also true that the influences of conflict have a significant impact upon the organizations and may result to either positive or negative outcomes. Conflict must be recognized as the underlying power that stimulates innovation. Innovation is a condition through which people develop new effective strategies for solving problems. Most managers regard innovation as a threat. Innovation in fact improves production in an organization.

Conflict management is a binding and an enabling force within an organization. Thus "without effective conflict management the trust that glues the organization together and oils the operation does not overlap. In its absence, the organization limps along and fails to achieve the ranks of the excellent" (Mayer, 1995:80). It is evident that effective conflict management is required for cohesive and smooth functioning of the organizations.

Conflict can only be explained or analyzed in relation to the context in which it occurs. In essence then, conflict management involves a determination of whether there is a need for the level of a conflict to be increased or decreased, identifying the type of conflict involved, whether it is individual or group, and then stimulating or resolving it accordingly. Conflict management is also a process that aims at the regulation of conflict and its avoidance.

Since conflict has positive as well as negative consequences, it must be analyzed and managed carefully. The conflict- handling style of the manager also determines how conflict is managed. Conflict, often unsettling, is a neutral part of collective human experience. It can leave participants ill at ease, that is why it is often avoided and suppressed. Conflict is present within our schools whether we like it or not. Educators must find ways to legitimize critique and controversy within organizational life (Uline et al, 2003:783).

Finally conflict management can be defined as "the struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals" (Uline et al 2003:785). Conflict management is viewed as communicative behavior (Henkin, Cistone & Dee 2000: 146). It includes understanding of the sources and types of conflict as well as the impacts they have upon an organization. It inherently occurs in life and must be constructively managed.

As has already been mentioned, conflict management is a concept which is made of two dimensions. Its second construct, namely; conflict is conceptualized in the succeeding section.

2.3   CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CONFLICT

This section conceptualizes conflict through its definitions, its theoretical perspectives, its classification, and the strategies for its elimination.

2.3.1 Definition of conflict

The word conflict is derived from a Latin word *confligere* which means to strike together (Barash & Webel, 2002:26). Conflict must be viewed as a disequilibrium, a disturbance and a problem. It is a condition in which a minimum of two parties strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources. It is also proper to perceive conflict as a form of competition over scarce resources. Conflict can be defined as opposition or antagonism towards other individuals or things (Hodgetts, 1993:394). Conflict occurs when the needs of individuals in the organization are at odds.

When conflict is viewed from a competitive perspective, the researcher is of the opinion that the parties to a conflict must be defined as rivals. Rivals or competitors "by contrast are those who seek to obtain something that is present in limited supply, such as water, food, mates or status" (Barash & Webel, 2002:26). The factor which influences conflict in this regard is scarcity because if the resources were in abundance, there would be no competition and therefore no conflict at all. Barash and Webel (2002:26) advise that the rivals or competitors must not be seen as enemies.

Hodgetts (1990:339) has also defined that "when individuals or groups in the organization clash over some issue that at least to them, is important, conflict occurs." This definition contains a feature of competition.

When the researcher mentions the word parties, this does not mean that conflict only occurs between two persons on their individual basis. Conflict can occur between groupings on their

individual basis. Barash and Webel (2002:154) have identified that human beings are social creatures with powerful tendencies to aggregate into groups and somehow to distinguish members of each group for other comparable groups. Groups are regarded as parties in this view because like persons on their individual basis, they share similar language, customs, patterns of behaviour, mythology and religious beliefs and practices. Conflict in groups can have many different outcomes.

Conflict is a situation where there is a disharmony between the parties who share a common organization, such as for example, workers and employers. Conflict occurs when ideas differ dramatically amongst people (Kuye et al, 2002:164).

DuBrin (1994:128-141) thinks that conflict is synonymous to terms such as, controversy, strive, battle, quarrel and incompatibility. He continues to define conflict as a condition which occurs when two or more parties perceive mutually exclusive goals, values or events. According to DuBrin (1994:130), conflict occurs in the organisations due to a number of reasons, such as, for example, when there is a competition over limited resources, when parties in the same organisation share different objectives, and when there are some aggressive and abrasive personalities.

Achinstein (2002:4) says that conflict occurs in situations where individuals and or groups experience each others' views and behaviours as different; conflict can occur when divergent beliefs and actions are exposed; and that conflict is also a process whereby individuals or groups come to sense that there is a difference and or dilemma and thus begin to identify the nature of their difference of beliefs and action. Conflict is a "social interaction

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process, whereby individuals or groups come to perceive of themselves at odds" (Achinstein, 2002:4). Uline et al (2003:785) agree that conflict can occur when two persons interact and are found to be having different interest. Conflict therefore occurs when the action of a person is interfering, obstructing or in some way making other's behavior less effective.

Conflict is neither good nor bad. Conflict can be a positive force that facilitates needed change.

Whitfield (1994:4-5) identified the positive aspects of conflict when he wrote that conflicts enable us to learn something more about ourselves, conflicts bring about the greatest acts of courage and heroism, conflicts resolution displays our human potential, and that the need to resolve conflicts has a tendency of bringing people together because "communities can be brought together in a unique way when the people concerned have a common purpose." In this context therefore, the appearance of a conflict in a situation becomes in itself a mortar or a glue that holds people together. Conflict is necessary in every organization because it "is absolutely necessary. Without it we just couldn't get the job done" (Whitfield, 1994:10). Functional conflict is a positive conflict because it is associated with progress and achievement. Positive conflict is according to Deutsch (2005:5) called an approach-approach in which an individual is faced with two positive valences of approximately equal strength to choose from. This is not a problematic type of conflict.

A negative conflict on the other hand, could also be viewed as a competitive process which Deutsch (2005:6) maintains has the following characteristics: communication is usually impaired,

obstruction and lack of helpfulness which lead to mutual negative attitudes and mistrust, parties are unable to share the work, members tend to experience disagreements and critical rejection of ideas proposed by others and that conflicting parties seek to enhance their own power and at the same time opting to reduces the power of the other. A win-lose conflict according to Deutsch (2005:19), involves outwitting, misleading, seducing, blackmailing and various other forms of the black arts. This type of conflict is usually featured with forms of coercion in that people are forced into selecting the negative choice because of the pressure they experience from the powerful parties. A negative conflict was called an avoidance –avoidance entity in which an individual is faced with two equally negative values to choose from. Opposite to the functional conflict is a dysfunctional conflict which is negative in nature. Dysfunctional conflict induces stress on individuals. According to Whitfield (1994:11), dysfunctional conflict is a term which is "applied to a type of conflict which prevents progress, avers achievement and suspends success. It is a destructive conflict." A dysfunctional conflict is condition which purports to disrupt the smooth functioning of organizations.

Mismanaged conflict can erupt in violence, consequently resulting in the destruction of the entire environment. Conflict can cause a great deal of injury or a great deal of good, depending upon its management. Conflicts, whether positive or negative must be managed as soon as they develop. Whitfield (1994:11) has advised that "we must manage every conflict, whether it turns out to be functional or dysfunctional from the outset. We simply cannot foresee the eventual outcome of a conflict whilst it is in its embryonic stage." This entails that a problem must be attacked at the moment it starts to develop. Conflicts which are let to grow

become issues which cost organizations large sums of money in the future. A conflict, according to the researcher is like a small snake which you feel it is not worth killing, whereas you forget it might sting you in the near future. In the same vein, Whitfield (1994:12) advises that "our problem is that no one really knows whether a conflict is going to be functional or dysfunctional in advance of the event. We can of course, avoid having to anticipate an uncertain future by controlling and managing every conflict and managing it properly from its inception." In this regard therefore, managers in the organizations must avoid the loose/loose; win/loose circumstances in order to achieve the most popular win/win scenario.

Whitfield (1994) contends that a real cause of conflict is misunderstanding which is an element of poor communication. This form of conflict occurs when people, that is, the sender and the recipient of information, cannot communicate in a precise manner. Poor communication causes misunderstanding in that (i) people's values are not understood by the others, (ii) different people's interests diverge instead of converging and that (iii) some people tend to misunderstand others' personalities, this being evident in that "people often become emotional and defensive when they lack information. They make poor judgements under stress, rather than wait for a time when they can think more rationally" (Whitfield , 1994:9). The very failure of understanding the other party is a most important cause of conflict.

Whitfield (1994:18) has mentioned that conflict of ideals usually occurs for "even identical twins, no matter how close, will have different thoughts, different ideas and perhaps, different beliefs." Usually workers at a workplace fight and or are engaged into

conflict due to the reason that they share different experiences, beliefs, ideas and interests. In the context of these differences, people tend to fight one another. Indeed conflict is an unwanted condition within every organization. Conflict according to Whitfield (1994:13) induces individuals to anxiety which is a condition of fearfulness and can be associated with the following feelings: heart racing or palpitations, dizziness or light headedness, butterflies in the stomach, trembling hands, dry mouth, flushes and sweating, wanting to go to the toilet and rapid breathing. Conflict must be managed at its earliest stages of development in order to save employees from being anxious.

Dipaola and Hoy (2001:239) agree with their statement which contends that "conflict is necessary for true involvement, empowerment and democracy. It is an inevitable reality of organizational life. It will not disappear nor should it be ignored, indeed it is on the daily menu of the school administration." Uline et al (2003:785) state that conflict in organizations has been conceived of as pathology to be diagnosed and treated. Managers therefore must not seek to avoid or suppress the advent of conflict in their work environments. Instead, managers must encourage the subordinates to vent up their frustrations. In this instance, they can be able to identify the sources and types of conflicts in their organizations, and ultimately manage to formulate the effective strategies for the elimination of conflicts.

Conflict is omnipresent because even though its symptoms may not be recognized, it is always present. "In any organizational settings, individuals consciously or subconsciously are involved in roles of conflict as they compete for resources, recognition and rewards" (Hoeslcher & Comer, 2002:523). This indicates that in real life

situation, organizations cannot experience a state of conflictlessness, because there is no total equilibrium and/ or harmony in any given organization. Organizational change leads to conflict and stimulates organizational change (Hoelscher & Comer, 2002:529). In academe, as in any other organization, conflict should be expected.

The researcher selects to suggest that conflict is a fact of life. The inevitability of conflict in our daily living was recorded by Whitfield (1994:4) when he said that "conflict is more than simple disagreement. Throughout our lives we all encounter conflict in one form or another." According to this author, conflict could be defined as a state of opposition or hostilities, a fight or a struggle, a clashing of opposed principles and "the opposition of incompatible wishes or needs within an individual and the distress resulting from this" (Whitfield, 1994:4).

Conflict can be a force with enormous destructive potential. Conflicts are fuelled by destructive actions which are aimed at reducing the influence of the others' side and enhancing the influence of the powerful's side. An example of the destructive potential of conflict is an industrial strike. Big companies lose millions of Rands on a daily basis when their employees engage into strikes. Strike started as conflict. It is therefore required that managers identify the possibilities of conflict and resolve them within a short space of time.

Conflicts in the work place emerge in the form of grievances. Grievance is defined as any dissatisfaction or feeling of injustice which is experienced by employees at their workplace. A grievance is a form of complaint between the employee and his/her immediate

supervisor which is presented in a written form. A grievance is a feeling of dissatisfaction within an employee. This entails that whereas complaints are informal and regarded as unimportant; grievances are formal and must be attended with seriousness. Of importance in this analysis is that grievances develop into conflicts and the latter are more destructive to the organisation and the employees and employers in general than grievances are.

2.4   THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF CONFLICT

The theoretical perspectives of conflict help us understand that concept in much detail. Theories are guidelines which help us to organize our explanation, interpretation and prediction about a phenomenon under study (Papalia & Olds, 1992:21). In this study, the researcher discusses the theoretical perspectives of conflict as follows: human nature and violence, frustration- aggression hypothesis, psychoanalytic perspective, relative deprivation, basic needs and identity formation.

2.4.1   Human nature and violence

This theoretical perspective of conflict explains that some individuals are violent in nature. Other workers tend to bully others at the workplace. Boucaut (2003:150) defines workplace bullying as "the persistent ill treatment of an individual at work by one or more other persons." Workplace bullying has a negative impact upon the victim and that it is a repeated activity. This condition occurs when people coerce others into doing something against their will. Another personality classified under natural violence is domineering. A domineering person was defined by Jay (1995:92) as person who often picks on the weakest person around and stand

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up for him/her and that "domineering people tend to try and shout other people down." If this behaviour is not identified earlier during its development, it can cause stress on other employees. Jay (1995:92) continues to contribute another personality which he calls aggressive type which is the type of person that can upset others because "aggressive people tend to think and act fast, and they are often insecure and need recognition and personal power." Aggressive is another form of stress and as a consequence it must be identified and dealt with accordingly.

Deutsch (2005:6) has identified the features of violence which he contends violence "stimulates the view that the solution of a conflict can only be imposed by one side on the other, which in turn leads to using coercive tactics such as psychological as well as physical threats and violence." In this regard, conflict could be viewed as a power struggle between the opposing parties.

2.4.2 Frustration- aggression hypothesis

Frustration occurs when the needs of an individual are blocked such as for example "the worker who is unable to accomplish a task because of interference by other employees or because of a failure of the equipment that is provided for doing the job" (Hodgetts, 1993:394). Frustrated individuals tend to be angry because "anger is often triggered by the threatened loss of something greatly valued" (Bowen, 2005:4). Angry persons are difficult people to work within organizations. Managers need to focus their clients towards the constructive ways of dealing with anger. Deutsch (2005:19) advises that clients should become aware of what makes them very angry, learn the healthy and unhealthy ways for expressing their anger, they must learn the ways of actively channeling their anger

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in a non-violent manner and or in a manner that is likely to evoke violence. In this way, anger could be successfully suppressed.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis is a free-floating hostility which can target anything at any time. This hypothesis holds that we become frustrated and feel hostile whenever we are prevented from reaching our goals.

An excessive level of frustration is accumulated when a person is hindered from pursuit of a goal. When someone blocks us from obtaining a goal, we tend to be frustrated and as such conflicts occur. This is due to the reason that people are goal-oriented animals who naturally become aggravated when they are prevented from achieving what they desire. When we are blocked from achieving the goals and or commodities, we normally vent our frustration towards the people and or organism which blocked us. In order to explain frustration in detail, Hodgetts (1990:339) said that "a person who sees his or her efforts blocked often becomes uneasy, anxious or nervous. A worker may be unable to accomplish a task because of interference by other employees or failure of equipment." The most common form of frustration in the work place in the South African context is a condition through which most people are denied access to the socio-economic, political and cultural resources due to their racial, sexual, physical and other orientations. This is a condition called discrimination. Discrimination must be avoided at all cost at the work place. Under the statute law, the employer is restricted to avoid discrimination on the ground of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, race, disability, non-trade union membership, religious affiliation, educational level and others.

The South African government has passed legislation which is aimed at protecting peoples' rights from being violated by management at the workplace. Various Acts were designed according to the primary legislation, namely, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). The Constitution is designed to protect every citizen from being discriminated against. Special stipulations related to this protection are included in the Bill of Rights contained in Chapter 2 of the constitution.

The most effective method to deal with discrimination at the workplace has been identified as affirmative action process. Carroll and Buchholtz (2000:534) define affirmative action as "taking of positive steps to hire and promote people from groups previously discriminated against." It is also added that "all levels of government will be expected to implement a policy of affirmative action to ensure that the Public Service is representative of all the people of South Africa, in racial, gender and geographical terms" (RDP White Paper: Discussion Document, 1994:42). Affirmative action simply means that certain categories of the society which were denied access to the high positions in the organizations such as blacks, women, the disabled and others must be afforded the opportunities to occupy such positions.

The South African government has developed special legislation to address discrimination at the work place, namely, the Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998). The Act aims at addressing the main areas of concern such as discrimination, affirmative action, sexual harassment, medical testing (including HIV) and psychological testing. The main purpose of the Act is to promote equality in the workplace by creating equal opportunities and fair

treatment of the people through the elimination of unfair discrimination and implementing the affirmative action.

Equity maintains that all people must be treated in an equal manner. Equity addresses a condition where people may not receive preferences on the basis of the racial, sexual, religious, economic, social, political backgrounds and others forms of deprivation. Equity maintains that "all candidates should be measured against the same objective criteria, with due regard to the need for diversity and representativity in the Public Service" (Kuye et al, 2002:151). All people must be seen as equals before the law.

2.4.3 Psychoanalytic perspective

In an attempt to explain the psychoanalytic theoretical perspective of conflict, Jeong (2000:68) says that "unthinkable actions can be induced by a dehumanised image of the enemy reinforced by nationalstic propaganda." This perspective maintains that once a person views the other party as an enemy, his/her unconscious mind blocks the possibility of bringing the consciousness in harmonizing with the other. "The likeness between ourselves and our enemies which is perceived unconsciously must be denied and never permitted to enter our consciousness in order to keep our projections, externalization and displacement stable and in identity of ourselves cohesive" (Jeong, 2000:68). This theoretical perspective of conflict maintains that conflicts are caused by the stereotypes which we project upon others. We become highly disintegrated with each other immediately we perceive ourselves as different from others.

Stereotypes occur in the workplace when we regard others who hold different methodologies and knowledge, skills and attitudes as threats to our well-being. This suggests that we experience a lack of understanding diversity. This concept maintains that everybody has the right to be different without the fear of being harmed and or isolated by the others.

Diversity is simply explained as a change which Lombard (1991:74) says "strategies for change can include negotiation, canvassing, social protest and the use of mass media." Drake (2001:105) says that "the political landscape is becoming more variegated and devolved" and as such, conflict resolution practitioners should always be armed with relevant intervening strategies. They must encourage people to be different from others.

2.4.4 Relative deprivation

Relative deprivation results from the combined effect of rising expectations and a lack of progress towards demands for a better life, and it is also the actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities (Jeong, 2000:69). If much is expected from the person's effort and performance, and the person finds him-/herself lacking the capability to achieve the expectations, he/she manifests the relative deprivation conflict. This explanation is mostly evident in children born from affluent parents, when such children fail to pursue life in the same manner their parents did, they manifest conflict through self-denial and self-destruction. Most of these children end being alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes and so on.

If we expect others to perform extensively, we should be able to identify their personality statuses. Personality is one such factor which relates to the concept that people are inclined to act in a certain manner when given tasks that are beyond their expertise. Personality disorders are the cause of conflict. Hodgetts (1993:94) has defined that "the relatively stable set of characteristics and tendencies that determine similarities and differences between people is termed personality." People who tend to exhibit different personalities experience conflicting attitudes to each other. This is due to the reason that personality has a basis from the forces such as heredity, culture, social class and family relations.

2.4.5 Basic needs

Abraham Maslow is a noted psychologist who contributed the needs hierarchy to our base of knowledge. According to him, the most fundamental of all needs are physiological which we call the human basic needs. "Some common examples are food, clothing and shelter. A person deprived of everything would want to satisfy these basic needs first" (Hodgetts, 1993:44). The basic needs are always scarce commodities and this condition causes conflict as people tend to compete each other over them. Deutsch (1992:10) has also indicated that where there is a competition over resources, people tend to coerce, threat and even deceive others. This causes conflict.

We cannot live without the provision of the basic needs. These needs differ from the wants which we can live without. Jeong (2000:70) mentions that "the satisfaction of basic needs is required for human development as well as survival of human beings in both physical and social terms." Without the basic needs we are

transformed into dead organisms. And yet, the supply of the basic needs in our daily lives is in scarcity. We are therefore impelled to compete with each other for these basic needs. "The struggle to satisfy basic needs is a key motivational factor behind human behaviour and social interaction" (Jeong, 2000:71). Conflicts therefore occur in situations where people compete over limited resources.

2.4.6   Identity formation

Korsgaard, Brodt and Sapienza (2005:42) view identity formation in line with the concept of social identity which they define "is that aspect of a person's self-concept that is determined by her/his membership in a particular group." Individuals belong to different social groupings such as political, religious, social or work, which they tend to determine themselves in terms of their membership in them. Korsgaard et al (2005:37) define that identification "refers to the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of their membership in a particular group, is influenced by a wide array of contextual and process factors." This aspect maintains that individuals feel secure when they interact with others within their particular groups of affiliation.

Jeong (2000:71) explains that the concepts of primordialism and social constructivism describe the process of group identity formation as well as forces driving the need for identity. The group is formed by the common members of a community who normally share attributes such as language, customs, kinship, beliefs, norms, values, history, traditions, and others, these attributes being utilized when distinguishing one group from the other. Members of a particular group regard members of the other group as different

from them and this fuels conflicts. Sources of group violence can be attributed to a lack of security, suppression of autonomy and identity and an unequal distribution of life chances (Jeong, 2000:65). As an example, some South African communities are found to be practising xenophobia, this being a condition of regarding foreigners as wicked and cruel, and regarding them as responsible for the high rate of unemployment and other social conditions within the society.

The researcher has exposed that the theoretical perspectives of conflict are guidelines which are used in viewing the concept in different ways. These guidelines are also used to classify conflict in a number of classifications which are discussed in the succeeding section.

2.5   CLASSIFICATION OF CONFLICT

It is common knowledge that conflict occurs due to a number of factors and therefore can be classified in a number of classes.

There are no conflicts which are entirely similar. In this context, there are rules, norms and understandings that try to equalize conflicts so that they can be treated in similar ways. In this fashion, the classifications of conflicts enable us to view the typologies of the concept into classes. There are two broad classification of conflict, namely, the judicial and public administration which are both concerned with the preservation of the status quo and the maintenance of existing institutions, respectively (Jeong, 2000:34). In the public management paradigm, we have four types of conflict, namely, intra-individual conflict, interpersonal conflict, intergroup

conflict and organizational conflict which are discussed in this section.

2.5.1 Intra- individual conflict

Intra-individual conflict can be defined as a struggle which takes place within an individual. When expectations are placed upon a person who is incapable of achieving the goals and or objectives, intra-individual conflict occurs. Intra-individual conflict is evident when too much is expected from the individual whilst undermining the resources available to the person. Jay (1995:98) identified the unfair workload as another cause of this type of conflict. Indeed when individuals feel that their self-esteem needs are threatened, they tend to become violent. Esteem is much more psychological in nature in that people feel they are not respected if they are looked down upon by others (Hodgetts, 1993:46).

A conflict which is manifested within an individual is called an internal conflict. "Internal conflict differs from external conflict in that it deals with opposing positions within a single individual" (Whitfield, 1994:31). Intra-individual conflict was also called an internal conflict by Deutsch (2005:23) who defined it as "a way of blaming the other for one's own inadequacies, difficulties and problems so that one can avoid confronting the necessity of changing oneself." The internal conflict is a condition when an individual is faced with conflicting choices within him/herself. This person is unable to choose right from wrong. This conflict appears when individuals are faced with two equally attractive options. And yet, when we find ourselves in a situation in which we should choose from a win-win condition, "we have to decide between the two equally attractive options and this causes conflict within us" (Whitfield, 1994:31). The

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condition of choosing from a win-win condition presents a stress in the individuals. This is because one cannot know in advance which choice to choose. People who experience intra-personal conflict must be held accountable. This is a process through which employees are held to their commitments.

2.5.2 Interpersonal conflict

According to Korsgaard et al (2005:39), interpersonal conflict can occur when members of the group fail to work cooperatively with each other. Cooperation is necessary to ensure group cohesion due to the reason that it promotes the efficient use of the group resources, it frees individuals to work towards a common goal, it enhances group member satisfaction and it lastly enhances the group's effectiveness in an ability to resolve its own conflicts.

The need to belong provides individuals with another aspect of security. Through security, individuals are involved in a set of social and individual interactions with each other. For Boucaut (2003:155), "for people to be able to perform their work to the best of their ability, they require ontological security, or a feeling of trust that they are safe in their working environment." Conflict occurs when people feel that they are not secure enough in a group situation.

People become closely related to one another for the purpose of satisfying their interpersonal needs. According to Hayes (2002:298), "the notion that the needs of people engaged in social interactions can be an important determinant of the quality of the relationship." The author contributed the types of interpersonal needs as follows: (i) **inclusion**- a need to belong to a group so that one cannot be lonely, (ii) **control**- a need to be involved in the

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decision making process involving the group, and (iii) **affection**-which refers to close personal emotional feelings such as love and hate (Hayes, 2002:298).

For Hodgetts (1993:97), "no one lives in vacuum. People interact with other people. In fact, this is how we develop values, perceptions, attitudes and to a large degree, personality." Conflict will intensify when we start to interact with people whose values, perceptions, attitudes and personalities are different from ours.

Hodgetts (1993:395) has defined that interpersonal conflict arises when there are disagreement between workers in an organization. Employees can disagree on the methods applied to achieve goals.

Kuye et al (2002:185) mention that interpersonal conflict is "personality conflict, individual differences in personal qualities- such as values, attitudes, abilities and personality traits- often cause clashes." Personality clashes, different values, attitudes, needs, or expectations and communication blocks are sources of conflict. People quickly learn that co-operation instead of competing for a scarce resource is in their best interests. In co-operation, disputants perceive share in the problem solving, recognize each other's interest and create choices (Bodine & Crawford, 1999: 158).

2.5.3 Intergroup conflict

Intergroup conflict occurs when a particular group feels somehow about the other group. This is due to the stereotypes groups attach to others. Hall (1993:134) has mentioned that "stereotypic distortion occurs when the parties only see evidence that supports the hypotheses they have developed about the other side, but not

evidence that contradicts them." Groups in this circumstance tend to prejudice one another. In order to reduce this type of conflict, groups must be encouraged to live and interact with each other in a more frequent way. When the contact between different groups is increased, groups tend to identify positive aspects about others.

Intergroup conflict was identified as a form of ethnic conflict which according to Deutsch (2005:28), is bitter, destructive and dehumanizing because it is the "establishment of social justice, transforming the patterns of exclusion, inequity and oppression that fuel tension and fighting."

The nature of interactions within groups are called cohesion. Group cohesion is enhanced by making members cooperate with each other. Things that threaten to split the group must be identified as soon as possible because the sooner they are tackled, the better is for the group to exist.

Group cohesion can also be enhanced through threatening a group that it faces outward threats. In this analysis, Jay (1995:103) contends that group members can be united through focusing them on threats, dangers and enemies outside their team because "if you can make them feel that survival is at stake and the enemy is beating at the gates, internal disputes seem less important." Members must be encouraged to interact with each other. The places where they can interact better is during meetings. "Meeting is a place where people bond and develop a sense of belonging to the same group as each other, and you can't over- emphasize the value of this meeting" (Jay, 1995:128). When individual members of the group feel for each other, the lesser conflicts will occur.

2.5.4 Organizational conflict

Organizational conflict is caused by the organizational restructuring process which poses threat upon individuals. Bowen (2005:25) contends that "practices that in effect rob employees of their voice and sense of personal dignity- like leaving them out of decision-making processes or omitting them from important communications" tend to add gasoline to smoldering embers. In this regard, employees become very angry and as such, conflict occurs.

Organizational conflict can arise in situation when, for example, some organizational departments fight to gain more resources at the expense of the others. This leads to departments harbouring grudge against each other (Hodgetts, 1993:395).

Boucaut (2003:152) has identified that "a climate of restructuring and downsizing may lead to increased competitiveness and increased emotional stress." Bowen (2005:22) agrees that "down-sizing, changing technology, and the charge to do more with less- are contributing to heightened anxiety and in turn raw anger." And yet stress was discussed as a form of negative or dysfunctional conflict at the workplace. Bowen (2005:19) has identified forms of stress as follows: anger, anxiety, fear, disputes and failure to follow through on commitments. Conflict will continue to exist in the workplace unless these forms of stress are not accordingly identified and addressed.

Organizational conflict can be caused by the organizational culture in that individuals who are not conversant with it might feel left out. Organizational culture is "a pattern of shared organizational values, basics underlying assumptions and informal works that guide the

way work is accomplished in an organization" (Korsgaard et al, 2005:160). Organizational culture is an entity which bring people together as it was supported by Korsgaard et al (2005:160) who added that it is a shared cognitive framework which creates a social glue that hold people together in an organization. People who were not socialized according to the organizational culture tend to be isolated and therefore feel discriminated against. This is the most common cause of conflict in the organizations.

All the types of conflict discussed above combine to form an organizational conflict. Simply put, the researcher can concur that an organizational conflict has the characteristics of all the intra-individual conflict, interpersonal conflict and the intergroup conflict.

The potential sources for a conflict are namely; resource inequities, ideological change, resources completion, differences in goals, dependence on external constituents, communication, the organizational structure, differences among generations, old versus new knowledge, the adaptation of new technology and the ideological variations and personalities (Hoelscher & Comer, 2002: 526). The types of conflict discussed in the proceeding section enable the managers to categorize conflict accordingly in order to identify their solutions. The types are just a general classification of conflict, which in real life situation might be difficult to identify. It is along this limitation that the researcher decided to add the discussion of practical and common conflicts in the workplace as an example, in the succeeding section.

The above sections discussed the concept conflict into detail. Conflict must always be identified and handled on time because if it is ignored, it can be very destructive towards the employees, the

employers and the entire organization. This calls for the identification of the strategies meant to eliminate conflicts in the work place which are discussed in the succeeding section.

2.6 STRATEGIES FOR ELIMINATING CONFLICT AT THE WORK PLACE

This section discusses the strategies for eliminating conflicts at the work place.

2.6.1 Definition of strategy

A strategy is an action which involves two or more individuals coordinating, planning, implementing and evaluating an activity in the pursuit of a goal. A strategy can simply be viewed as a plan aimed at achieving something. According to Lombard (1991:126), a strategy is a predetermined comprehensive course of action which can be taken in order to attain a specific goal or aim. A strategy is therefore a well-planned action which has been identified and developed as most effective in reducing a phenomenon, conflict in this regard.

Effective strategies are necessary for the elimination of conflicts at the workplace. Some public management practitioners have called the strategies to eliminate conflict the conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is a situation whereby conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent actions against each other. It is important for managers to take most of their times towards the identification and handling of conflicts at their organizations. Jeong (2000:31) has also noted that "in conflict

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situations, resources are mobilized to force the other party to change their behaviour according to one's own wishes."

It is proper for managers to always manage conflicts in their workplace. For Jeong (2000:169), conflict resolution refers to an outcome in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties. Strategies for the elimination of conflict were defined as a process and or procedure by Jeong (2000).

Procedure maintains that processes are conducted in an systematic manner which involves a greater degree of decision making by the conflicting parties. Decision making on the other hand, is also attained through a systematic process through which public managers engage themselves in choosing the best solutions towards the elimination of an existing conflict in the workplace. In a similar approach, decision making shall mean the selection of the best effective and efficient methods and solutions to a conflict.

In this section, a number of strategies to the elimination of conflict are discussed, namely: parties' point of view, negotiation and mediation, consensus building, separation of people from problems, inventing options for mutual gain, contracting and technical background of managers.

2.6.2 Point of view

Barash and Webel (2002:537) have mentioned that conflict resolution is aimed at enabling people to view the outside world in different perspectives. This maintains that the conflicting parties must be afforded an opportunity to see their differences in a more

constructive way. Conflict resolution has the following outcomes: one side is changed, one side is eliminated, both sides are changed, neither side is changed and both sides are eliminated, conflicts can be resolved by means of violence, by the issues changing over time or by mutual agreement (Barash & Webel, 2002:537).

2.6.3 Negotiation and mediation

Bodine and Crawford (1999:155) maintains that since a school is an entity which composes of different people with different generational ages and that negotiation and mediation must be identified as the best strategies for eliminating conflicts. This is also the case in other organizations. Barash and Webel (2002:283) support that in the last-best offer technique, each side is nudged to be as conciliatory as possible, in hope that its offer will be the one accepted by the other.

Negotiation is an unfortunate aspect in the conflict management process because it is too unpredictable, that is, one cannot tell its outcomes before it has been conducted. In such an instance therefore, managers must concentrate only on the process of negotiation than on outcomes of conflict. Hall (1993:155) says that negotiators who are effective are the ones who get the most money for their clients, the ones who make sure that both sides are most satisfied and the ones who come closest to totally destroying the other side. Effective negotiators are the ones who opt for a win-win solution to the conflict. This view holds that dissatisfied party will in future return and cause conflict to an organization.

According to Kramer and Messick (1995:18-19), negotiators are usually faced with three types of conflicts, namely; relationship and task conflict, emotional and intellectual conflict and compromise and win conflict, because "a negotiation is a situation that frequently involves win/lose beliefs." In a particular conflict, parties tend to come up with different expectations which differ from those of others. Conflict management is said to have achieved its goal when it has reached a win-win, or approach-approach and or consensual agreement which is favourable to both parties to a conflict.

Bentley (1996:4) describes mediation as a form of problem solving process where a neutral person assists disputants to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. This process embraces fairness to the extent that the aggrieved party finds it easy to accept the outcome. Mediation could be used for certain strategies to solve problems because it is aimed at promoting positive relationships. Mediation proves as an effective method because it involves a democratic and structured process that enables disputants to resolve their own conflict, with the assistance of trained peers (D'Oosterlinck & Broekaert, 2003:222). The researcher is of the opinion that effective conflict resolution process shall always include proper mediation.

The adult authority serving as the mediator settles the dispute between parties. Mediation is aimed at reaching a consensus between the conflicting parties. In this regard, the disputants are expected to participate in a co-operative and collaborative manner and to work towards the resolution to their problem. Mediators are people who are professional in the processes of listening skills and chairpersonship, and they will be neutral and refrain from taking sides during discussions.

Mediators are defined as unethical if they become biased during the mediation process and if they cannot keep secrets of the deliberation information. The principle of human rights in the public management is very important within the negotiation and mediation contexts because if people's rights are violated by management, then the overall conflict resolution process is affected. Drake (2001:85) contends that where human rights are denied, they do tangible harm not only to the individuals concerned, but also to the process.

Mediation whether formal or informal is another effective method of conflict management used today. Mediation has advantages in that, its utilization is less costly than other methods and that parties are more frequently able to reach agreement in a more satisfactory manner.

Deutsch (2005:15) maintains that mediators do the following tasks: (i) they establish a working alliance with the parties, (ii) they improve the climate between parties, (iii) they address the issues, and that (iv) they apply pressure for settlement. Mediation is the method which is used where there are obstacles to conflict resolution such as interpersonal barriers, poor communication, strong disagreement over the issues and where there is an absence of forum for negotiation.

Mediators tend to create conditions which enhance cooperative problem- solving process between the conflicting parties. This they achieve through the encouragement of parties to enhance their decision-making skills. According to Deutsch (2005:16), mediators

require four kinds of skills in order to deal with conflicts experienced by parties, namely;

- they must be able to establish a working relationship with each of the conflicting parties,

- they must be able to establish a cooperative problem-solving attitudes among the conflicting parties,

- they must be able to develop a creative group process and group decision making, and

- that they must gather considerable substantive knowledge about the problems around which the conflict centers.

2.6.4 Consensus building

Consensus building is necessary "in times of stalemate when people are refusing to budge and neither side wants to take that first step" (Hall, 1993:135). Management must use the momentum building as an effective tool in bringing conflicting parties toward an agreement and even commitment to work towards the solution of problems.

Consensus building is an effective strategy which managers can apply when addressing conflicts in the workplace. "A consensus decision is one that everyone can live with, even if it's not everyone's first choice" (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004:129). Managers must make sure that all parties to a conflict support the decision and that they are committed to seeing it through.

Consensus building process is also called cooperative relations which according to Deutsch (2005:76-77), shows the most positive characteristics as follows:

- There is an effective communication in that group members are attentive to one another, members accept ideas proposed by others, and they have fewer difficulties in understanding each other. Hall (1993:135) has mentioned that good communication skills is an aspect for effective conflict deescalation. This is because listening is identified as a more important aspects than talking is. When we understand between lines what others have to say, we are able to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding which is usually associated with conflicts.

- There is friendliness, helpfulness and less obstructiveness within the group interactions. Members become more satisfied with the group and its methods of resolving problems. Group cohesion is enhanced.

- Coordination of effort, divisions of labour, orientation to task achievement, orderliness in discussion and high productivity are manifested within a group.

- There is feeling of agreement with the ideas of others and a sense of basic similarity in beliefs and values as well as confidence in one's own ideas and in the value that other members attach to those ideas within the group.

- There is a willingness to enhance the other members' power. This is due to the reason that when a persons' power is

enhanced, then the power of those around him/her is also enhanced in the process.

- There is a possibility that members are able to define conflicting interests in terms of a mutual problem which must be solved by a collaborative effort. Members therefore have an interest to search for the solution to the problem.

"If the parties involved in a conflict situation had a cooperative rather than competitive orientation toward one another, they would be more likely to engage in a constructive process of conflict resolution" (Deutsch, 2005:9). Cooperation is in this context closely associated with similarity in beliefs and attitudes, helpfulness, openness in communication, trust and friendly attitudes towards others.

The concept of consensus has been reiterated quite often in this analysis. Consensus simply means bringing harmony between people. According to Bodine and Crawford (1999:175), there is a concept of consensus in decision making called, consensus decision making. This is a decision making process based on the availability of necessary information. Consensus decision making is a group problem solving process in which all the parties involved in the dispute or their representatives, meet to collaborate and resolve dispute by crafting a plan of action that all parties can and will support (Bodine & Crawford, 1999:175). It is evident that a consensus achieved in this fashion will always be representative to all involved in the conflict.

2.6.5 Separating people from the problems

Another best strategy for the elimination of conflict in the work place is through the separation of people from the problems. In this regard, every problem is said to have both the substantive issues and relationship issues. That is, before managers can start working on the substantive conflict, it is divided into components which are separately and individually dealt with. Bodine and Crawford (1999:165) have identified that peoples' problems fall into three categories, namely; perception, emotion, and communication. In order to deal more effectively with such problems, a close consideration into the manifestations of perceptions, emotion, and communications as the basis of conflict resolution is required. It goes on that this strategy is more effective in resolving conflict because it is fundamentally aimed at changing people from adversaries in a confrontation to partners in a side-by-side search for a fair agreement with each other, and that the technique has an advantage of focusing on interests of the conflicting parties rather than on the positions held by the people in an organization (Bodine & Crawford, 1999:167).

Cloke and Goldsmith (2005:67) mention that the best strategy to resolving conflict is to separate a problem from people. They say "define the problem as a person and you are in trouble…[whereas] by contrast, if you define the problem as difficult behavior, you can do something about it." Individuals tend to be violent if their personalities are directly and openly attacked. It is therefore advisable for managers to always define the problem areas in terms of the difficult behaviours.

Deutsch (2005:19) has concluded in this context of separating people from problems and said "define the conflict in the smallest terms possible, as a here-and-this conflict rather than as a conflict between personalities or general principles, eg. as a conflict about a specific behavior rather than about who is a better person."

2.6.6 Inventing options for mutual gain

Korsgaard et al (2005:63) maintain that group members experience what is termed a mutual gain when they are collaborately involved in mutual problem solving process.

This strategy provides parties an opportunity to design options that may be potential solutions without the pressure in deciding to do so. Before parties try to reach an agreement, they brainstorm a wide range of possible options in advance, share interests and creatively reconcile differing interests (Bodine & Crawford, 1999: 168). This strategy embodies the quality of communication which is of utmost importance in the conflict resolution process. Employees and their respective management must make sure that they know how to talk and listen to each other. Kuye et al (2002:169) contributed the forms of communication as follows:

- in a haphazard manner, information can be expressed in a mixture of facts, interpretations, opinions and attitudes. This is confusing as it cannot be transformed into knowledge and skills necessary for the existence of an individual,

- in a persuasive manner, information can be in the form of persuading others and or informing them. This is good

information because it is meant to bring forth responses to the recipients,

- in a formal and informal manner, information can be transmitted, for example, through written modes such as letters, e-mails and others and through a friendly talk, respectively, and that

- communication can be in the form of a one-way transmission of information when one person continues to tell the other what to do without listening what the other can say, and in the form of an integral part of a continuing dialogue which is a process of a discussion between two people.

All these forms of communication are important in the conflict resolution paradigm and therefore managers must select the most relevant ones to specific situations. Management must ensure that the barriers to communication are eliminated at all cost, these being language, poor listening habits, differences in perception, behavioural patterns such being empathetic, and lack of honesty (Kuye et al, 2002:171).

Management is advised not to regard some problems as of little interest. "When engaging in conflict resolution with your colleagues it is usually counter productive to minimize the problem raised by them" (Mostert 1998:129). This ensures that problems are not isolated and or ignored without being dealt with accordingly.

2.6.7 Contracting

Conflict resolution must be conducted in a systematic order. Dipaola and Hoy (2001:240) have mentioned that the first step in

managing conflict effectively is to develop a contractive context, one that determines whether the conflict is managed constructively or destructively. A contract must be viewed as a blue print and or plan which the conflicting parties must follow.

2.6.8 Technical background of managers

The technical background of managers requires them to deal with conflicts immediately as they develop. This entails that time is an important resource which must be adequately managed. Whitfield (1994:14) has contended that "one of the other reasons for the early management of a conflict is to save the time that unresolved conflicts will otherwise consume." Managers must consider that time is a most important resource which must be taken into consideration when they deal with conflicts in their workplace.

Managers must be skilful in identifying the problems which other experience. "If we are to better understand the conduct of people in organizations we need to address what they appear to think and feel about themselves and others" (Hayes, 2002:5). Unless managers know exactly what others are feeling, they would not be able to assist them. Hayes (2002) contends that a healthy relationship between managers and their subordinates shall develop only if such a relationship is rewarding to them. "People voluntarily enter and stay in a relationship only so long as it is adequately satisfactory in terms of reward and cost" (Hayes, 2002:6). That is, managers must be able to assess the balance in satisfaction of the rewards of both employees and of the organization. Managers must be able to steer employees towards employee satisfaction whereas at the same time they consider the overall goal of organization. There are a number of skills which

managers must obtain in relation to the maintenance of human relations, these involve a few which shall be discussed in this section, namely; listening, advising, supporting, challenging and information gathering.

- Listening:- is a skill which most managers overlook because it usually seems easier to achieve. That is, premature formulation of response can undermine our ability to listen. "Effective listening requires that we give full attention to everything the speaker has to communicate" (Hayes, 2002:52). Managers must be able to listen until other person has finished speaking if they are to understand the content of what is being communicated in a more detail.

- Advising:- sometimes advising others is not a good approach to effective conflict management. "The advising approach involves us in telling clients what they should do to rectify problems in a given situation. The helper diagnoses the problem for the client and prescribe the solution" (Hayes, 2002:168). This approach places dependency and disempowerment upon the employees. On the other hand, advising maintains that managers have a greater level of relevant expertise and understanding of the client's problem than the client him/herself. Advising can only be used when the clients are in a state of confusion.

- Supporting:- means travelling with the clients when they explore their problems and finding solutions for themselves. The manager does not give advice but rather encourage the employee to think in a more focused manner. "The supporting style of helping involves us in working with clients to help them express any feelings and emotions that impede clear and

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objective thinking about a problem" (Hayes, 2002:168). Managers are only there to help clients to go on and solving their problems themselves. In this regard, it is the client who has a primary say about his/her own problem. According to Hayes (2002:168), managers in this regard play a very passive role because they "do not intervene or develop any active strategies for dealing with the clients' problem."

- Challenging:- is an approach which requires that managers must have adequate information which can enable them to evaluate if the client's thinking is effective towards the solution of the problem, or not. "This is an approach which involves us in confronting the foundations of the client's thinking in an attempt to identify beliefs and values that may be distorting the way situations are viewed" (Hayes, 2002:169). In a problem-solving process, managers will be expected to regularly review the client's abilities towards solving the problem, and at times when necessary, warn the client if their intentions are not well contributing towards the solution of the problem.

- Information gathering:- is an approach in helping which "involves us assisting the client in collecting data that can be used to evaluate and reinterpret the problem situation" (Hayes, 2002:170). This is a most important skill managers must consider because in most incidents, clients fail to solve their own problems due to the reason that they usually collect information which is irrelevant and ineffective to their problem situations. To enable and encourage clients in collecting data related to their problems is another way of empowering them. This has been captured by Hayes (2002:170) when he

concluded that "clients will be less resistant to proposals and action plans they generate for themselves."

The above expositions attempted to describe the strategies which management and supervisors can utilize in order to eliminate conflicts at the workplace.

2.7 STYLES FOR HANDLING CONFLICT

There are styles for handling conflict, namely, collaborative style, avoidance style, accommodation style and comprise style. These conflict handling styles are discussed in this section.

2.7.1 Collaborative style

Collaborative style of conflict management is also called the mutual problem solving which involves bringing together the conflicting parties in order to work out their problem in a joint situation. This "will often require the two groups to mutually determine how they will resolve their own conflict. Through this process of sharing concerns and communicating with each other, mutual problem solving often brings about intergroup harmony" (Hodgetts, 1993:403). Hodgetts (1993:131) defines that "sometimes goals desired by two or more parties cannot be reached without the cooperation of those involved: this is when collaboration can be effective." Collaboration style to conflict management entails that inputs from both the conflicting parties are required in order for a conflict to be resolved. This is because "collaboration calls for all parties to work out their differences and to realize that without full cooperation all of them will fail" (Hodgetts, 1993:132).

Jay (1995:51) maintains that it is also possible to coerce people into becoming collaborative. People can be coerced when they are given no choice. "They may still not like the decision, but on balance they can see the sense and they want to make it work- and that's motivation." In this context therefore, motivation must be regarded as the most effective strategy to achieve collaboration. People will be collaborative if they are given a good reason why manager's decisions are more effective in solving the problem.

Collaborative style of conflict management is a supervisory style based on the belief that teaching primarily involves a problem-solving process whereby two or more persons jointly pose hypotheses to a problem, experiment and implement the strategies that appear most relevant in their own surroundings. At the school environment, the principal's role is to guide the problem process, be an active member of the interaction and keep teachers focused on their common problems (Shautz, 1995:211). A collaborative style requires a collaborative environment where both principals and teachers share information and arrive at a mutually and acceptable plan, consequently problem-solving and negotiating a major components of this approach (Shautz, 1995:213).

Adler, Laney and Parker (1993:120) contends that the collaborative style is natural to most women and it is more suitable to modern management because it is not dictatorial in nature. These decision-making styles tend to be more democratic and participatory these days than it was in the past. The collaborative style is mostly used by women because they often build coalitions in order to achieve their goals (Adler et al, 1993:122). Managers arrive at popular decision more often when they work with others than is the case when they work alone. The process of involving others towards

decision-making is also called participatory decision-making which Adler et al (1993: 122) maintain it is highly favoured in the schools which are headed by females. Women are more likely than men to withdraw from confrontation and to use collaborative style in handling conflicts.

According to Uline et al, 2003:44), a collaborative relationship enables parties in a conflict to take advantage of differences and use them as strengths. Collaborative discussions are usually time-consuming, but are worthwhile investment. After a conflict was resolved through a collaborative style, people are enabled to see the world in a different and new manner (Melamed & Reyman, 2000:16). The collaborative style of conflict resolution still ensures that although parties tell their stories in a truthful manner, they are still not able to reach a consensus (Melamed & Reyman, 2000:17).

Collaborative requires the conflicting partners to come face to face with the underlying causes for the conflict. The parties consider the full range of alternatives, the similarities and the differences in viewpoints, they become more clearly focused on the causes or differences and that they become outwardly evident. Collaboration also requires the parties to be rational and objective, which can be difficult at times, especially when tensions are running high between the parties.

There is no one best way to manage organizational conflict. Different conflict situations will determine the appropriate conflict-handling style to be adopted. If collaborative style is found to be non-effective, then other strategies can be selected. This brings the discussion to the second strategy for the elimination of conflict, namely, avoidance style.

2.7.2 Avoidance style

The avoidance style for handling conflict is the process of treating complaints as if they do not exist. In this context, the managers do nothing when conflicts occur and hope they will resolve themselves as time goes by.

Avoidance style of conflict management could be applied by managers when they are faced with a problem and have not yet gathered enough information about it. Avoidance provides them with time to collect the information necessary for the solution of the problem (Deutsch, 2005:11).

The avoidance style in conflict management is necessary especially when employees do nothing towards settling their disputes and expect managers to settle them on their behalf. Whitemyer (2005:43) advises that in a situation like this, managers must select to do nothing instead. Managers spend most of their time dealing with subordinates' problems. "If managers never allow employees to work out conflicts among themselves, they'll never meld into a high-performing unit" (Whitemyer, 2005:43). In this context therefore, not intervening can be in itself an effective strategy because it tends to empower employees and enhance the organizational performance.

If conflict is found not to be disrupting the organizational functional processes, the most suitable strategy will be to avoid it and act as if it does not exist. Avoidance style in conflict management has advantages which Whitemyer (2005:44-45) contends are to provide employees an opportunity to develop their own problem-solving

skills and that employees "will have confidence to resolve more issues that come up during workplace conflicts.

The avoidance style of handling conflicts has an advantage which was contributed by Uline et al (2003:799) who maintain that it could be utilized by an organization as a means to rest a bit and gathering enough energy and resources for future intervention. In this context, the managers will be able to effectively deal with conflicts. The authors warn that "suppressing conflict to avoid more confrontation may actually lead to escalation of the conflict in the longer run" Uline et al (2003:800). This analysis maintains that suppressed conflicts can have a serious implications in future. The researcher still contends that, conflicts must be resolved immediately as they emerge. For Dipaola and Hoy (2001:241), ignoring or avoiding conflict not only encourages escalation but also communicates disinterest in shared values, beliefs and norms. Employees become irritated when they discover that their issues were ignored by management. This limitation leads to serious destruction such as for example, industrial strikes which cost organizations large sums of money.

Avoiding conflicts is not always a good strategy in the conflict management analysis. Williams (2005:55) says "perhaps a manager chooses to avoid a conflict with a difficult person because he or she finds it painful or uncomfortable- thus unintentionally escalating the problem behavior." If conflicts are avoided, they tend to develop and grow into bigger problems in future. Ducking conflict distracts us from achieving the organizational goals, whereas unmet conflicts do not go away. It is therefore best to attack conflicts as soon as they develop than avoiding them. "When conflict is rising, energy is directed away from tasks, and engaged

instead in interpersonal issues. If you manage the conflict, people are freed to put their focus back on the tasks" (Williams, 2005:59). Avoidance style in conflict management is discouraged since it is only able to suppress conflicts for a short while. Williams (2005;59) continues to warn that suppressed conflict is a conflict which will resurface in the future because "when one person is compelled to a premature agreement in which his needs are not met, he is going to get you back."

Uline et al (2003:785) supported that conflicts that are avoided and poorly managed can wreak havoc on both individuals and organizations. It is true that the unresolved conflicts will exist for a longer while. If conflicts are not resolved, they will stay passive for some time but will resurface in future. It is therefore suggested that any conflict must be accordingly identified and resolved. This indicates that the avoidance style of conflict resolution is a temporary relief.

Deutsch (2005:19) mentions that managers must be aware that evading conflict is closely associated with   negative consequences. The best approach here therefore will be to learn the kinds of conflicts which are better avoided than confronted.

Avoidance style is defined as an unassertive and uncooperative style in which a person withdraws from the conflict by sidestepping or postponing confrontation (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:151). Instead of continuing with the argument, the manager withdraws from the conflicts and accepts with what it entails. A failure to be assertive can be very fatal to the conflict resolution process. The researcher is of the opinion that the concept of assertiveness must

be defined in this context as it is an important element in conflict resolution process.

Assertiveness can be regarded as a communication style preferred to aggressiveness, because it builds strong relationships, confidence and self-esteem. Another definition of assertiveness is "standing up for our rights in an open, honest and direct way, which does not violate another person's rights" (Kuye et al, 2002:154). Assertiveness must be encouraged in the work place because it is one of the motivational techniques which managers can keep as tools to increase the effectiveness of their institutions. Another important element of assertiveness in the conflict management paradigm is the avoidance of violence. Conflict resolution take place without violence. Jeong (2000:19) contends that the popular meaning of violence is the physical injury and the infliction of pain that is caused by a specific person who intends to influence the other. Violence must be totally avoided in the conflict resolution processes.

People in organizations often avoid or suppress conflict because they fear that uncontrollable consequences could result from a lack of self-efficacy and skills to manage the conflict constructively (Uline et al, 2003:785). Indeed there is a need to avoid intervention toward conflict when managers are of the opinion that such intervention shall be met with the limited resources such as for example, lack of knowledge and skills and of course, the consequences thereafter. Managers may avoid the intervention in a fear that it will bring forth unanticipated circumstances. Some managers may avoid interventions in order to protect their own ego selves, such as when they feel they are not competent enough to participate in a conflict resolution process.

Avoidance style for handling conflict has been identified as characterized with a number of limitations. It can lead the destruction of both the organization and the relationships at the workplace and as such it must be discouraged at all cost. This brings a discussion of yet another conflict management style, namely; accommodation style.

2.7.3 Accommodation style

The accommodation style for handling conflict seems to be very effective because it is highly featured with consensus.

The accommodative style means that one party satisfies the interests of the other party at his/her own expense (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:151). Teachers who manage conflict by means of an accommodation style tend to put aside what they think is important. They do not propose their own professional points of view, but tend to ensure that others' points of view are espoused (Mostert, 1998:123). Accommodation is a common soft response, when one party adjusts to the position of the other without seeking to serve his/her own interests in the relationship (Bodine & Crawford, 1999:161).

Principals and teachers can make use of an accommodation style as an important process through which they identify, extract and combine the diverse skills, abilities and perspectives within the group to develop high quality decisions. By engaging in cognitive debate, leaders gain more through understanding the rationale underlying decisions. The presence of open expressions and the tolerance of viewpoints may also suggest to the team members that

the decision making process is fair and adaptive. By entering into the debate, individual team members gain an opportunity to participate until final decision which accommodates their interests is made (Uline et al, 2003: 798).

Accommodation style plays down the differences while emphasizing common interests on the other hand. Managers who use this style attempt to defuse conflict by consoling the conflicting parties using supportive, effective language and facilitating participation. Accommodation style is generally ineffective because it does not resolve conflicts.

2.7.4 Compromise style

Whitfield (1994:12) has explained the compromise style of conflict management by stating that in it the "inventive and forward looking negotiators have often increased the size of the cake so that both parties were able to get a bigger slice." In this analysis therefore, both the conflicting parties to a problem become satisfied. A compromise conflict resolution management style entails that both the opposite parties become satisfied with a conflict resolution which was arrived at.

Hodgetts (1993:132) has mentioned that "when each party gives up something and no one group is the clear winner, compromise occurs." Managers need to be confrontational during the conflict management process. Confrontation is used when conflicting parties are asked to meet and try to resolve their conflicts in a face-to-face basis. "This confrontation method is one of the most successful approaches to conflict resolution because it

concentrates on solving the problem directly rather than trying to bypass it or to smooth over the issues" (Hodgetts, 1993:131).

"Compromise involves each side emerging as the big winner. Compromise is an important conflict resolution approach because it often allows each side to gain at least some of what it is seeking" (Hodgetts, 1993:404). The only disadvantage with compromise is that if one party feels that it has given up far too much than it was suppose to have gained, conflict might reemerge.

According to Jay (1995:100), everybody in an organization has the responsibility to understand the value of compromise. Thus, "members should consciously make an effort to recognize each other's feelings- such as lack of confidence, inexperience or stress- and support each other." Compromise can only be achieved when individual members recognize the ability to give-and-take. Members are not coerced into arriving at a compromise but should be encouraged to deliberate in an in-depth manner till their matters come to an agreed resolution, that is compromise.

Compromising is used when there is a balance of power between the parties or when resources have to be shared. Compromising is a more direct management style than avoidance or accommodation. It is most appropriate when time for conflict resolution is limited or when two parties appear deadlocked. Using this style take more communication and negotiation skill than is during the avoidance or accommodation styles (Mostert, 1998:121). Compromising is embedded in the rights of people because it entails that people must be satisfied at all times.

This style involves a lot of negotiation. Jeong (2000:168) maintains that negotiation is meant to reach an agreement through joint decision making between parties. Harvey (2002:168) concludes that "compromise is normally made to serve the interests of all parties in a successful negotiation." Even when each negotiating party's preferences have not been fully satisfied, the outcomes have to be acceptable to all the concerned parties. The steps for compromising should be perceived as viable solutions for preventing potential disputes and resolving existing disputes as early as possible.

Compromise requires each party to be willing to engage in the process of resolving the conflict and to be in the position to give up something of value. In a compromise style, there is no winner or loser. The compromise style of conflict resolution is an effective strategy which must be encouraged all the time.

2.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter has successfully interrogated conflict conditions at the workplace. The researcher has exposed that conflict management is one of the traditional public management functions which is aimed at resolving conflicts as they develop and become destructive to the organizations and the working relationships between employees and employers. It was indicated that managers need to identify and resolve conflicts immediately as they occur in the organizations.

Conflicts are conditions which occur when two parties experience their differences. Conflict is a never-ending entity and as such, it must be dealt with rather than being avoided. The causes of conflict

are contained in the discussion of the theoretical perspectives of conflict. These perspectives explain that conflicts occur within individuals, from the frustrations when people are blocked from achieving their goals, that human beings have an inherent in-born characteristic of being violent and destructive, and that conflicts usually occurs when people compete over the scarce resources. The researcher concludes that most conflicts emerge when people want to amass more basic needs than others.

The theoretical perspectives of conflict suggest that conflict could be classified in categories. This enables the managers to intervene accurately when resolving conflicts. Examples of conflicts at the workplace instilled the requirement to develop the strategies for the elimination of conflict. Although these strategies seem to be well-designed, those which are meant to provide a win-win and lose-win situations seem to be more effective than the others and as such, they must be encouraged in the workplace, especially at the school environment. This brings the researcher to appropriate the entire succeeding chapter for the discussion of conflict management at the schools.

CHAPTER 3

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A FEMINIST THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE APPROACH

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher envisaged that conflict occurs when two parties meet and start to compete over a limited resources. Effective management is necessary for proper conflict resolution in order to provide parties with satisfaction. When this condition is reached, we believe the maintenance of a healthy working relationship shall have been achieved. Since this study is about the conflict management styles of women principals in the superior- subordinate relationships in schools, the researcher is of the opinion that a discussion on the common conflicts in schools will be necessary in this section. Effective conflict management is a task of the school principal who plays a number of different roles. The roles are the professional guidelines for ethical behaviour. The feminist theoretical perspective explains the under-representation of women principals in the schools throughout the South African country. The perspective argues that women principals perform better than their male counterparts. This calls for leadership skills which will also be discussed in this chapter. The researcher identifies and explains the challenges faced by the women principals in the postmodern society. Finally she will discuss the healthy working relationships in the school environment.

3.2   COMMON CONFLICTS AT THE SCHOOLS

In order to counteract misbehavior within the school environment, it is useful to operationalise the view that conflict is

a natural and vital part of life. When conflict is understood in a positive manner, it can become an opportunity to encourage learning and creativity. Thus the synergy of conflict can create new alternatives which replace something that was not possible before the conflict management process took place. Conflict management instills the possibility of differences being acknowledged and appreciated by the conflicting parties so that at the end, they are able to build on one another's strength. This reciprocal quality of conflict management was identified by Bodine and Crawford (1999:66) who maintained that after an effective conflict management process "a climate is created that nurtures the self- worth of each individual and provides opportunities for fulfillment of each." This is a condition which must be encouraged in the school management environment.

Stader (2000:6) contends that conflict is part of a maturing process. Conflict can also result in fear, alienation, withdrawal, attendance problems and academic difficulty. However, the task confronting school principals is to find appropriate ways of reducing conflict in the school so that these issues no longer disrupt the school management system.

In this section, the researcher discusses the common conflicts in schools in relation to the general conflict management practice. Dipaola and Hoy (2001: 238) support this approach by mentioning that understanding differences in conflict issues and the relationship between conflict and change helps the school principals to improve the climate in schools.

3.2.1 Conflict within teachers

A common type of conflict occurs when teachers who manifest differences in their own personal qualities clash with each other. Nir and Eyal (2003:548) prefer to term this conflict, role conflict,

which occurs when inconsistency, incompatible or inappropriate demands are placed upon individuals.

Some teachers experience internal conflicts among their own competing professional goals and agendas. For Mostert (1998:119), non-professional conflicts within teachers and their associates may affect working interactions and decisions. Intra-individual conflict is evident in the individual teachers themselves, that is, when they fail to identify and select the best goals and choices. Conflicts exist within an individual when a choice has to be made between two opposing goals (Anderson & Kyprianou, 1994:126). A teacher who is unable to select the best goals about his/her work cannot develop himself/ herself and those around him/her. Such teachers are frequently withdrawn. The development of an intra-individual conflict occurs when teachers are brought to new challenges and or non-supportive environments such as when given new tasks which they did not perform in the past. Mostert (1998:127) maintains that the cause of intra-individual conflict in schools continues when professional orientation provided to teachers seems to be irrelevant and mismatches their previous professional positions. In this condition, teachers become frustrated. "Conflict may arise when educational philosophies, treatment approaches or service delivery strategies are incompatible" (Mostert, 1998:127). In this type of conflict, the source of the problem is found within the person and is closely linked to his /her personality. Frustration of this kind is manifested through a number of observable behaviours, such as hesitation, vacillation, sleeplessness, stress and anxiety.

The most effective way to resolving an intra-individual conflict is to define the conflict in terms of the problem that can be solved either individually or within the collaborative group. Collaborative group context is a process of encouraging teachers to discuss

their frustrations with each other. This approach develops their working relationship. Resolving conflict in this approach generally provides greater insights into the problem and enhances understanding of others' perspectives. Another solution to the intra-individual conflict, namely, communication, was identified by Davidson and Burke (1994:148-149) who explained that it is one of the primary ways which is utilized to establish and maintain good relationships among teachers. The authors continue to mention that through communication, teachers are able to share concerns and learn from each other.

3.2.2 Conflict between teachers with different agendas

The second common conflict available in schools is a conflict between teachers with different agendas which was classified as an interpersonal conflict in the previous chapter. Kuye et al (2002:185) have said than an interpersonal conflict develops when people with different values, attitudes, abilities and personalities interact with each other.

It is common for teachers to have different perceptions of what is important for effective intervention. Conflicts arises when a decision must be made about which goal is to be adopted by the collaborative group because some goals are usually adopted at the expense of the others (Mostert, 1998:119). Interpersonal conflict is the most widespread and visible kind of conflict in schools and other organizations because it is evident when two or more individuals disagree about issues, actions or goals (Anderson & Kypriano, 1994:127). Usually, some teachers will regard others who attempt educational tasks with different methodologies from theirs as enemies. This shows that conflicts between individuals can be stressful and unpleasant. In this context therefore, sensible people wish to avoid those with differing opinions and strategies, and or simply confront them

(Harvey, 2002:513). People have the right to be different. In this view, diversity management is enforced by the South African government legislation. Kuye et al (2002:189) have mentioned that "it is not something which we can achieve simply because government says that we need to achieve it. We should always remember that diversity is an intense human business and, as such, we should facilitate it through a process of creating mutual respect." Thus interpersonal conflict can be addressed through the diversity management process which the authors maintain is possible when people learn to listen other's opinions and attitudes and they empathically understand their positions without being judgmental.

Interpersonal conflicts begin when an individual or group feels negatively affected by another person or group. It may occur in interactional encounters between two colleagues, in decision-making teams, between work groups, or in board meetings. The larger and more diverse the group, the greater the potential for conflicts. This is the case because diversity among members of the group results in differences in goals, perceptions, preferences and beliefs. Thus, it should not be surprising that conflict is common in schools and that conflict is particularly likely to occur at the boundaries or interfaces between different groups or units within organizations (Dipaola & Hoy, 2001:238). It must be noted that if the interpersonal conflict is not identified and managed properly on time, it can impede the organization's attempt to effectively achieve goals. School management must develop the fundamental means for identifying the occurrence of interpersonal conflict through the formulation of effective policies in schools.

3.2.3 Conflict between teachers with similar agendas

This type of conflict was classified as an intergroup conflict in the previous chapter. According to this conflict, teachers form groups which are cohesive and are supportive to them. These different groups conflict with each other.

Conflict can arise in disagreements about methods, techniques or feasibility of an intervention. In addition, conflict among teachers with similar goals may rise when they cannot equally access their goals (Mostert, 1998:119). The intergroup conflict is according to Kuye et al (2002:188) explained through three considerations, as follows:

- people think that conflict is inevitable and that agreement is impossible,
- people think that conflict is not inevitable and agreement impossible, and that
- people think that conflict is possible and that agreement is probable.

The researcher is of the opinion that a successful conflict management strategy includes agreeing on the basics, searching for common interests, experimenting and treating differences as group responsibility.

3.3   THE ROLES OF THE PRINCIPALS

It is not the responsibility of the principal alone to maintain a good working relationship at the school environment. The teachers, the learners, the parents, the school governing bodies and other stakeholders have today become highly involved in the maintenance of a working relationship at schools. They are

all role players in the maintenance of a healthy working environment at schools. In this section, the researcher discusses the roles of the principal in relation to the stakeholders in an attempt to achieve superior-subordinate relationships in schools.

Collins (2003:17) summarises that there are many 'hats' that principals wear as school leaders. During a typical school day, the principal's duties include acting as building manager, administrator, politician, change agent, boundary spanner and a leader. Yet there is another hat to add to the rack, principals are also expected to create safe environments, respectful schools and assume the role of school mediator. In order to accomplish this, many leaders are examining conflict resolution programmes.

A few number of the roles will be identified and discussed in this section as follows:

3.3.1 Agent of communication

The principal must be an agent of communication in that all other stakeholders in the school management interact with each other through him/her. It must be noted that communication skills are the most important tool principals have available to them as they interact with others in the school environment. As conflict occurs, it is essential that the principal monitors his/ her thoughts, emotions and communications (Mostert, 19998:133). When conflict arises, the principal must use communication and conflict resolution skills to the best of his/her command. Being skilful in these situations will model for colleagues that conflict is not necessarily always destructive. Potential areas of conflict can be avoided or their impacts lessened if the principal is empathetic, honest and provides meaningful goals to colleagues

(Mostert, 1998: 143). The principal should learn how to access the level of conflict and its possible consequences.

3.3.2 A negotiator

Usually conflict occurs among teachers, between teachers and heads of the departments, between teachers and learners, between teachers and parents, between teachers and the school governing bodies, between teachers and principals and between teachers and other stakeholders. Principals are responsible for the identification and resolution of conflicts that may occur at the school premise. And when conflicts occur, principals must become the negotiators, in that, they facilitate the involvement of differing parties towards resolving their conflicts. Negotiation can be defined as a principal way through which old relationships are redefined and new relationships are created (Lombard, 1991:189). Negotiation is a systematic process that places communication and thinking skills into a framework that guides the participants towards discovering a mutually satisfactory agreement.

3.3.3 A leader

Leaders should find ways to acknowledge and reinforce the interdependence of all organization participants in meeting the goals and frequently reminding individuals of their vital contributions (Uline et al, 2003:797). According to Uline et al (2003:797), facilitative leaders create and manage tensions to keep the school in motion and keep the culture of learning and teaching in place. Facilitation promotes not only a good culture but also one which is characterized by dilemmas that require constant resolution to keep the school supple (Uline et al, 2003:797). Conflict management is only possible when conducted by competent leaders.

3.3.4 A caring person

Principals must be seen as caring towards the individual problems of teachers, learners, parents and others individuals who have an interest in the schools. A caring person is that who is able to listen, and support others during their emotional outburst. Maintaining a construction level of conflict requires not only skills but also an open and respectful attitude towards others (Uline et al, 2003:797). Principals must recognize that conflict is neither bad nor good. Uline et al (2003:797) mentions that many teachers feel uncomfortable with any level of conflict in such a manner that they prefer to isolate themselves from others. Withdrawal is a very destructive manifestation of frustration. Withdrawal can be attended by people who are caring and supportive towards the others.

3.3.5 A problem solver

After principals have identified the conflicts and their respective causes, their next step will be the provision of mechanisms towards their solution. A problem-solver is a practitioner who is capable of utilizing diverse methods of data collection intended to formulate their decisions. The elimination of conflict seems to be the ideal goal for principals. Principals must guard against treating organizational conflict as a dread disease and or as a disruptive activity (Dipaola & Hoy, 2001: 239). This will develop them into abstaining from taking unrealistic decisions. They must observe that conflict can generate many positive results for the organization if it is accordingly addressed. Conflicts handled in a cooperative and a problem-solving manner are more likely to have positive outcomes because they generate solution, promote insight and help individuals grow and strengthen their emotion status (Dipaola & Hoy, 2001:239).

3.3.6 An encourager

The principal plays a role of an encourager or a facilitator when encouraging conflicting parties to seek a consensus agreement to their problem. To produce superior result, principals and teachers must work diligently to encourage a balance between the cognitive and affective aspects of conflict. School leaders can enhance the potential for creative solution if they provide individuals a non-threatening environment in which pressures to perform is increased (Uline et al, 2003:810). Principals should manage and resolve conflict by negotiating, mediating and participating in the group problem solving process. These strategies should be part of the staff development programme. Without conflict, there would likely be no personal growth or social change. Employing problem-solving techniques to integrate interests of all parties can result in achieving mutually satisfying outcomes which creates a win-win situation. Principals should make a conscious effort to develop skills that will help them use conflict effectively. It is this non-threatening environment which principals must opt for because it is an important component in a healthy working relationship.

3.3.7 A decision- maker

The school principal plays a role of a decision-maker because after thorough deliberations concerning the resolution of conflicts, it is finally him/her who must take the most informed decision. Dipaola and Hoy (2001:242) have realized that this role is closely supported by trust and an ability to communicate well with others. The ability to work with others is another dimension because Dipaola and Hoy (2001:242) concludes that "developing a creative group process and group decision-making are essential tools for successful administrators."

3.3.8 A person who is not authoritative

Principals who want to cultivate a climate of professionalism and change in their schools should avoid reliance on their authority to control teachers and instead nurture a professional perspective of autonomy. Such an orientation may increase cognitive conflict, but the conflict generated by professional teacher's action will likely leads to constructive change and helps avoid rigidity and stagnation in schools (Dipaola & Hoy, 2001:239). Usually teachers and other administrative staff tend to ignore and or confront principals who give them instructions on an authoritative fashion.

3.3.9 A teacher

A principal is a teacher on his/her own professional outright. The word teacher is used interchangeably to mean an educator, who is expected to show a considerable empathy in his/her pedagogic communication with other teachers and learners in general. The name teacher is also called educator, and it includes those individuals who happen to work as public school administrators or education school professors who work inside the public school and or the graduate school of education (National Education Policy Act, 1996; Act 27 of 1997).

3.3.10   A researcher

Research is the process through which the facts concerning problems and their solutions are obtained (Lombard, 1991:185). The principal regularly conducts a feasibility study about the school and its respective socio-economic, political, natural, religious and other environments. His/her approach to conflict management should be informed, primarily, by the local

circumstances including readiness of the school to assume challenges in the environment.

3.3.11 A mediator

Solution orientated approaches to conflict management may work best where principals serve in meditative roles and emphasize solution finding through a consensual, cooperative process which avoids antagonism that may endanger future personal and or professional relationships. Such a meditative approach in solution- oriented conflict management can reinforce belief in the fairness of outcomes and simultaneously allow conflicting parties to feel that they have some control over the process (Henkin, et al, 2000:154).

Lipsky, Seeber and Fincher (2002:174) contend that "the supervisor uses his or her authority to convene disputing employees and explore mutually acceptable solutions" during the mediation process.

It has been highlighted in the introduction of this chapter that effective conflict management is made possible by the school principal who plays the mentioned different roles. The roles are the professional guidelines for ethical behaviour. They place social expectations upon the professional person who occupy the position of a school principal. The roles enable the principal to challenge the tasks and assignments relevant to the principalhood. In the succeeding section, the researcher briefly explains the challenges to principals and a healthy working environment.

3.4   CHALLENGES TO PRINCIPALS

A challenge has been defined as an expectation which we normally attach to the professional person. The challenges facing the school principal are that he/she must maintain a good environment at the schools and influence the teachers, learners, the parents and other stakeholders to become more tolerant to each other. They must be able to be increasingly tolerant of disagreements and differences and learn to live with them more creatively and productively. The principal and teachers must have the interests of the learners at heart. They must find more and better ways to work with others in the interests of the children and they must reinvent their sense of professionalism so that it does not place them above or set them apart from parents and the wider public.

3.4.1 The principal and the maintenance of a healthy working environment

A relationship is a logical and interpretive causal connection between the members of an organization who contribute separate components to this professional relationship. A relationship therefore is an interaction between two or more individuals.

A healthy working relationship can be defined as an environment wherein more than two people work together in an interactive nature and is characterized by the limitation of problems. Such an environment is featured with support and understanding and is said to be highly productive. Dipaola and Hoy (2001:242) have mentioned that one of the basic challenges in schools is to construct an enabling work environment where professionals can perform their tasks relatively unencumbered by administrative control and teacher

independence is a fundamental dilemma that cannot be completely resolved, rather a balance between the two is necessary. A healthy working relationship is a major aim for conflict management. If it is absent, an organization becomes dysfunctional.

Effective conflict resolution programmes must be formulated and implemented in the school administration. Woody (2001:116) agrees that more comprehensive conflict resolution programmes are needed that include school wide participation and delivery of the programme over the entire school year. Implementing conflict management programmes in schools directly or indirectly affects the school's social climate. School climate means the feelings of students and staff about the school over time. These feelings may be influenced by how comfortable individuals feel in this environment. Implementing conflict management programmes constitutes a process that affects the entire school (D'Oostelinck & Broekaert, 2003:224).

In the succeeding section, the researcher discusses principals as leaders in the school environment.

3.5   PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

In this section, the researcher discusses the challenges facing principals as leaders in the school environment. Good leaders have the ability to maintain healthy relationship at the school environment. It is important for the researcher to include a discussion of effective leadership in this study.

Leadership is a process through which individuals within an organization are able to steer other employees towards the improved performance of tasks and also to improve the human relations and adaptation of the organization. Yukl and Lepsinger

(2004:18-19) contend that "leadership has sometimes been defined as doing the right thing, but a better definition is doing the right thing at the right time." On the other hand, a leader is therefore somebody who is able to think and acts like a leader. Handy (1992:10-11) mentioned that leaders have certain characteristics which differ from those of ordinary individuals such as follows:

Different vision:- leaders have different vision because instead of being transactional, they tend to be transforming. Their visions make the sense to others because leaders do not only believe in their vision but are seen to be believing in them. Visions that leaders dream about are not only original in nature, their importance lies in "how well it serves the interests of important constituencies- customers, stockholders, employees- and how easily it can be translated into a realistic competitive strategy" (Kotter, 1992:19).

Steer others to realize their dreams:- leader's vision remain dreams until others contribute their effort towards their realization. That is, leaders must be able to mobilize followers who work towards realizing their visions. This is what is called motivation. Kotter (1992:21) has written that "just as effective alignment get people moving down that path, successful motivation ensures that they will have energy to overcome obstacles." Motivation helps people to complete routine jobs successfully. Motivating people is different from pushing them. It involves satisfying people's basic human needs for achievement, it provides them with a sense of belonging, recognition, self-esteem and a feeling of control and provides people with the ability to live up to their ideals (Kotter, 1992:21).

Space for movement:- leaders must have freedom to change things and also make mistakes. Without a room for experimenting, quality leadership cannot develop.

Believing in oneself:- leaders do not have an inferiority complex. Leaders must believe that they can influence others and events. When they do things, they usually have a purpose behind their actions.

Credibility is a biggest challenge to leaders. "Many things contribute to credibility: the track record of the person delivering the message, the content of the message itself, the communicator's reputation for integrity and trustworthiness and the consistency between words and deeds" (Kotter, 1992:20). Leaders must be individuals who command knowledge, skills and attitudes that are not currently available in others.

Awareness of other worlds:- leaders do not only know their own worlds, but instead they are able to understand other people's worlds as well. In order to understand the worlds of others one must develop empathy. This is a process through which one attempts to see the world as others see it or putting self in other person's place. "Empathy means deep understanding of other people, identifying with their thoughts, feeling their pain, sharing their joy. Such empathy is typical of strong, healthy relationship. Indeed empathetic communicators know each other so well that they can predict the responses to their messages" (Hodgetts, 1993:373).

Creating a culture of leadership:- Leaders are expected to create a culture of leadership within an organization. They are able to do this by simply identifying and recruiting people with leadership potential. Kotter (1992:23) contends that leaders "put an emphasis on creating challenging opportunities for relatively

young employees." In this regard, young employees are nurtured in becoming the future leaders of tomorrow.

A capacity for loneliness:- leaders although they may be respected, trusted and believed in, they may be hated as well. They must be able to stand on their guts although this condition excludes them from others. In this manner, leaders are not afraid of intimidation by more powerful parties in the problem-solving process. Intimidation means any act by a person with the intent to compel or induce a particular person to do or to abstain from doing any act or to assume or to abandon a particular standpoint by means of assault, injury or causing damage to that person or any other person, threats to kill, assault, injure or cause damage to that person or any other person (National Education Policy Act, 1996, Act 27 of 1996).

3.6 A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN LEADERS

There are many theoretical perspectives which could be invited to contribute a discussion on the plight of under-representation of women in the management of the public and the private sectors. The feminist theory is an effective guideline to explain the conditions of women and their characteristics in detail. In this section, the researcher defines feminism, conceptualizes feminism and discusses women principals as they are viewed from a feminist theoretical perspective.

3.6.1 DEFINITION OF FEMINISM

Meehan (1995:1) has stated that "feminist theory is devoted to clarifying the nature of the social and political world and the way in which gender functions to produce male domination and female subordination." Feminism is a theoretical perspective which is used by different organizations when they demand the

emancipation of women from oppression by the societal structures of the country. Feminism is not only composed of women who are seen as man-haters, it also composes of men who demand that their counterparts be freed from all forms of discrimination.

Problems faced by women managers who are operating in male-dominated organizations have recently attracted the attention of social scientists from a wide variety of academic disciplines. Feminists want to break the shackles of the patriarchal system. A patriarchal system can be defined as a situation where men are regarded as the leaders and women as followers. Jeong (2000:80) has summarized this explanation by mentioning that "patriarchy is the cultural concept that determines virtually all human enterprises while illustrating the historical and social dimensions of women's exploitation and oppression." Patriarchy is highly cultural and is totally in clash with the South African Constitution which purports that people are democratically free from all forms of oppression. Patriarchy is derived from the rule of fathers which reveals the prevalence of male domination over women.

"South African history has been characterised by patterns of domination-white over black, rich over poor, men over women and human beings over nature" (Ackerman & Joyner, 1996:121). This is what feminism perspective intend to address, the fair representation of women in all sectors of the society. Reynolds (2002:51) has noted this limitation when he mentioned that "women continue to be under-represented globally in educational leadership and other areas of executive management." This form of discrimination prevented women from competing fairly with their male-counterpart for the resources in the country.

In South Africa, black women have suffered discrimination based on their racial and sexual affiliations.

A doubly disadvantaged concept was coined to mean that South African women suffer more from both poverty and the racial discrimination. Sullivan and Thompson (1994:170) write that a development that has been viewed with some alarm in recent years is what has been labeled the 'feminization of poverty,' referring to the growing number of women among the poor. Indeed the feminization of poverty is a concept which is known by Wells (in Peck & Dolch, 2001:126) who contends that "women are overrepresented among the country's poor." The first reason behind the feminization of poverty is that women carry a burden of taking care of themselves, their own children, their parents and other relatives in families. The second reason behind the feminization of poverty is that the female-headed family is growing among black population both in South Africa and abroad because "black women are less likely to get married, more likely to get divorced, and of those who do get divorced, fewer are inclined to remarry than their white counterparts" (Kelso, 1994:96).

Women managers are for a number of complex reasons, generally denied access to the levels and kinds of power that are necessary for the successful performance of their roles. This suggests that there are unnecessary criteria which are put in place for the sole purpose of denying women access to join the management in the organizations. The criteria must be removed so women can compete fairly with males in the occupation of the top-most positions.

Feminist perspective maintains that women are stigmatized by certain unfounded labels, such as for example, subordinates, complaint, different from men, desiring pleasant social relations,

and afraid of conflict. This myth has not been proved empirically and as such it must be regarded as senseless and baseless.

A feminist perspective is intended to steer women to learn to demand the higher positions in the social, economical and political elements of the country. The feminist perspective encourage women to make noise so that they could be heard, acknowledged and attended to. Women need to mobilize themselves in groups and organizations.

The exposition above defined that feminist perspective is the theory which is developed in order to show the injustices experienced by women with an aim to address this misfortune. It is a theory which explains in part the impact which discrimination based on the sexual orientation of people could have upon women. Since this study is about the conflict management styles of women principals in the superior- subordinate relationships in schools, the researcher is of the opinion that the definition of feminism is not enough. Feminism must be conceptualised in depth and also be related to the educational system.

3.6.2 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF FEMINISM

In the proceeding section, the researcher defined feminism as a theory which has been developed in order to identify and explain certain manifestations which form discrimination of women by the social, economic, political, religious and cultural structures of the society. Feminists have a cardinal problem, namely, patriarchy which is a cultural set-up that places women in the lower positions than men. Viewed in this way, feminism is not a form of discrimination but rather a context through which the discrimination against women can be explained.

This section attempts to conceptualize feminism, this meaning the identification and explanation of the different parts of the discrimination against women in general. These parts are as follows:

3.6.2.1   Discriminated against at birth

Women are discriminated against at birth. Girl children are expected to behave in certain ways that are far different from the boy children. This condition was mentioned by Jeong (2000:80) who maintains that patriarchy places pressure upon the women at their earliest stages of development. Female children continue to grow under the shackles of this oppressive expectation. In some communities, girl children are discouraged from attending schools as they are regarded as the priced commodities which can be exchanged with bridal money called *lobola*.

According to Oplatka (2001:221), gender is a cultural term that describes the characteristics we ascribe to people because of their sex. The ways we believe they behave are based upon our cultural expectations of what is considered male and female. In this vein, gender is important aspect of the complexity and daily interaction and it determines how people must behave in particular circumstances in the school environment. It follows that gender expectations may partially determine the management style the principals employ in their roles.

Gender discrimination is viewed as an obstacle in the broad literature on women in educational administration as it increases the pressure to perform and labels women principals as incapable. The belief is that women are not capable because they are not powerful (Dunshea, 1998:208). This is a feature

which women were given at birth and it is very difficult to erase in the human thinking.

3.6.2.2 Violation of human rights

Feminism attacks the violation of human right. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996, section 7 (1)) warns that "it enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom." Feminists are supported in this way, and the researcher is of the opinion that their fight against the discrimination of women shall be soon attained. It was indicated in the previous section that women were discouraged from occupying the top- most positions of the organizations by means of the invalid and unnecessary criteria. This is in violation with their human rights. The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service as stipulated in the Government Gazette (No. 2011 of 1997, Section 4.7.1) details that "selection on merit is fundamental to ensuring that the Public service recruits and promotes people of the highest calibre." People are not measured according to their sexual orientation but rather by the nature of their knowledge and skill base. The feminist will then attack any job specification which defines people according to their sex.

3.6.2.3 Deprivation of access

The researcher has identified that women have generally been denied access to the levels and kinds of power in the organizations. The most powerful positions were appropriated for men. When an individual is denied access to compete equally with others for the resources, the person will be condemned to poverty and other forms of exclusion. South African women were denied the right to vote. The primitive and

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cultural communities did not allow women to obtain positions which are regarded as belonging to males and women in general were not expected to be active outside their family households. And today, most researchers will agree with the researcher's opinion that programmes and projects which afford women an opportunity to hold higher positions tend to be successful than those which are headed by men. This is so due to the reason that women regard their respective communities as part of their own families.

3.6.2.4   Under-representativeness

Under-representativeness means a condition through which people's grouping is less in size than other groupings. Under-representativeness is interchangeably called minority which means few people and or inputs. Women are very few in the higher echelons of the organizations. As an example, Reynolds (2002:51) mentioned that although the number of women teachers is higher than that of the male teachers at schools, women continue to be under-represented in educational leadership and other areas of executive management. Women's under-representativeness was caused by the unfair discrimination which the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996, Section 9 (3)) seeks to address when it stipulates that "the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth." This stipulation will revise the current state of affairs and the researcher is of the opinion that more and more women will be included in the higher positions in the organizations.

3.6.2.5   Stigmatization of women

Feminists argue that women are mostly discriminated against due to the stigma attached to them. A stigma is a definition of the other person which is based on intuitive knowledge and or myths. Women were said to be physically weaker than the men. Some women believed this definition and allowed to be abused by men, so that most victims of domestic violence has become women. Another stigma attached to women is that some people believe that women principals are afraid of conflict. Carson, Butcher and Coleman (1980:130) have identified the negative impacts which the stereotypes have upon people. These stereotypes, which are stigma, lower the people self-esteem and demoralize them. According to the feminist analogy, women must destroy these stereotypes which define them as a weaker sex than men.

Coleman (1996:163) complains that a stereotype that identifies management as 'masculine' still exists, despite the tentative links made between the effective management of schools and what might be termed 'feminine' style of management. The continuing existence of stereotypes relating to male and female managers is based on the relative lack of empirical data, meaning that there is no research which indicates the difference in the performance between men and females. And yet, the majority of senior managers in education are male. Women are under- represented amongst senior managers in all phases of education. Coleman (1996:163) continues to suggest that "the stereotype is underpinned by the unwarranted assumption that leadership is a male characteristic demanding physical and mental toughness and the ability to approach difficulties unemotionally." Thus the female manager in education has tended to be identified with the 'softer' aspects of management of people (Coleman, 1996:164).

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3.6.2.6   Feminization

Feminization is a concept which attempt to explain that certain conditions affect women more than any sectors in the community. Wells (in Peck & Dolch, 2001:126) have mentioned the term feminization of poverty to mean that the poor are highly represented amongst women. Feminization is a measuring tool which the feminists use in order to measure the prevalence of a social problems affecting women within the society.

Feminization is when a condition is classified and defined as belonging to women. Women principals were considered to act according to a feminine style, whereas men were considered as using masculine style. Women were found to be more task – focused and visionary. Women on the other hand, seemed to be more democratic and participatory in decision-making, and were more likely to withdraw from conflict in their role than men. Relationships with others were more central for women than men, resulting in a sharing of power. Caring for the staff and student was of great value in their leadership style, and the women head teachers constructively evaluated staff performance to bring out the best. Women tended to focus mainly on instruction; learning and students needs in the school setting. According to Oplatka (2001:230), women head teachers may use in practice either a masculine or a feminine management style during their career. It seems to be very simplistic to claim that women head teachers are supposed to use predominantly feminine management styles.

Feminism is meant to protect women from continued oppression by men. Some women principals and feminist scholars indicate discomfort with the power structure that has traditionally existed in modern organizations, including schools. They have also

expressed displeasure that prevailing theories of power and leadership take little or no account of women experiences in such roles as wives, mothers and community workers (Fennel, 1999: 29).

The researcher discusses the nature of women principals according to the feminist perspective in the succeeding section.

3.7   STRATEGIES OF WOMEN PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP

The previous South African dispensation was infested with all forms of discrimination as was summarized in a statement by Ackerman and Joyner (1996:121) who said that the South African history has been characterized by patterns of domination: white over black, rich over poor, men over women and human beings over nature. This state of affairs prevented women from fairly competing for the positions of principalhood at schools with their counterparts, men. This factor influenced the over-representation of male principals at schools whilst women only served the subordinate roles as teachers.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) and other legislation which were formulated for its realization, aim at addressing this inequality which was practiced in the past. The researcher shall name a few legislation as follows: White Paper on Education and Training (1995), the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Act 4 of 2000). It became the most important mission for the South African society to rid itself of all forms of discrimination which were caused by gender inequality. This then afforded women an opportunity to occupy the positions of principalhood in schools. Women in

South Africa today, have started to join the top management both in the public sector and in schools.

The emergence of women principals at in schools is viewed with mixed feelings. Some students think women principals make good leaders at the school environment whilst on the other pole, some think that women principals lack of the effective leadership skills. The researcher has consulted a number of library material which she used to support the argument presented by the former group who are possibly from the feminist perspective. The leadership quality in women principals is obtained from their personalities, the educational orientation and the interpersonal skills.

In this section, the researcher will discuss the qualities of women principals.

According to Coleman (1994:164), women made up 43 per cent of the secondary level teaching force but 90 per cent of principals were male before the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa. The under-representation of women principals at schools must be seen as a form of discrimination. Even when a larger number of women than men were released as qualified teachers, more positions for principalhood went to males. In the light of the above, women should have equal opportunities equal to those of men in order for the representativity gap to be closed.

The under-representativity of women principals in the schools has become a traditional and a cultural expectation. It is therefore uncommon to find a woman as a principal of a school. In South Africa, management has traditionally been male-dominated in the senior level of decision making.

The societal expectations are, according to the feminist perspective, denying women the higher positions in the management of the organizations. Where most decision making occurs, it is dominated by men. Despite positive developments, women remain disadvantaged in terms of career advancement.

The under-representation of women principals at schools in the South African society is caused by the backlog which women experience due to their long-standing disadvantaged position. In this context, the school and or the community will prefer to have a male principal in order to maintain discipline in the school. This further discriminates women from occupying the position of principalhood. The irrelevant criteria imposed upon women thwart their chance to occupy higher positions. "Women in educational administration have had to face a number of deterrents that men do not encounter" (Grogan, 1996:25)

In order to address the under-representation of women principals in schools, Cheng and Shun (1997:168) suggest that the studies on women principals' leadership may be needed to reveal women principals as untapped resources of society and that women principals may obtain a different sex-role orientation to cope with the problems caused by sex-role stereotype effect.

However, in the real situation, women and or women principals have proved in a number of instances to be most effective leaders. In this regard, the researcher shall report on the instances which were highlighted by different authors.

3.7.1   Transformational

Kruger (1996:454) has written that "women's own style of leadership tends to be more transformational than authoritarian. Transformational leaders engage others in decision-making,

they share power and information, thereby providing a type of leadership that involves all concerned and affected professional decisions." This quality of leadership creates an enabling environment not only in the schools but also in the entire public management enterprise. Women's leadership styles are less hierarchical and more democratic and that women principals communicate better with teachers. This means that women are generally not interested in the positions people hold, but they rather concentrate on the democratic principles when leading and directing those subordinate to them.

3.7.2 Not authoritative

The researcher has mentioned in the previous chapter that teachers and learners are reluctant to take instructions which are provided them in an authoritative fashion. Shautz (1995:213) says that this limitation is not available in the women principals whom he writes they have a "greater preference towards activities related to instructional leadership and communication and avoided authoritarian solutions." This approach for communicating with others make women principals good leaders because they do not only improve the working relationships in schools but also empower and motivate those in the subordinate positions such as teachers for example. To support this analysis, Shautz (1995:213) adds that "women principals encourage the empowerment of teachers, involved teachers in decision making and provided immediate feedback on performance and also practicing a collaborative style of leadership."

3.7.3 Collaborative

Women generally have a gift of collaborative agreement skills because they are concerned with fostering relationships in the

long term. The researcher has identified the skill of collaborative communication in women principals. "Women overall respond in collaborative, responsive relationships, as a team member, and are non –competitive. The strength of women managers is the support they give, both subtle and overt. They have lateral ways of thinking and working and are capable of being supportive and supported" (Adler et al, 1993:113). The desire to solve problems in a group context make them effective group leaders, and as such decisions which they make through these contexts tend to be popular to others.

3.7.4   Team leader

A person who is able to work in a group context is also likely able to operate under a team. A team is a number of people with professional knowledge and skills who work towards a specific goal. The team leader is usually a person who is multi-professional in that he/she is expected to steer the team towards the achievement of goals and objectives. Adler et al (1993:114) produces evident that women view the job more as master-teacher or educational leader in contrast to male views. More women tend to be educationally competent than men are.

3.7.5   Competent

A person who is educationally mature and competent is less likely to be threatened by his/her subordinates. In the conflict resolution context, if parties experience differences with one another, the women principal is competent in the negotiation process. Negotiation is a collaborate effort with long term implications and is the process which is characteristic of a women principals.

3.7.6   Moral

The women principals make good leaders because they are always guided by the principles of morality. The principles of morality maintain that the processes which are conducted by the managers are neither harmful to the social, physical and emotional standing of other people. This quality is possible because women are morally mature and are well able to make decisions on ethical grounds. Persons who are guided by the moral prerequisite of our social system have a less probability of taking unrealistic decisions, and as such their leadership skills are of highest quality.

3.7.7   Child development

Women excel well in the social and emotional development of the child. This quality seems as if it is their in-born character. Davidson and Burke (1994:148-149) state that women are generally supportive towards others because "women's speech tends to display identifiable features that foster connection, support, closeness and understanding. Women principals pay more attention to social, emotional and academic development of the children in their schools." They are more knowledgeable about the curriculum and value of productivity of their teachers (Adler et al, 1993:114).

3.7.8   Selfless

Slaikeu and Hasson (1998:8) describe selfishness in a statement which purports that "greed causes conflict. If I want more than my share, someone is sure to try to stop me. That can lead to clashes between persons and groups." Women principals are not selfish in nature because instead they are involved in assisting others. The capability of being supporting to

others is due to the reason that women principals are self-less. A self-less person is defined here as a person who prefers to see the satisfaction of others before his/her own satisfaction. Women are believed to be selfless and concerned with others, they are more kind, helpful, understanding, warm, sympathetic and aware of others' feelings.

3.7.9 Respectful

The above exposition suggests another personality in the women principals, namely; of being respectful to others. Women show greater respect for the dignity of teachers. As more women than men see conflict as a negative state, ridding a school of conflict is more likely to occur with women in charge (Adler et al, 1993:122). Individuals who are respectful to others have the ability of being more sensitive. Shautz (1995:213) mentions that female principals are sensitive to personality clashes and are intuitive about possible problems and work hard at maintaining relationships within organizations. This was supported by Bascia and Young (2001:287) who indicated that women educators have the quality of developing professionally and personally.

3.7.10 Empathetic

The capability of being supportive to others requires the other parties to understand them empathetically. Empathy was defined as a deep understanding of others. Principals do not only hear the words others say, they are able to understand the meanings and emotions behind what is being said (Hodgetts, 1993).

3.7.11   Communication

Communication skills such as supportiveness, attentiveness, and collaboration enhance moral and productivity in work settings. Women leaders use collaborative participative communication that enables others to be involved in the conflict management process (Davidson & Burke, 1994:162). Communicative strategies in conflict management and conflict regulation in social institutions have received only marginal attention in the organizational and theoretical literatures (Henkin et al, 2000:142). Communication simply means sending of information by the sender and its being received by the receiver. Communication is therefore not possible if the sender sends it and it is not received at last. This concept includes two manifestations, one of sending and the other of receiving, without which it is not completed and therefore not possible and or present. Collins (2003:19) concludes that communication skills provide the necessary strategies to reduce alterations and promote peaceful solutions.

3.7.12   Participatory

Communication is a two directional context because it involves both the sender and the receiver of information. In the conflict resolution paradigm, the communication process can be achieved when parties deliberate their differences, which is called participation. Participatory style encourages ownership of decision by all the parties involved. This view does not claim the innate superiority of women as managers and leaders but clearly identifies feminine traits of leadership and management with good practice. Managers who prefer people to receive their decisions with popularity opt to use participatory method for involving different parties in a discussion about their differences.

3.7.13   Empowering

Effective communication encourages empowerment in both the women principals and the teachers. Shautz (1995:213) has discovered that women principal's empowerment process of teachers involved teachers in decisions making and provided immediate feedback on performance. Empowerment is the process of returning the socio-economic and political control back to the people so that they can be able to take decisions about themselves. Female principals generally viewed the teachers with whom they worked as being professional and dedicated individuals. They place a great deal of trust in teachers. This trust is an important foundation upon which collaboration supervision is constructed (Shautz, 1995:213).

3.7.14   Motivating

Motivation is a process through which people are encouraged to achieve certain goals and objectives even when there obstacles preventing them to do so, by another person who is considered as more influential than they are. Women principals have the ability to steer colleagues towards the achievement of the school goals and objectives.

3.7.15   Also authoritative

The women principals also become authoritative when the implementation of the school policy are concerned. This maintains that there is a situation wherein the realization and enacting of the authority in the leadership is necessary. Oplatka (2001:221) supports that "heads manage their schools in different ways and enact diverse levels of control and authority." This relationship with staff range from participative, non-directive relationship to auto- directive ones.

3.8 CONCLUSION

To this stage, the researcher has reported what literature maintains about conflict management, conflict and the strategies for an effective elimination of conflict. The theoretical explanations were utilized in order to classify conflict according to classifications. This chapter explained conflict management with special attention to the women principals. It showed that women are underrepresented in the position of principalhood yet they command unique and positive leadership skills. The feminist theoretical perspective was used in order to explain the past discrimination of women in the South African context.

The next chapter outlines research design of the empirical investigation.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The literature review presented in chapter two of this study provided clarification of the concept conflict management at the schools. This review also paved a way for the goal of this research, namely; to investigate the conflict management strategies which women principals in primary schools in South Africa apply in order to maintain the superior- subordinate relationships. Conflict is viewed as an outcome of the organizational politics which develop when individuals, groups and departments attempt to influence the decisions made towards their own interest. Schools are no exception because this conflict of interests occurs in their organizational settings. The feminist perspective, in chapter three, argued that women principals are in fact more competent than their counterpart, men principals in resolving conflicts in the school environment.

In this chapter, a detailed description of the research methodology and design, which were employed in this study will be presented. The chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical basis of the qualitative methodology. It further outlines the rationale for the choice of the research methodology. This is followed by a description of the research design for the study, a description of the procedures used in locating and selecting the informants who were interviewed. An account of the methods used to analyse, order and understand the data is also given.

4.2   RESEARCH APPROACH

Research design refers to the method which the researcher planned to utilize in order to gather information relevant to the study. The nature of the research problem for this study required that information be obtained through a face- to- face interpersonal situation.

Gay (1992:7) contends that a   research methodology is an approach to address a research question or problem.

The aim of this study is to investigate the conflict management strategy of a primary school woman principal in Hammanskraal, Gauteng Province. A qualitative research method was found to be the most appropriate as people involved in the primary school settings were studied and understood through their own experiences which they reported to the study.

Qualitative approach is based on a phenomenological position which focuses on the logically understanding of the meaning of events as first- hand reported by the persons being studied (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:25). Maykut and Morehouse (1994:25) describe a qualitative researcher as a participant observer who becomes both a part of the observer and the observed because he/she is strongly involved in the participant's situation which he/she emphatically needs to understand.

Qualitative research may be generally classified as a primarily interactive research (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:371). It is a naturalistic inquiry which uses non-interfering data collection

strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes based on how participants interpret them (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:372).

Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the social phenomenological philosophy that views reality as multilayered, interactive and a shared social experience interpreted by individuals (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:373). Qualitative research was relevant in this study because the researcher intended to investigate how the woman principal, the heads of the departments and the educators measured the conflict management strategies applied by the women principals in the primary schools.

4.3   TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA

Trustworthiness of data is concerned with the reliability and validity of the data.

Reliability in the qualitative research study refers to the researcher's ability to be transparent, consistent and dependable upon his/her research activities so that research bias is minimized. Best and Kahn (1993:208), contend that reliability is the degree of consistency purported by the research instruments and procedures. Consistency means the ability to provide replicable data when similar data collection methods were utilized by different researchers at different research settings. This means that the research instruments which were used to collect the data must be relied upon. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:385) maintain that reliable data collection instruments collect these data with accuracy so that, the researcher does not risk a condition wherein he/she collects different information he/she initially did not intend to collect.

In this study, the researcher constructed a semi-structured interview schedule so that the participants were expected to respond to questions in a similar mode. This process ensured that participants respond similar to the questions posed to them.

Validity on the other hand, is the degree to which definitions and explanations of the phenomena under study match accurately with the realities of the environments in which they exist (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:391). Validity simply means that the definitions and or descriptions of phenomena are exactly understood by different researchers and or consumers of the research reports. Validity is closely linked to measurement, so that the manner in which the participants measure the phenomena is well understood by different people who never took part in the research study.

Both reliability and validity requirements in this study were attained through the following procedures:

- The same semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect information from a woman principal, two heads of the departments and two educators.
- A tape recorder was used to capture first-hand information from the participants without loosing a single piece of it.
- Transcription process was utilised to transform data from the audio-tapes into written form. This procedure assures the researcher that the deliberations which took place during interviews are accordingly reflected without loosing a single piece of them.
- The qualitative data analysis methodology was conducted to reduce, manage and interpret data which were available.

4.4   SELECTION OF THE SITE

The inquiry concerning the modes of conflict management of a woman principal in a primary school was conducted in one of the primary schools in Hammanskraal, Gauteng Province. The school has been in existence for a period of 32 years. The female principal in that school has 23 years experience in the teaching field, whilst on the other hand, she has served the school as principal for a period of 8 years.

4.5   DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

There are 780 learners, 14 educators and a principal at the school under study. The foundation phase comprises of grades 1-3 and is attended by 4 educators whilst the intermediate phase which comprises of grades 4-7 is attended by 10 educators. Each learner pays an amount of R75.00 each year as school fees. The office of the principal has all the recent administrative requirements such as for example, a telephone facility, a computer, a photocopy machine, and a storeroom which is used for keeping garden equipment. The library is accessible for both the teachers and learners. There is a staff-room which is shared among the educators at the school. The school has other facilities such as toilets for both the male and female educators and learners, respectively, sewerage system and running water.

4.6   SAMPLING

Krathwolth (1993:123) defines sampling method as a procedure used for selecting a small number of units from a population to

enable researchers to make reliable inferences about the nature of that population. A sample is composed of elements that contain the most typical attributes of the population it is drawn from. A sample comprises of the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. A sample is a small proportion of the total set of objects or persons who together comprise the population of the study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche' & Delport, 2002:209). Sampling is described as taking a portion of a population or universe and considering it for representation of that population or universe in the research study (De Vos et al, 2002:209).

Sampling is the selection of individuals who are considered to be those studied in a particular investigation. The idea of drawing a sampling from a population has rather become the standard method for selecting the units of analysis who are the representative of the larger population for studying (Bulmer & Warwick, 1993:91).

Sampling denotes the selection of a sample design that will be suitable for addressing and answering questions which are raised regarding the processes of the research project. Robinson and Read (1998: 99) maintain that a sampling process is used to reflect the generalisability of effects in the chosen group that belongs to the larger population. Sampling is explained as a process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify the information- rich key informants. Purposeful sampling is according to McMillan and

Schumacher (1997:97), the sampling procedure which is applied by the researchers when they want to understand something about the cases without generalizing their findings to all the cases which look alike. The advantage of purposeful sampling lies in the fact that the few cases which are studied in an in-depth method provide a great deal of insights about the topic. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:378) state that purposeful sampling is conducted for the purpose of increasing the utility of information obtained from samples.

Purposeful sampling is a non- probabilistic sampling method which in contrast to the probabilistic sampling, is utilized for selecting information which is rich and is used for an in-depth study (Patton, 1990:169). It is used when one wants to understand something about those cases without reading or desiring to generalize to all such cases. Purposeful sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples. Purposeful sampling requires that information be obtained about variations among the subunits before the sample is chosen (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:378). It is also based entirely on the judgement of the researcher in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population (De Vos et al, 2002:207).

Best and Kahn (1993:13) explain sampling as a selection of a small portion of a population for observation and analysis. Thus, in selecting the sample, size is the most determining factor. This enables the researchers to be confident that their estimates are correct and reliable. It is for this reason that the accuracy of the data is influenced by the absolute size of the sample. The logic of the sample size is related to the purpose of the study, the research

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problem, the major data collection technique and the availability of information- rich cases.

One primary school in Hammanskraal, Gauteng Province was selected for this study. The sample included the woman principal, two heads of departments and two educators. The school was selected due to the reason that it met the characteristics necessary for this study, namely; of being administered by a woman principal and that it is situated in an urban area of Hammanskraal, Gauteng Province. Another motivation is that Hammanskraal has a 55% representation of woman principals which according to the researcher, is a reflection that gender equity policy is being adhered to in the area. The school is amongst the most disciplined schools because of its enhanced working relationships between the principal and the educators, the educators and the learners, the school management and the school governing body, and the entire school management and the community. The school principal's added credentials include her socio-economic status of being married, running a family of her own and that she has qualifications which include a primary teaching course (PTC), BA degree and an HED. The school profile of the woman principal is reflected in a Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: The profile of the primary school woman principal

Pseudonyms	Post Level	GENDER	Qualifications	TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Sarah	PL 3	Female	PTC	23
			BA	
			HED	

4.7 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING TEACHERS AND HEADS OF THE DEPARTMENTS

In order to gain access to the school, the researcher obtained a permission from the principal. Participants in this study were assured of the total confidentiality. The selection of the heads of departments and educators who participated in the study was conducted in collaboration with the school principal. The composition of the heads of departments and educators is as follows:

- Two heads of the departments
- Two educators

There were three female educators and one male educator who participated in this study. The two heads of departments were

selected on the basis of their five years experience as post-level educators, and the two educators were selected on the basis of their 11-20 years in teaching, respectively. The profiles for both two heads of departments and two educators is reflected in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: The profiles of the educators who participated in the study

Pseudonyms	Post Levels	Gender	Qualifications	Teaching Experience
Peggy	PL 2	Female	UDEP, BA	11
Reineth	PL 1	Female	PTC	20
Maggy	PL 2	Female	UDEP, BEd Hons	14
Jackie	PL 1	Male	UDEP, FDE, BEd Hons	11

4.8   DATA GATHERING

Gay (1992:105) has advised that when the instruments for data collection are valid to the study, then the study itself becomes valid. This maintains that the choice of the research instruments is crucial in the assurance that indeed the empirical investigation shall satisfy both the reliability and validity requirements of the research study. Constant with the aim of the study, the techniques which were used in this study were the semi-structured interviews which were

conducted at a selected school. The best method for conducting this type of interviews is to make use of an audio- recording device, namely; a tape recorder. In this context, the deliberations which took place between the researcher and the participants in this study were recorded in the tape. The procedure was that the deliberations were transcribed into a written form, and that they were analysed thereafter.

Interviews are social interactions in which meaning is necessarily negotiated between a number of selves (De Vos et al, 2002:298). Interviewing is the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research (De Vos et al, 2002:292). De Vos et al (2002:292) states that one interviews because one is interested in other people's stories. Frey and Oishi (1995:1) define an interview as a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (interviewer) and another answers them (respondent). When used with care and skill, interviews are an incomparably rich source of data (Anderson, 1990:222). Qualitative interviews as attempts to understand that world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations (De Vos et al, 2002:292). In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the school principal, two heads of the departments and two educators at the school. The semi-structured interview schedule is included as APPENDIX A in this study.

Semi- structured interview is a one- to- one interview, also sometimes referred to as in depth interview, merely extends and formalizes conversation. It is referred to as a conversation with a purpose. The purpose is not to get answers to questions, nor to test the hypotheses, nor to evaluate in the usual sense of them. It is

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focused, discursive and allows the researcher and participants to explore an issue in more detail. It is used to determine individual's perceptions, opinions, facts and forecasts, and their reactions to the initial findings and potential solutions. It is a type of interview that the researcher uses to elicit information in order to achieve understanding of the participants' point of view or situation (De Vos et al, 2002:298).

A tape recorder was utilized during the interviews. This made it easier for the researcher to analyse and compare the responses of the different responses in order to arrive at generalizations of the different questions. Tape recording the interview ensures the completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks. The researcher was pleased about the level of trust which was established with the participants. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere.

Visitation to the school was done over a period of three weeks. The school policies, vision and missions were considered. The minutes of the processes in the school were studied from a minute book. The researcher was fortunate enough to observe a meeting held at the school which centred around a discussion about the IQMS (Integrated Quality Management System). Both the principal, the heads of the departments and the educators attended that meeting and shared valuable information with the research.

4.8.1 Interview with the principal

An interview was conducted with the principal. The principal was interviewed on matters concerning the conflict management strategies which are used in her relationship with school staff.

Interview was held in her office. A tape recorder was used to record all the discussion and the field notes were compiled. The questions which were posed to the principal are contained in an interview schedule which is included in this study as APPENDIX A.

4.8.2 Interview with the heads of the departments

Interviews were held with two heads of the departments in their offices. The interview schedule used for the heads of the departments was similar to that mentioned in item 4.8.1.

4.8.3 Interview with the educators

Interviews were conducted with the educators. The educators were both at the post-level 1. One was a male whereas the other was a female. Similar interview schedule mentioned in items 4.8.1 and 4.8.2 above was used to collect information from the educators. The educators were individually interviewed in the staff room which was free from disturbance from others.

4.9   DATA ANALYSIS

Once the actual interviews were conducted, the next step would be to transcribe, summarize and code the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:428-429). Marshall and Rossman (1995: 111) define data analysis as a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of the collected data. It is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. The collected data need to be analyzed and interpreted in a way that will clarify the facts without adding or deducting anything which was said or given by the participants. Glesne and Peshkin (1992:146) perceive the

analysis of data as the researcher's effort to manage and interpret data.

At this stage, the researcher conducted the data reduction, presentation and interpretation (De Vos et al, 2002:286). Analysis of data began during the interviews and continued throughout the process till interviews were completed. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:123), qualitative analysis is an ongoing process of the qualitative design, which calls for different modes of inquiry at different moments. The advantage of this ongoing process is that errors in the field note can be corrected the next time out.

The researcher has carefully transcribed the responses of the participants from the audio-tapes. Where clarity was needed, the researcher confirmed with participants. Data was organized into themes. Transcripts for interviews and field notes were read with the view of highlighting important passages and ideas. Similarities and differences were identified from the ideas expressed by the principal, heads of the departments and educators. The different highlighters were used to mark the identification of the patterns and themes.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter exposed that qualitative research method is relevant when the researcher aims to study the natural environment of the participants from their own definitions and perspectives. That is, qualitative research method is utilized when a detailed description of the situation about the phenomenon is being required. The best and relevant research method to achieve this requirement is therefore a semi-structured interview which can be defined as a

process of an interaction between the researcher and the interviewees (participants), whereas the former asks questions which are contained in the interview schedule and the latter responds in own language and other methods of communication. This enables the researcher to understand the circumstances of the participants from their own definitions and explanations. The relevant sampling method for the selection of the participants who are information- rich was the purposive sample. Purposive sampling was used in this instance and is defined as a sampling based on the judgment of the researcher. Purposive sampling method was used in this study to select a school at Hammanskraal, Gauteng Province from which its woman principal, two heads of the departments and two educators were interviewed. The management process of data which were collected in this fashion follows a sequence of stages, namely, (i) that data are transcribed from the tapes, (ii) that the data are coded, and (iii) that data are interpreted.

The succeeding chapter is concerned with the presentation of the research findings.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research data which were collected from a primary school woman principal, two heads of the departments and two educators through the data collection method of semi-structured interview. As was reiterated throughout the previous chapters, the basis of this study was to investigate the styles for handling conflict and the knowledge and skills regarding conflict management which women principals use in order to maintain superior- subordinate relationships at schools.

In chapter two, the researcher has defined conflict management, and also conceptualized it through the discussion of its theoretical perspectives, the classification of conflicts and the strategies for the elimination of conflicts. Chapter three on the other hand, was concentrated on the resolution of conflict which was viewed from a feminist perspective. Common conflicts which occur at schools, the roles of the principal, the challenges to principals, definition and conceptualization of feminism and the strengths of women principals' leadership were identified and discussed. Literature suggested that in fact women principals perform better than their male counterparts due to the reasons that women principals have strong leadership qualities.

5.2   PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE KEY THEMES

In the previous chapter, the researcher mentioned that the participants for the study composed of a woman school principal,

two heads of the departments and two educators. These participants were requested to respond to 6 qualitative questions which are contained in APPENDIX A which is included in this study. The participants will not be identified by their real identities and rather will be mentioned through the use of the pseudonyms.

The research instruments were concentrated around only six (6) themes which concerned the participants' definitions of the concepts conflict and conflict management, the occurrence of conflict in the school environment, the opinions of the participants with regard to their feelings about conflict, the conflict resolution styles which are used in the school environment, the principals' conflict management approaches and the effect of conflict management style on principals' relationships with their subordinates.

5.2.1 Participants' definition of concepts

The participants were requested to define the concepts conflict and conflict management in their own words.

The principal, a head of department and an educator defined conflict in a most acceptable context. Their responses are as follows:

The principal defined conflict by stating that it "is an argument or disagreement between two people or more than two people." A head of department described conflict as, "disagreement between two people." One educator said that conflict "is the misunderstanding between people or parties."

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With regard to the definition of conflict management, the participants responded as follows:

A head of department said conflict management "is when you manage misunderstanding between people, and how you respond to people when they have arguments." An educator mentioned that conflict management is "controlling the disagreement which can occur during your management."

The researcher is of the opinion that the educators, heads of the departments and the principal understood conflict and conflict management concepts.

5.2.2 Occurrence of conflict in school environment

The participants were requested to report on how conflicts usually occur in the school and the impacts these conflicts have upon the working situation. These were the responses:

The principal reported that there were no serious conflicts at the school. According to her, some teachers may have negative attitudes during meetings where "you find that it's only one who is always trying to be negative." By this, she means that although there were no serious conflicts at the school, certain teachers sometimes showed dissatisfaction about certain issues. Thus, as Whitfield (1994:4) have reported, conflict is an inevitable part of life. Hodgetts (1990:340-341) mentioned that conflict occurs in an interpersonal basis and at other times it takes place between groups. A head of department said that late submission of tasks was a common source of conflict in the school. The other head of department felt that conflicts in the school do occur especially when

"a teacher responding in an unfriendly manner because "she was busy but she didn't answer correctly… she was bully." The participant is of the opinion that conflicts occur mostly among the teachers because "I can say misunderstanding between people under the same.. if you don't understand what the other teacher is saying." This participant maintains that conflict occurs if teachers have different perspectives about phenomena and their possible solutions. According to an educator, there is no serious conflict except the one which occurs due to lack of information, that is, teachers believe information is being withheld from them by the principal and heads of the departments. The other teacher reported that the occurrence of conflict between himself/herself and other teachers is due to the reason that some teachers usually interfere when he/she talks to the children. Interference is like interruption in that the interfering person does not only disturbs the interaction between others, but he/she also causes misunderstanding and conflict amongst them. The view of this teacher is that conflict occurs during meetings because some teachers do not respond to others in a positive way.

When participants were requested to report about the types of conflict at school, they said as follows:

The principal said that the type of conflicts which occur at the school are that the teachers are sometimes late at school, and that some fail to submit learning experiences. Another type of conflict is among the learners who fight with each other and sometimes steal from each other. A head of department reported that there are no serious conflicts occurring in the school except among the children who play rough and hurt each other. According to the participant, conflict among teachers occurs when some teachers are "not with

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the information" they require. Another head of department said conflict at the school occurs when other teachers fail to do the work and that this retards the team spirit for performance. A teacher reported that there were no conflicts at the school due to the fact that the colleagues are disciplined. The only type of conflict is among the kids who fight and throw stones. This teacher said that sometimes conflict may occur when teachers are denied information. Asked whether this is a lack of communication, he/she answered 'yes.' Deprivation of knowledge and information can manifest into conflict. Teachers who are denied information feel deprived and as a such they may retaliate in several unpopular behaviours which can cause problems to the school system. Another teacher mentioned that conflicts occur among teachers and among groups of teachers. In this regard, it means that teachers form small groups which are rival to one another. Conflict can occur when teachers are late at school. Another area of conflict is when the teachers are not dedicated to their work.

5.2.3 Feelings about conflict

Since conflict composes two elements, namely, a negative element and a positive element, the researcher requested the participants to inform the study on how they view it. Their responses were as follows:

The principal mentioned that "conflict creates stress among educators, but at the same time conflict stimulates learning from each other's experience." The principal therefore identified both a negative element and a positive element of conflict in her response. A head of department views conflict as a positive concept because according to him/her, it is an "eye-opener.' The participant

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explained that he/she gained much from conflicts with colleagues. Another head of department said conflict is not good at the work place. He/she has mixed feelings because he/she reported also that it is good for "sometimes it works a lot because other people prefer to use to settle things down before they occur." An educator reported that conflict is good in that it could be used as a means for pressurizing lax teachers to do their work. Another educator said that conflict is "something which is unpleasant and which results in sadness."

Thus, the participants, like the principal, recognised both the negative and the positive aspects of conflict upon the work environment.

5.2.4 Solutions to conflict in school environment

The participants were requested to share information with the study regarding the methods they implement when they prevent conflicts in schools. These are what they said:

The principal said the method for the prevention of conflict is to listen attentively and to become unbiased. She said she attends workshops and read material on conflict management and that she adheres to the government policies meant for preventing conflicts at school. The principal maintained that conflict is something which cannot be prevented in the school. Instead, people can learn from conflict. A head of department said that conflict could be effectively prevented at the school only if transparency is maintained, that is, "teachers will know each and everything that is happening in the school so that they should not ask behind the principal or behind the heads of the departments." Another head of department

reported that the best methods for preventing conflicts at the school is through working as team around the problem area and knowing others' personalities so that one can react accordingly to their behaviours. An educator said the method for preventing conflict in the school is to provide teachers with proper information at all times. Another educator said there are three methods for preventing conflicts at the school, namely, management must be transparent, it must involve all the teachers in the processes of the school and lastly, management must not take side when dealing with problems.

It is obvious from the above responses that a number of different conflict management styles are available in theory and practice. The participants reported that the following conflict management styles are available at the school:

The principal said she firstly identify the problem area and then invites teachers to her office where they discuss it in order to avoid further conflict in future. She said the best conflict management style she applied was mainly discussion which "lead to the solving of the problem whereby a consensus is met by the two parties." A head of department responded that the best conflict management style will be to identify where conflict originated and then continue to collect more information about it and its possible solutions. Research is an important part of the conflict management style. The participant went on to explain that another conflict management style which is effective is the involvement of all those who are involved in the conflict to participate in the identification of its causes and solutions. The final conflict management style mentioned by the participant is that of accepting own mistakes. The participant said the best method for handling conflicts is through

empathetically understanding the psychological states of the teachers, that is, if the teacher is depressed, he/she must not be further stressed by unnecessary demands. A second head of department said conflicts could be handled through reprimanding the wrong party to the conflict. Reprimand mean telling the person that he/she is wrong and that if he/she commits similar mistake in the future, he/she will be punished. The participant said reprimand must be conducted "not in a bad mood." An educator said conflict management style must concentrate on information dissemination. According to the second educator, conflict management styles used at the school are to identify the sources of conflict and its solution and listening to both parties involved in the conflict. The teacher said that if conflict is not accordingly resolved, it must be referred to the school governing body and later to the area project officer (APO). A group discussion is used to resolve conflicts at the school. Team work is another conflict management style used at the school.

It is clear that conflict management styles are closely related to communication, since the participants mentioned the involvement of different parties in the identification of the causes and the solutions as an effective method. The participants mentioned the following about communication:

The principal reported that she maintained good communication by inviting all the staff members to attend the formal meetings, they talk freely during breaks and lastly, they join the trips through which everyone is given the opportunity to become used to the others. According to the head of department, communication is a two-way process whereby two people are talking to each other, maybe in a group and or in a discussion. The participant advised that the best

methods for maintaining good communication at school is to be humble when confronting others and to listen attentively, and never to use a strong language at all. A second head of the department said that communication is defined as a process when two persons with different ideas come together and share what they have in order to achieve effective goals in the work environment. For this participant, the teachers must refrain from being grudgy. Grudge is a condition of transference which individuals attack other persons who were initially not the cause of their problems. An educator maintained that communication is the interaction of people wherein the flow of information moves from one person to the other. The teacher reported that communication is about the interaction with others so that when problems are encountered, they are reported and resolved. A second teacher said communication is the involvement of two people talking together verbally or through telephone and in a language which is understood by both. Good communication is maintained if after talking, people understand each other and get what they initially wanted.

Communication is not only through the spoken language, it also involves the non-verbal communication such as body movements and written messages. In a nut shell, all the participants in the study indicated that effective communication is a strategy to resolve conflicts at a work place.

5.2.5   Principal's conflict management approach

It has been reiterated throughout the previous chapters that this study is aimed at investigating the styles for handling conflicts and the knowledge and skills regarding conflict management which women principals command at schools. The researcher therefore,

requested the participants to report about the manner is which the principals handle conflicts at the schools. The responses were as follows:

A head of department maintained that the principal is usually good in handling conflicts at the school because she usually comes up with the best possible solutions to the conflicts. Another head of department mentioned that there is less conflict to be handled because the teachers and the principal are working in a supportive and friendly manner. An educator said the principal usually invite the conflicting parties to discuss a problem and that she does not take sides during discussions. A second teacher reported that the principal usually invites the conflicting parties to discuss the nature of the conflict. The principal uses the negotiation skills and also tries to maintain peace among the conflicting parties.

5.2.6 Effect of conflict management style on principal's relationships with subordinates

The participants were requested to report of the effect conflict management style has upon the principals' relationships with subordinates. The principal holds the superior-most position in the school and all others, namely, the heads of the departments and the teachers, are her subordinates. In this regard, the responses were aimed at measuring this superior-subordinates relationship between the principal and other members of the staff.

These are the responses:

A head of department said that his/her relationship with the principal is good because they usually discuss their work, they

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show each other mistakes when they occur and that "we encourage each other, we build one another." A second head of department said the relationship with the principal is good because the principal is not a rude person, or "someone who dislikes starting an argument… we always work together." The head of the department said that there are no arguments between himself/herself and the principal. An educator reported that he/she has a good relationship with the principal. A second educator reported that his/her relationship with the principal is good because they both can show each other's mistakes. The principal is a good listener because if she is wrong, she does not insists on arguing. This teacher reported that the principal has a tendency of ignoring his/her problem because she is a woman.

5.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the research study which were collected through the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews.

The participants could define the concepts conflict and conflict management adequately. They reported that conflicts occur in the school environment because they are evident among the teachers, between the teachers and the principals, between teachers and the learners and among the learners themselves. Conflict has both a negative element and a positive element. The participants mentioned that they use different conflict management styles in the school environment, and that communication is the most important concept in the conflict resolution process. The participants reported that the principals' attitudes, knowledge and skills in the area of resolving conflicts are the components which maintain a good

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principals' relationships with their subordinates. But since nothing has been concluded and recommended about these findings, the researcher has selected to include these conclusions and recommendations in the succeeding chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The second and third chapters of this study were concentrated on the definitions of conflict and conflict management, the theoretical perspectives regarding conflict management, the classification of conflicts and the strategies for the elimination of conflicts in the school environment, and the explanation of the feminist perspective with regard to its view on the common conflicts which occur at schools, the roles of the principals, the challenges facing the women principals, definition and conceptualization of feminism, and lastly, the strengths of women principals' leadership which are usually identified at the school environment.

The previous chapter presented the findings of this study which were collected from a primary school woman principal, two heads of the departments and two educators through the data collection method of semi-structured interview. The findings were only presented as such without them being interpreted to make sense to the reader. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations for the study.

6.2   THE REDUCTION OF ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS INTO FEW MANAGEABLE THEMES

In an attempt to draw summary, conclusions and recommendations for the study, the researcher has reduced the findings into six manageable themes as follows: (i) the participants' definitions of

the concepts conflict and conflict management, (ii) the occurrence of conflict in the school environment, (iii) the opinions of the participants with regard to their feelings about conflict, (iv) the conflict resolution styles which are used in the school environment, (v) the principal's conflict management approaches, and (vi) the effect of conflict management style on principal's relationships with subordinates.

The conclusions and recommendation for the study will therefore be centred around the mentioned themes.

The discussion below will be presented in a simplified process which is made up of the following steps:

1.   Firstly, the researcher will present an introductory note regarding the research instrument which was used in the previous chapter.

2.   Secondly, the researcher will present the summaries of the findings of the study.

3.   Thirdly, the researcher will make conclusions from the findings of the study. She will also support the findings by information she gathered from the literature review.

4.   Fourthly and lastly,   the researcher will draw the recommendations for the study.

6.2.1 PARTICIPANT'S DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The researcher requested the participants to define the concepts conflict and conflict management.

The participants in the study defined the concepts conflict and conflict management accordingly. It is concluded here that although the school environment seems to be denied of information, training and methods regarding conflict management, most of the stakeholders in a school understand what conflict and conflict management are about.

It is hereby recommended that the educators, heads of the departments and the principals be afforded an opportunity to access the workshops and other information dissemination methods regarding conflict management so that in a nut shell, they are encouraged to maintain healthy working relationships at schools. Kalamas and Kalamas (1993:14) supported that "there are many workshops and seminars available to the general public that deal with career related issues (career decision, time management, stress management, managing personal finances, retirement planning, and so on)" which the personnel at schools can access. Slaikeu and Hasson (1998:7) on the other hand have identified the lack of information as an important cause of conflict.

The participants indicated that they fully understand matters and processes involved in the conflict management. It must be recommended that similar workshops and the reading material and educational policies be made available to the participants in the school environment.

6.2.2 OCCURRENCE OF CONFLICTS IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The participants reported that conflicts at the school environment occur due to the following: (i) some teachers may have negative

attitudes during meetings, (ii) late submission of tasks, (iii) some teachers are moody towards others, (iv) teachers do not share similar solutions to problems, (v) the teachers are denied information, (vi) some teachers interfere when others attempt to resolve problems with the learners, (vii) some of the teachers are sometimes late at school, (viii) the learners fight among each other, (ix) a lack of communication, (x) teachers form groups which fight each other, and that (xi) some of the teachers are not dedicated to their work.

It is concluded that in the primary schools, most conflicts occur among teachers, between teachers and the heads of the departments, between teachers and the principals, between teachers and the learners, and among the learners. School principals who are supportive to their subordinates' concerns are more probably to experience less conflicts at the schools than are those who are non-supportive.

Hodgetts (1990:295) has recommended that good leaders have the ability to influence others in directing their efforts towards the achievement of the goals, they drive originality and tolerance and that they have characteristics such as superior mental ability, emotional maturity and problem solving skills.

6.2.3 FEELINGS OF THE PARTICIPANTS ABOUT CONFLICT AT THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The researcher wanted to gather information with regard to the feeling of the participants towards conflict in the school environment.

The researcher reported in the previous chapter that the participants view conflict as having either the negative or the positive impacts upon the school environment.

Participants reported that conflict creates stress among educators, is not good at the work place, it could be used as a means for pressurizing lax teachers to do their work, and that it is something which is unpleasant and results in sadness. Viewed in this perspective therefore, the researcher concludes that conflict must be discouraged at all cost from a school environment. The view is supported by Hodgetts (1990:340) who identified that conflict is associated with stress which he defines as "the condition that is characterized by emotional strain or physical discomfort and that, unrelieved, can impair one's ability to cope with the environment."

It is recommended that conflicts of all sorts must be minimized at the school environment.

The participants reported that they view conflict as stimulating learning, as an 'eye-opener,' and that conflict is a most preferable manner to be used when problems are to be settled before the organization experiences serious close down. Whitfield (1994:4) have mentioned that conflict is not always bad. They were supported by Hodgetts (1990:340) who suggested that conflict can only be bad if it leads to a deterioration of cooperation, trust and loyalty among individuals.

It is recommended that principals should accept the inevitability of both the negative and the positive conflict at schools.

6.2.4 SOLUTIONS TO CONFLICT IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The participants were requested to inform the study about the solutions to conflict in the school environment, the conflict management styles which were available at the school, and the importance of communication in the conflict management.

Firstly, the participants indicated that they use a variety of methods in order to resolve conflicts in the school environment. These methods are as follows: (i) to listen attentively and to become unbiased, (ii) to attend workshops and read material on conflict management, (iii) to adhere to the government policies meant for preventing conflicts at school, (iv) to be transparent, (v) working as team around the problem area, (vi) knowing others peoples' personalities, (vii) providing teachers with proper information at all times, and (viii) the involvement of all the teachers in the processes of the school.

It is recommended that all the school participants be provided with adequate workshops related to the conflict management arena. Kalamas and Kalamas (1993:41) supported this recommendation when they wrote that "appropriate training will help your employees grow and develop while helping your organization gain a competitive advantage in its markets."

Secondly, the participants informed the study that the available conflict management styles at the school were that (i) they firstly identify the problem area and then invite teachers to discuss its causes and possible solutions, (ii) they maintain a consensus between the two parties involved in the conflict, (iii) they identify where conflict originated and then continue to collect more

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information about it and its possible solutions, (iv) they involve all those who are involved in the conflict to participate in the identification of its causes and solutions, (v) they accept own mistakes, (vi) they empathetically understand the psychological states of the others, (vii) they reprimand the wrong party to the conflict, (viii) they disseminate information to others all the time, (ix) they refer unresolved conflict to the school governing body and the area project officer (APO), (x) they utilize group discussions to resolve conflicts at the school, and that (xi) they use team work to assess the problem and its possible solutions.

Hodgetts (1990:343) agrees that "if the manager believes some action is needed, three causes are available: (1) tell the employee to shape up or ship out, (2) discipline the person, or (3) discuss the problem with the employee in an efforts to work out a solution."

It is therefore recommended that the teachers, the heads of departments and the school principals use these approaches in an attempt to resolve conflicts in order to maintain good superior-subordinate relationships at schools.

Thirdly, the participants informed the researcher that communication at school is maintained through the following: (i) the involvement of different parties in the identification of the causes and the solutions to a problem, (ii) invitation of all the staff members to attend the formal meetings, (ii) encouragement of all members to talk freely about the problems during breaks, (iii) encouragement of members to join the trips in which everyone can have an opportunity to become used to the others, (iv) to discourage the usage of a strong language, (v) to encourage individuals with differing ideas to come together and share what

they have in order to achieve effective consensus, and (vi) the encouragement of interaction between people so that the flow of information moves from one person to the other.

Communication is a necessary aspect in the conflict management. The researcher recommends that the school management and the educators must practice open-communication with each other. Kressler (2003:1) has mentioned that this approach encourages the stakeholders to achieve the enhanced performance of the organizations.

6.2.5 THE PRINCIPAL'S CONFLICT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The researcher intended to collect information with regard to the principal's conflict management approaches.

The researcher has gathered information with regard to the participants' view about the manner in which the woman principal handles conflicts at the school.

The participants responded that the principal's conflict management approaches are as follows: (i) the principal is usually good in handling conflicts at the school because she usually comes up with the best possible solutions to the conflicts, (ii) the teachers and the principal are working in a supportive and friendly manner, (iii) the principal invites the conflicting parties to discuss a problem and that she does not take sides during discussions, an that (iv) the principal uses the negotiation skills to maintain peace among the conflicting parties. These responses delineate that the women principals at a primary schools are conducting the conflict resolution

in the most acceptable manner, which also entails that the women principals are good leaders.

The effective leadership skills were summarized by Hodgetts (1990:300) who said "some of the social characteristics of effective leaders are administrative ability, interpersonal skills, tact and diplomacy, ability to enlist cooperation, popularity, social participation, cooperativeness and attractiveness."

It is recommended that the principals' approach to resolving conflicts at school be based upon the technical skills, human skills and the administrative skills.

6.2.6 THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES ON THE PRINCIPAL'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUBORDINATES

The researcher gathered information with regard to the effects the principal's conflict management styles had on her relationships with subordinates.

The conflict management styles of the principal on her relationships with subordinates were reported in the previous chapter as follows:

(i) the subordinates' relationships with the principal is good because the principal usually discusses the work with them, they and the principal are able to show each other mistakes when they occur and that they encourage each other, (ii) the principal is not a rude person, (iii) the principal avoids arguments, (iv) the principal always work together with the team of teachers, (v) the principal shares her mistakes with the subordinates, and that (vi) the principal is an attentive listener.

This skill is termed motivation which "refers to whether and how much, a person wants to do something, the amount of efforts and care they are prepared to put into it, and how long they are willing to keep on doing it" (Gray, 2004:19). For Hodgetts (1990:298), effective leaders have a high motivation drive.

It is concluded in this study that a principal maintains good relationships when she exhibits effective leadership qualities of motivating the subordinates towards working together to identify the causes and solutions of the conflict. Thus "leaders who have a high concern for both people and work are engaged in participative leadership. They encourage their subordinates to play an active role in operating the enterprise, but they reserve the right to make the final decision on important matters " (Hodgetts, 1990:308).

The researcher therefore recommends that principals at the primary schools must exhibit effective leadership skills in order to maintain good relationships with subordinates.

6.3. AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The summaries, conclusions and recommendations which were made in this study clearly indicate few areas in which future research could be concentrated. These areas are listed as follows:

- training of the school management personnel in the area of conflict management,

- effective leadership skills for school principals and their subordinates,

- the nature of conflicts in the workplace: its advantages and disadvantages,

- the effective conflict resolution strategies which could be formulated in relation to the school environment, and

- communication skills necessary to the conflict management at schools.

6.4   LIMITATIONS FOR THE STUDY

Although the researcher is of the opinion that this study was conducted in a systematic manner in order to reduce the possibilities of errors, the study has some limitations as follows:

1. Data which were collected in one primary school involving only one principal, two heads of the departments and two educators cannot be generalized to the entire population. Neuman (2000:217) agrees when he states that "larger samples are needed if one wants high accuracy, if the population has a great deal of variability or heterogeneity, or if one wants to examine many variables in the data analysis simultaneously."

2. Based on the above limitation therefore, the researcher contends that this type of research requires researchers to utilize other data collection methods than the semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews consume more time and they cover a very minimal number of respondents. The researcher recommends that the self-administered questionnaires be utilized in the place of the semi-structured interviews. Neuman (2000:267) has advised that

the response rate for self-administered questionnaires could reach close to 100%.

6.5   SUMMARY

The researcher is of the opinion that she has laid a foundation from which other researchers who are interested in pursuing studies in the area of conflict management at schools can build. She has attempted to satisfy the requirements of both reliability and validity in her study so that her area of study could be accurately replicated by others. Her research report, this dissertation, is made available for access by others.

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8. APPENDIX A

Semi-structured interview schedule for the school women principal, HODs and educators

1. How would you define the concepts conflict and conflict management in your own words?

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2. Kindly report on the nature of conflicts which occur in your school environment

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3. What are your feelings about conflict?

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4. What are the conflict resolution styles you use in the school environment?

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5. Please report on the effects the conflict management styles which you apply have on your relationships with subordinates.

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6. What is your opinion regarding the effectiveness of women principals as school managers?

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7. Please identify and explain the areas which the women principals must improve in order to maintain their interaction with the subordinates.

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8. What actually makes women principals good leaders at the school environment?

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9. What is your opinion regarding the representation of women in the principalship position in your area?

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The Gifts of the Holy Spirit!

1. The Power for Service.

Act 1:8 *But you shall **receive power**, the **Holy Spirit** coming upon you. And you shall **be witnesses** to Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

- We obtain spiritual power, equipping us with supernatural gifts.

- The anointing of Holy Spirit's power is for one thing, to be an effective witness.

Act 2:4 *And they were all filled of the* *Holy Spirit*, *and began to* *speak in* *other languages*, *as the* *Spirit gave* *them utterance.*

- *The evidence of infilling with the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.*

1Co 12:4 *But there are **differences of gifts**, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are **differences of ministries**, but the same Lord. 6 And there are **differences of workings**, but it is the same God working all things in all.*

- *Every ministry functions by gifts.*

2. Gifts empower us for Service.

1Co 12:7 *But to each one is given the **showing forth** of the Spirit to our profit.*

- *The effect of His presence reveled by his gifts for our benefit.*

- *Not your gift but a ability from the Holy Spirit, only a gift if given.*

1Co 12:7 *But to each one is given the showing forth of the Spirit to **our profit**. .*

Rom 12:4 For even as we have **many members** in one body, and **all** members do not have the **same function**, 5 so we the many are **one body in Christ**, and each one members of one another.

- We are different but we need each other.

3. Different Gifts

1Co 12:8 *For through the Spirit is given to one a* *word of wisdom*; *and to another a* *word of knowledge*, *according to the same Spirit; 9 and to another* *faith* *by the same Spirit; and to another the gifts* *of healing* *by the same Spirit; 10 and to another* *workings of powers*, *to another* *prophecy*; *and to another* *discerning of spirits*; *and to another* *kinds of tongues*; *and to another the* *interpretation of tongues*. *11 But the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing separately to each one as* *He desires*.

Rom 12:6 *Then having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, if **prophecy**, according to the proportion of faith; 7 or **ministry** (serves), in the ministry; or he who **teaches**, in the teaching; 8 or he who **exhorts**, in the encouragement; or he who **shares** (giving), in simplicity; or he who takes the **lead** (administration), in diligence; or he who shows **mercy**, in cheerfulness.*

4. Three categories of Gifts.

1Co 12:8 *For through the Spirit is given to one a* **word of wisdom***; and to another a* **word of knowledge***, according to the same Spirit; 9 and to another* **faith** *by the same Spirit; and to another the gifts* **of healing** *by the same Spirit; 10 and to another* **workings of powers***, to another* **prophecy***; and to another* **discerning of spirits***; and to another* **kinds of tongues***; and to another the* **interpretation of tongues***. 11 But the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing separately to each one as* **He desires.**

i) Revelation Gifts

➢ **Word of Wisdom** – wisdom spiritual or worldly.

➢ **Word of Knowledge** – the act of knowing.

➢ **Discerning of spirits** – the recognizing and discerning spiritual influences/powers controlling people or places.

ii) Action gifts

➢ **Gift of Faith** – Supernatural believe in God's provision and promises.

➢ **Gift of Healing** – Supernatural anointing to heal the sick.

• Every believer's responsibility to pray for the sick.

Mar 16:17 *And miraculous signs will follow to those **believing** these things: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will **lay hands on the sick**, and they **will be well**.*

➢ **Workings of powers** - Supernatural powers to control natural and spiritual world.

*Act 13:11   And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is on you. And **you shall be blind**, not seeing the sun for a while. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell on him, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.*

*Act 8:39   And when they had come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **caught Philip away**, so that the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing.*

iii) The utterance Gifts

➢ **Speaking in Tongues** – *the act of declaring a message from God*

1Co 14:22 *So that tongues are **not a sign** to those who believe, but to those who **do not believe**. But **prophesying** is not to those who do not believe, but to those **who believe**.*

Jud 1:20 *But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** in your most holy faith, **praying in the Holy Spirit**,*

Act 2:4 *And they were all filled of the **Holy Spirit**, and began to **speak in other languages**, as the **Spirit gave** them utterance.*

1Co 14:14 *For if* **I** *pray in a tongue*, *my* *spirit prays*, *but my mind is unfruitful.* *15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the mind.*

1Co 14:18 *I thank my God that I* *speak more languages* *than all of you;*

➢ *Interpretation of Tongues* – *Act of reveling the tongues message.*

➢ *Prophecy* – *Proclaiming a message form God. Portion of faith*

*1Co 14:3 But he who **prophesies** speaks to men for **building up**, and **exhortation**, and **comfort**.*

Rom 11:29 God's gifts and God's call are under full warranty--never *canceled*, never *rescinded*.

- *Gifts does not prove your relationship God.*