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ABSTRACT
            Educational administrators cannot avoid interacting daily
with diverse groups of people including teachers, students, parents, school
boards, and the community around the school. Each of these groups has its own
problems, needs, views, expectations, and demands which often conflict with
the ideals, demands, and views of others in the educational enterprise.
Diagnosing conflict in a given situation is the basis for choosing an
appropriate management strategy. There is no one best way of managing
conflicts in educational organizations. There are, however, a number of ways,
each suited to circumstances in a particular situation. Most literature
suggests the basic principle in choosing a way of managing conflict is to use
the approach most likely to minimize destructive aspects and to maximize the
opportunity for organizational growth and development. To a very large
extent, leaders' conflict mediation/management role is one of the most
commonly performed, doing a great deal of work at unrelated pace, yet, never
sure when they have succeeded, or when their whole organization may come down
around them because of some miscalculation of which they will have initiated
another conflict. (Contains 34 references.) (RS)

The Role of the School Administrator

in Conflict Management

By: Edith George Mhehe

The Open University of Tanzania

2

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The article defines conflict [kinds, causes, positive and negative effects of conflict] in educational organizations, and conflict management processes by school administrators. It provides conceptual, theoretical, and scholarly knowledge about conflict management in educational administration that can be used in schools, colleges, universities, and other academic teaching and training institutions.

Introduction

According to bureaucratic theory, existence of conflict in an organization is evidence of organization breakdown and that there has been failure on the part of management to plan adequately and / or to exercise sufficient power and control. On the other hand, the human relations theory views conflict as an especially negative and evidence of failure to develop appropriate norms in the organization (Owens 1995 p.146).

Traditional administrative theory has usually been strongly biased in favor of the "ideal"-- the smooth-running of organization, where harmony, unity, coordination, efficiency, and order exists. While the human relations theory seeks to achieve this [ideal] through happy, congenital work groups, classical supporters would seek to achieve it through control and strong organizational structure (Owens 1995 p.146). However, both theories tend to believe that conflict is disruptive and must be avoided.

More recent literature and studies of organizations, organizational behavior, and organization administration have put a different view on conflict in organizations. This paper focuses on the crucial task of the school principal's role in conflict management. The mediation of conflict seems a daily administrator activity. To explore this common activity, the paper discusses: (1) definition of conflict; (2) causes of conflicts in educational organizations; (3) types of conflicts in educational organizations; (4) effects of conflicts on educational organizations; (5) functions of conflict in educational organizations; (6)

management of conflict in educational organizations; (7) the school administrator as mediator of conflict; and (8) conclusion.

Definition of Conflict

Contemporary literature gives various definitions of what conflict is. Thomas (1976) and Owens (1995) explained that there is no consensus on the specific definition of the concept "conflict." However, Deutsch (1973) notes that two things are essential to any conflict: (1) divergent views and (2) incompatibility of those views. Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. The incompatible actions may originate in one person, group, or nation and are called interpersonal, intra-group, or international respectively.

Conflicts may even occur when there is no perceived or actual incompatibility of goals. For instance, the principal and the teachers in a school may disagree on how to teach mathematics; or the School Board of a school and the teachers may disagree on how to discipline students. Goals are concordant but approaches differ based on the values, beliefs, and norms held by each party member.

Conflict can occur in a cooperative or a competitive context. Conflict could result from sharing leadership roles in the school bureaucracy, such as heads of department and the assistant principal, or sharing the resources, like money, books, computers available for day- to- day use in running of the school and the school projects. Actions that are incompatible with another actions prevent, obstruct, interfere [with], injure, or in some way make the latter less likely or less effective. Berelson and Steiner (1964), Deutsch (1973), and Owens (1995) pointed out that incompatibility creates the dilemma of choosing among alternatives, and conflict becomes "the pursuit of the incompatible, or at least seemingly incompatible goals such that gains to one side is attained at the expense of the other." In this way everyone involved in the conflict strives to avoid losing, and losers seek to become winners.

"The classic zero-sum, win-lose" situation is potentially dysfunctional to organizational life because striving for one's preferred outcome sometimes produces hostility. This situation demands the mediation of the administrator. However, the processes of conflict resolution are influenced by the context within which the conflict occurs.

These definitions indicate that conflicts arise from different things. Loewen (1983), looking into the causes of conflict, and Fris, Eiserman, and McIntosh, (1992), examining causes of conflict in schools, explained that conflict is like power, its ambivalence can cause great injury if not well-harnessed. They note that conflict is pervasive in society, but, most human activities do not end in conflicts. Hence, conflict can be viewed as an integral facet of human behavior that does not exert constant force in shaping the majority of human activity. Conflict must be seen as exceptional human behavior and should not be exaggerated simply because of its visibility. The consequences of conflict, as observed by Owens (1995). are such that they are major contributors to the study of organizations and organizational behavior to day.

Causes of Conflicts in Educational Organizations

Conflict processes in work places are often so spectacular and visible that leaders overestimate their importance in shaping organizational behavior. Loewen (1983) estimated about 10 percent of human activity in educational organizations to be involved into conflict. He asserted that conflict can be viewed as an integral force in shaping human activity in the organizations.

Roethlisberrger (1959), addressing conflict in organizations, pointed out that when management is out of touch with the sentiments of the workers and acts in ignorance of these sentiments, management practices often collide with the sentiments of employees. This means lack of understanding between management and workers and causes disagreement between the two groups. Ruben (1978, p. 202) explained that communication or the lack of it causes conflict: "Probably the most pervasive view of the

relationship (between communication and conflict) is that conflict is, in fact, the direct result of the faulty communication, ...a misunderstanding or a disagreement."

Most conflicts, according to this view, could ultimately be attributed to problems in communication. Assael (1969, p. 573) stated that conflict was an outgrowth of "functional interdependence and the scarcity of resources." He explained that, when groups within an organization depend upon each other for goal attainment or productivity, conflict often occurs. Also, scarce resources in an organization can cause conflict between competitors for those resources. Pondy (1969), when summarizing Walton's (1965) work, concluded that conflict in an organization could be attributed to jurisdictional boundary ambiguity, a perceived increase in departmental friction, departmental dependence or physical obstacles to communication.

Corwing (1969), studying staff conflicts in 28 public schools, identified five variables that lead to conflict: (a) Structural differentiation...where conflict was associated with the degree of organization differentiation, staff specialization and the number of levels of authority; (b) participation in the authority structure where conflict was a result of decentralization of decision-making; (c) regulating procedures where conflict was related to the degree of organizational control; (d) heterogeneity and stability where heterogeneity of the staff were all related to conflict; and (e) interpersonal structure where the rate of informal interaction among staff was related to the amount of tension and conflict.

In fact, Corwin noted direct causal relationships between conflict and organizational structure, participation, regulating procedures, heterogeneity and stability and the interpersonal structure. Hence, it can be observed that technically, as one of the successful processes of dealing with conflict, administrative leaders must note the places where conflict occurs. For instance, they should study places in the organizations where people meet and deal with issues related to boundaries of control such as subject specialty, interdependence especially that relating to student discipline, resource competition like sharing of computers in teaching the students, and differences in approaches to problem

solving, particularly in resolving students' discipline disputes. As Hodgkinson (1991, p. 67) put it:

> ...the central problem of administration was one of reconciling two often divergent interests: those of the individual and those of the collectivity or organization. To make these interests converge upon the goals of collectivity is to accomplish the core task of leadership.

Types of Conflict

Leadership can become confused in attempting to deal with conflict in an organization unless the leader understands and can interpret the nature of the conflict he/she is dealing with. Leaders must therefore examine types of conflicts and their associated influence on educational organizations. Barnard (1938) asserted that human behavior is controlled by private moral codes. These moral codes are derived from different bases including a social- environment base contained in political, economic and religious grounds; a physical- environment base contained in biological properties and phylogenetic history grounds; a technological- practices base; an education base, and a training base. Barnard noted that these moral codes are absorbed positively from the environment or negatively by lack of concrete experience. He explained that some individual codes are superior and command stronger validity or power. Barnard explained that individuals experience conflict as a direct result of the specific codes of behavior pulling them in different directions, (see also Hodgkinson, 1991, pp. 96-101).

Argyris (1957), however, claimed that conflict occurs when a person is not able to act in a specific situation, and that all conflicts involve the tension of opposite needs being enacted at the same time. He developed four types of conflicts from his theory: (a) when a person desires to do two things which he / she likes equally well but it is possible to do only one; (b) when the person has the choice of doing only two things, neither of which he /she likes; (c) when the person has the choice of doing something he / she likes, but runs the risk of punishment; and (d) when the person has alternative choices of doing something he / she likes but runs the risk of punishment. For Argyris, conflict arises as a matter of choice with the risk of punishment.

However, Likert (1976, p. 8) adopted Guetzkow and Cyr (1954) categorization of organizational conflict and identified what he called substantive conflict. These were conflicts "rooted in the substance of the task." They manifest themselves in job- related frustrations and emotions, and spark conflicts of affective aspects of the interpersonal relations. Coser (1956, p. 49) also identified two types of conflicts (a) "realistic conflict," which he refereed to as "conflicts which arise from frustration that is directed at presumed frustrating object" and (b) "non-realistic conflict" which are motivated by the need for tension release of at least one of the participant. This type of conflict as a resulted from the simple lust to fight. Bernard (1965, p. 454) supported Coser's notion that "some people love to pit their wits against worthy opponents." Beck and Betz (1975), examining organizational conflict in schools, identified two types of conflicts: (a) intra-stratum conflict between groups or individuals of equal power and (b) inter-stratum conflict between groups or individuals of unequal power. School conflicts are inter-stratum, and the conflicting parties have power based within the organization.

Apart from the "lust for the fight idea" developed by Coser, theorists have created two generic typologies: (a) those which occur within the organization between organizational members and (b) those which occur between competing organizations. If these theorists are correct, those dealing with conflicts in educational institutions must recognize that: (a) the principal is more responsible in dealing with those conflicts which occur within the organization between organization members while (b) the superintendent deals more with those conflicts which occur between competing organizations.

Effects of Conflicts on Educational Organizations

Owens (1995) explained that the effects of conflict on organizations must be handled with care because the powerful hostility arising from conflicts can have devastating impacts upon the behavior of the people in the organization. Psychological withdrawal from the hostility, including behavior such as alienation, apathy, and indifference are common behavioral symptoms that can affect the functioning of organizations. Physical

withdrawal such as absence, tardiness, and turnover occurs widely in response to conflict in schools that is often written off as laziness on the part of teachers who have been spoiled by "soft" administrative practices. Ineffective management of conflict, such as a "hard-nosed" policy of punishment for offenses, can create a climate that exacerbates the situation and develop a downward spiral of mounting frustration, deteriorating organizational climate, and increasing destruction. Effective management of conflict, on the other hand, means treating conflict as a problem to be managed rather than be solved and emphasizes the collaborative essence of an organization. Such management can lead to productive outcomes and enhance the health of the organization. Conflict, in itself, is neither good nor bad. Its impact on the organization and the behavior of its people is largely dependent upon the way in which it is treated.

The effects of conflict to educational organizations may be observed in the organizational performance. Owens (1995) stated that, to speak of organizational conflict as good or bad, functional or dysfunctional, one must specify the criteria used in judging. While some people believe that conflict is bad, other see conflict as good and seek it. However, Owens (1995) notes that conflict impacts the performance of the organization as a system, therefore, relating to the institutional culture, interaction-influence system. Hence, the function or dysfunctional outcomes of conflict on educational organization should be considered in terms of the organizational health, adaptability and stability.

Based on modern motivation theory, conflicts are important challenges because they encourage institutional problem-solving and motivate participative leadership which fosters the growth of good ideas from the people in the organization during the process of decision making. In this respect, Thomas(1972, p. 891) observed.

> The confrontation of divergent views often produces ideas of superior quality. Divergent views are apt to be based upon different evidence. Disagreements may thus confront an individual with factors which he had previously ignored, and help him to arrive at a more comprehensive view which synthesizes elements of his own and others' positions.

Conflict makes people seek more effective ways of dealing with issues which, in turn, improves organizational functioning, cohesiveness, clarified relationships and clearer problem-solving procedures. Deustch (1973, p. 9), speaking of society in general, observed:

> Conflict within a group frequently helps to revitalize existent norms; or it contributes to the emergence of new norms. In this sense, social conflict is a mechanism for adjustment of norms adequate to new conditions. A flexible society benefits from conflict because such behavior, by helping to create and modify norms, assures its continuance under changed conditions.

Deutsch (1973) cautioned that rigid systems which suppress conflict actually maximize the dangers of catastrophic breakdown. He cited America as having experienced such events.

In Tanzania, such catastrophic incidences in educational and non-educational organizations are currently rampant. In the past five years, the University of Dar Es Salaam, some secondary schools, and other non-educational government institutions are experiencing such upheavals. A very painful incidence worth noting happened in one secondary school where about fifty students were burned to death in their dormitory. The cause was religious conflict. In another incident, a headmaster was stoned by angry students in a boarding school and was permanently crippled. The cause of the conflict was the denial of permission to hold students' dance after the examinations.

Functions of Conflicts in Educational Organizations

Owens (1995) explained that educational organizations exist to foster cooperation and human endeavor in order to achieve goals that are difficult to achieve individually. Organizational ideals emphasize cooperation, harmony, and collaboration. Although recent literature talks very little about conflict in schools, conflict is pervasive in all human experiences and has the potential to enhance progress and development in organizations if it is well harnessed. Owens (1995) claims that it is not possible to get all people in an organization completely harmonious, -- such a group would be without any progress.

Argyris (1957, p. 39) spoke of conflict as having both positive and negative characteristics: "...conflict can be used to build the personality as well as distort or even

destroy it." Ruben (1978), discussing communication and conflict said that conflict is not only essential to the growth, change, and evolution within organizational system; but it is a system's primary defense against stagnation, detachment, entropy and eventual extinction. This means that conflict, as viewed by Ruben, is an important force in an organization's growing and life survival. Conflict is a dynamic process.

Corwin (1969) saw conflict as encouraging more control over the organizations by increasing leader's interest in subordinates. Assael (1969, p. 509) noted that "...inter-oganizational conflict is beneficial when a more equitable allocation of the balance of power and economic resources result by the formation of new countervailing forces and greater balance and stability within the system." Conflict can promote equity in power and resource sharing in the organizations.

Pondy (1967) argued that conflict is a key variable in the feedback loop of an organization. A conflicting situation can provide leaders with clues of trouble in their organization when administrators direct their attention to improve the areas of conflict. He also suggested that the following conflicts could be useful for leaders who wish to develop more control in their leadership capabilities: (a) a confusing situation within the organization to cover unstated objectives; (b) a diversion among his / her subordinates so that he / she might be called in to mediate the dispute he / she instigated; and (c) a conflict situation with an out-group to maintain or increase the cohesiveness of his / her in-group. According to Pondy, conflicts can be a tool to be used skillfully by administrators to achieve successful leadership in an organization.

Management of Conflicts in Educational Organizations

Owens (1995) explained that many people do not like conflict; they fear and avoid it whenever they can. Leaders must understand these fears, so that, during conflict mediation, they take care not get pushed by the parties in the conflict to avoid or deny practices of conflict management which are considered ineffective in resolving conflicting issues. Owens further explained that the aftermath of a conflict usually causes more trouble

than the conflict itself. He warned that mismanaged conflicts in organizations can generate

hostility between the conflicting parties and can lead to hate, retribution, and antagonism.

He explained that the key goal of any conflict management is to eliminate or reduce-to

manage the hostility arising from the conflict. He advises that the time and place to

intervene is before conflict can arise, rather than after the conflict has arisen.

Owens (1995) further advised that leaders should make sure that members in their

organization [well before the need arises] talk openly about the nature of conflict, and

strategies and tactics used in dealing with conflict. These conversations would be

productive and helpful to everybody in the organization.

In trying to focus causes of conflict Owens (1995) concurred with Pondy's (1967)

classification of basic types of latent conflicts that cause organizational conflicts. He

includes: (a) insufficient organization resources to meet the requirements of the sub-units

to do their work, resulting in competition for scarce resources (for example, budget

allocations, assignment of teaching positions, space or facilities)and (b) one party seeking

to control the activities "belonging" to another unit (and the second unit seeking to fend off

such "interference"). The issue here is autonomy such as protecting one's "turf"; and (c)

two parties in the organization which must work together but cannot agree on how to do

so, the source of conflict is goal divergence (for example, the school principal and the

director of special education have differing views on how mainstreaming issues are to be

settled). Owens (1995) also cautioned that these latent sources of conflict do not normally

disappear completely from organizational life, nor, is there one best way of managing

them. As Thomas and Bennis (1972, p. 20) put it:

> An effective paradigm incorporates what might be termed a "situational" or
> "contingency" framework, a point of view reflected in much of the current
> theoretical and empirical work in organizational theory. There is a primary
> emphasis upon diagnosis and the assumption that it is self-defeating to adopt a
> "universally" applicable set of principles and guidelines for effecting change or
> managing conflict.

Leaders must develop an organizational culture that supports continuous, productive

approaches to conflict management. Leaders must maintain what most writers today term

"conflict management"-- an ongoing organizational process that is heuristic and supports organization development. Porter, Lawler and Hackman (1975) noted that two prime functions of a leader in conflict management are diagnosis and execution. They cautioned that, while diagnosing and executing, leaders must first consider the goals and tasks of the organization. Because excessive conflicts mute organization's goals, administrators must develop conflict management skills to face those conflicts that inevitably arise in their organization. They note that recent literature on conflict management indicates that leaders must avoid mediation of conflict where one party wins all and another party loses all. this only leads to hostile relationships in future. As Owens (1995, p. 159) put it:

> In the first place, it is helpful to ascertain whether conflict does exist between the two parties or whether a conflict only appears (to the parties) to exist....If a conflict does exist, however, (that is, the parties do have goals that are mutually incompatible), then it is necessary to select a method of dealing with it as productively as possible from among the many available. The general principle is that a win-lose approach tends to be the least productive, while a win-win approach-in which both parties win something (though not necessarily equally)-tends to be the most productive.

Frey and Young (1978), Main and Roak (1975), Bethel and others (1978) suggested that the face- to- face confrontation accompanied by a significant third part mediation works well, while Porter, Lawler and Hackman (1975) outlined three major approaches: (a) process consultation, where an expert consultant is called in to referee meetings of the opponents; (b) laboratory exercises, where a series of exercises is given to both parties so that they can learn how they are misperceiving each other; (c) structural changes, where a reorganization of the organizational structure is done to minimize areas of conflict and maximize areas of agreement.

Porter, Lowler and Hackman (1975) recommended the Blacke and Mouton's (1964, 1969) approach, which uses a conflict resolution approach known as "grid organizational development" program. In this approach leaders change the entire system by reorganizing the goals and objectives of the organization, beginning from the top managerial level. Likert and Likert (1976) suggested using two or more individuals common to the two conflicting parties as linking pins. Such linking pins help coordinate

problem -solving between the conflicting parties [of which either of the linking persons is a member] to lead the groups to compatibility. The two persons could be used either laterally or vertically in the structure of the organization hierarchy.

Pondy (1967) suggested that leaders become aware of the dynamics of conflict to better know how conflicts develop and to understand how to deal with each conflict. He indicated five stages of development of conflict: (a) latent conflict, (b) perceived conflict, (c) felt conflict, (d) manifest conflict, and (e) conflict aftermath. Pondy explained that conflicts in organizations are often a result of an outcome, or aftermath of previous conflicts, where the resolutions were unsatisfactory to one of the parties. Other conflicts soon rise, actually leading to the other four dynamics of conflict development process. For example, latent conflict develops because of competition for scarce resources such as departments in a school looking to increase their budget for sustaining good level of running the departments or drives for individual autonomy in decentralizing the decision making in a school (Strike, 1988, pp. 70-72). For example, in a disagreement between the principal of a school and teachers over a school curriculum change to be implemented in the school, if the case is resolved on a "win all" for the principal and a "lose all" approach for the teachers, it will definitely leave the teachers feel a sense of defeat and that they have been denied the right to share in the decision making just because the principal has the power to influence the decision. Such a resolution makes the teachers feel low and inferior to the principal [a latent conflict], and may later develop into a potential aftermath conflict (Pondy, 1967). Pondy (1967) further warned that leaders should be aware that latent conflicts are always in an organization.

Perceived conflict exists when an individual is sensitive about an aspect of latent conflict. For example, an annual exercise of staff development review can increasingly make a teacher who does not excel well in teaching duties feel not at ease, and also feel that no justice is done during each year's evaluation exercise. The teacher may remain depressed [a perceived conflict]. Ultimately, her/his delayed promotion will create/develop

latent conflict. It can be seen from the cited cases above that conflicts regenerate even after they are resolved. In the "win-all" -"lose-all" approach the "lose all" subject in the conflict will definitely feel overridden by the "win all", this develops hostility and strained relationship between the two parties. Felt conflict is apparent between the two parties when perceived conflict becomes personalized. For example, the underachieving teacher would not be hostile or resentful to the head of department or the principal before the staff review is completed, the conflict arises only when it becomes obvious to the party that the promotion was not granted. The then perceived conflict becomes a felt conflict. Manifest is conflict usually characterized by aggressive behavior on the part of the actors. It is the behavior which in the mind of the actor, frustrates the goals of the other participant. For example, in the principal and teachers' case above, the principal took a "win all" decision stand for himself and a "lose all" for the teachers and expected the teachers to implement the new [changed] curricula. In this case the teachers are definitely not going to be cooperative in the implementation of the new curricula because in the first place they have been denied the shared decision making. However, since the principal has the power [as the head of the school] she/he can make her/his way though that the new curricula is implemented, and well implemented using the mandate of her/his office. Thus a manifest conflict between the teachers and the principal arises. The teachers will experience a manifest conflict because the principal will be forcing them to implement curriculum change against their will.

Pondy (1967) also cautioned that each conflict has an aftermath; but, if a conflict is resolved to the satisfaction of all parties [none of the conflicting parties getting a "win all" or " lose all"], each party retires happily and lives in harmony with the other party and with all members in the institution. For example, in the issue of curriculum change, the principal could allow the teachers win their argument against him in changing the curriculum but also give specific conditions on implementation. This way the teachers would have a feeling that they participated in the decision making. In the case of the staff review case, the head of department and the principal would be in a more difficult situation

to make a decision that would avoid conflict. Promotion of the staff member would not be feasible because conditions are not met. The best could be to find out why the staff member fails to meet conditions for promotion and render every assistance that would allow the individual meet the promotion criteria for the next year's review exercise. This approach is important for harmony [in the running of the school] and development of the goals of the institution. In case of any other conflict, it would be either a new case or a case of latent conflicts not previously anticipated or dealt with. On the other hand Pondy (1967) cautioned that if a conflict is suppressed, other latent conflicts will be aggravated and sometimes an explosion results. The Tanzanian issue, where students stoned their principal just because they were denied to hold a dance after their examinations, is a typical result of suppressing conflict. The conflict between the students and the school authority was not well managed and it ended in an explosive manner.

Pondy (1967) suggested that the interfaces between perceived and manifest conflict and felt and manifest conflict are the points where conflict resolution skills must be brought into play. He said, ... "a conflict episode can be thought of as a gradual escalation to the state of disorder....This does not mean that every conflict episode necessarily passes through every stage to open aggression" (p. 299). If conflicts are left unchecked, they usually end up in aggression -- "this is what administrators do not want to see happen" in their institutions.

Hence, Pondy's views suggest that conflicts usually originate with other conflicts, they are dynamic, the process is gradual, and conflicts end in aggression if unchecked. Outside factors such as strategic considerations can greatly affect conflicts at various stages.

The School Administrator as Mediator of Conflicts

Owens (1995) defines administration as working with and through other people to achieve organizational goals. Maurer (1991) explained that a typical day for a school principal can start with: (a) the secretary informing that there are two angry parents waiting

outside the office; (b) a group of community representatives presenting a list of demands they want a response to and are calling for the principal to resign; (c) the teachers' union president cautioning that unless the principal clears the teachers' grievances the teachers are going on strike! This situation means that a school administrator cannot avoid dealing with conflicts.

Mediation of conflict is the art of settling or reconciling differences. Foster (1986, p. 192) said, "...critical educational administration tries to liberate teachers and administrators from the preconceptions that lock them into socially unproductive relationships". It means acting between disrupting parties to bring about a settlement or a compromise. Mediation may also be viewed as a friendly intervention in the disputes of others with their consent, for the purpose of adjusting differences. Maurer (1991) explained that mediation is a process of determining a good settlement option for the participants involved. The mediator focuses on the question "What would I like to see happen?" and expects a clear outcome of the mediation. Mediating in conflict portrays the administrator as the person at the intersection of conflicting expectations, forces, and pressures --the person- in- the-middle.

This image views the school superintendent, for example, as being in a mediating position between the school board and teachers, between the public and the educational system, or even between conflicting community groups. Similarly, principals may find themselves placed between parents and teachers, between teachers and students, or even between different segments of these groups like departments such as the Department of Educational Policy Studies and the Department of Chemistry at the University of Alberta; or the Department of English and the Department of Mathematics in a secondary school. The political essence of this mediation position is evident. It can involve searching for a compromise, attempting to reduce the conflict, participating in the bargaining processes, and building coalitions to gain support for a particular decision.

Owens (1995) explained that, when conflict arises, the most instinctive

response of the parties involved is to adopt a strategy backed by determination to *win* - - *ipso facto*, the other party will *lose*. He said that confrontation, non-negotiable demands, and ultimatums have become the way of dealing with deep-seated differences where one party marshals its forces to compel the other party to do what it wants. The focal point of conflict management is knowing how to deal with the win-lose orientation.

Educational administrators adopt a number of methods to handle conflicts. These may include the use of force by employing authority, penalties, or sanctions; and withdrawal by steering clear or retreating from all situations of conflict whenever possible. However, these approaches do not constitute mediation in conflicts as discussed in this paper. Some approaches that denote mediation include confrontation, compromising or smoothing. Principals, for example, often mediate conflict through confrontation. The use of the open problem solving approach encourages those involved in the conflict to work through the ideological and emotional components of the disagreement. This method attempts to achieve an objective exploratory examination and evaluation of differences so as to find a solution more oriented to long- term interests rather than temporary expediency.

Principals also use the compromising method by yielding, twisting, turning and bending mediation in an attempt to find a middle course that splits the difference. This method a searches for an expedient means of splitting the difference by an accommodation in which no one "wins all" but no one "loses all." Another method is "smoothing." In this case, principals attempt to promote harmonious and "accepting" relationships among personnel which accentuates the positive aspects of a situation and smoothes over negative aspects.

Owens (1995) contended that organization conflict is now seen as inevitable, endemic, and often legitimate because the individual and the group within the human social system are interdependent and constantly engaged in dynamic processes of defining and redefining the nature of the extent of their interdependence. Important to this also is that the dynamics of the social process environment in which the interdependence occurs is

constantly changing. Barnard (1938, p. 36) explained: "Inherent in the conception of free will in a changing environment are social patterns characterized by negotiating, stress, and conflict." Moreover, conflict is expected, even in a well-led organization, because the leaders marshal and organize resources in conflict with others. This means the leaders marshal resources such as people, money, time, facilities, and materials to achieve new goals; and, given the finite resources available in the educational organizations, there will invariably be competing ideas of what to do with them, how to use them, how to involve people, where to spend the money, and how to schedule facilities.

It is natural that, when the leader is present, the people in the organization must experience conflict as a normal part of the organization life. Loewen (1983) observed that about 10 percent of human activity goes into conflict. A school administrators cannot avoid dealing with conflict in school each day. However, it is important that conflicts are managed carefully and well. Hardly a day goes by that the school administrator is not either involved in a conflict or mediating one. Demands can come from superiors, various constituents from the community, parents, students and teaching staff. Maurer(1991) observed that, whenever such conflicts occur, the administrator is the one called upon first to help resolve the conflict. He noted that, although the school administrator can be disputant in the conflict, very often the administrator is thrust upon in the role of a mediator. Parents, students, teachers and other administrators look to the educational administrator to mediate disputes.

On any day, an administrator, such as a school principal, may undertake numerous duties related to several stockholder groups. With regard to teachers, for example, the principal may be assigning duties, reviewing the curriculum, reprimanding teachers for negligence of duty, extracurricular activities, and personal problems. With regard to students, the principal may deal with attendance, the cafeteria, disciplines, complaints, placements and requests from the student council. Parents may have communication issues like parent involvement in school or lack thereof, or parent council concerns.

Superintendents may query principals about the school's particular policy which they have to defend. The community may charge particular teachers for high-headedness. Apart from these concerns, principals have their own daily school routines. These include the preparation of the school budget and making different negotiations for improving the school maintenance and sustenance to attend to. Principals find that most of the endless issues they face deal with conflicts which call for mediation. Principals may, at the end of the day, realize that the most common function performed has been that of mediation.

Mintzberg (1973) explained that managers [administrators] maintain such a workload because the work of a leader was inherently open-ended and ambiguous. He stated:

> The manager must always keep on going, never sure when he has succeeded, never sure when his whole organization may come down around him because of some miscalculation. As a result, the manager is a person with perceptual preoccupation. He can never be free to forget his job, and he never has the pleasure of knowing, even temporarily, that there is nothing else he can do. No matter what kind of managerial job he has, he always carries the nagging suspicion that he might be able to contribute just a little bit more (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 30).

Mintzberg further explained:

> Administrators and managers do a great deal of work, and do it at an unrelated pace. Each day they attend a number of previously arranged meetings as well as a number of unplanned conferences and interactions, deal with a substantial volume of mail and paper work, handle numerous phone calls. There are seldom any real breaks in the work.

Leithwood, Cousins and Smith (1990) studied the type of problems which principals encountered in Ontario. Four problem categories...teachers (247 problems); school routines (138 problems); students (113 problems); and parents (105 problems) were given to principals to respond to. Eleven elementary school principals and ten secondary school principals and vice-principals involved in the study were asked to review problems encountered over the previous two weeks using their planning calendar or appointment books as aids to memory. The findings revealed that, for teacher problems, "conflict among teachers" was second only to "assignment of teaching duties." Among the student problems, "abuse" was highest. Among the parent problems, "complaints" were

second only to "communication." These findings show that educational administrators are mostly involved in conflict mediation as a major duty in their administrative role.

Conclusion

This paper has examined some issues related to the mediation of conflict as a common function of administration in an educational institution. Several issue are clear. Educational administrators cannot avoid interacting daily with diverse groups of people including teachers, students, parents, school boards, and the community around the school. Each of these groups has its own problems, needs, views, expectations, and demands which often conflict with the ideals, demands, and views of others in the educational enterprise. School administrators, especially the principal, are expected to satisfy each of these people, all the time, in ways that end up in good relationship in future and which will contribute to the growth and development of the school enterprise.

Diagnosing conflict in a given situation is the basis for choosing an appropriate management strategy. This paper suggests that there is no one best way of managing conflicts in educational organizations. There are, however, a number of ways, each suited to circumstances in a particular situation. Most literature suggests the basic principle in choosing a way of managing conflict is to use the approach most likely to minimize destructive aspects and to maximize the opportunity for organizational growth and development.

The paper concludes that, to a very large extent, the leader's conflict mediation/management role is one of the most commonly performed, doing a great deal of work at unrelated pace, yet, never sure when he/she has succeeded, or when his/her whole organization may come down around him/her because of some miscalculation of which, he himself,/she herself will have initiated yet another conflict (Owens, 1995).

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Lecturer PhD student University of Alberta

Organization/Address:
The Open University of Tanzania
P.O. Box 23409 Dar es Salaam
Tanzania Tel. 255-51-668445/667455
668820/668992 FAX 255-51-668259

Telephone: (403) 434-8731(Res)

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