

**A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION
OF
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
A CASE STUDY OF A
NAMIBIAN INSTITUTION**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of**

**MASTERS IN EDUCATION: LEADERSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT**





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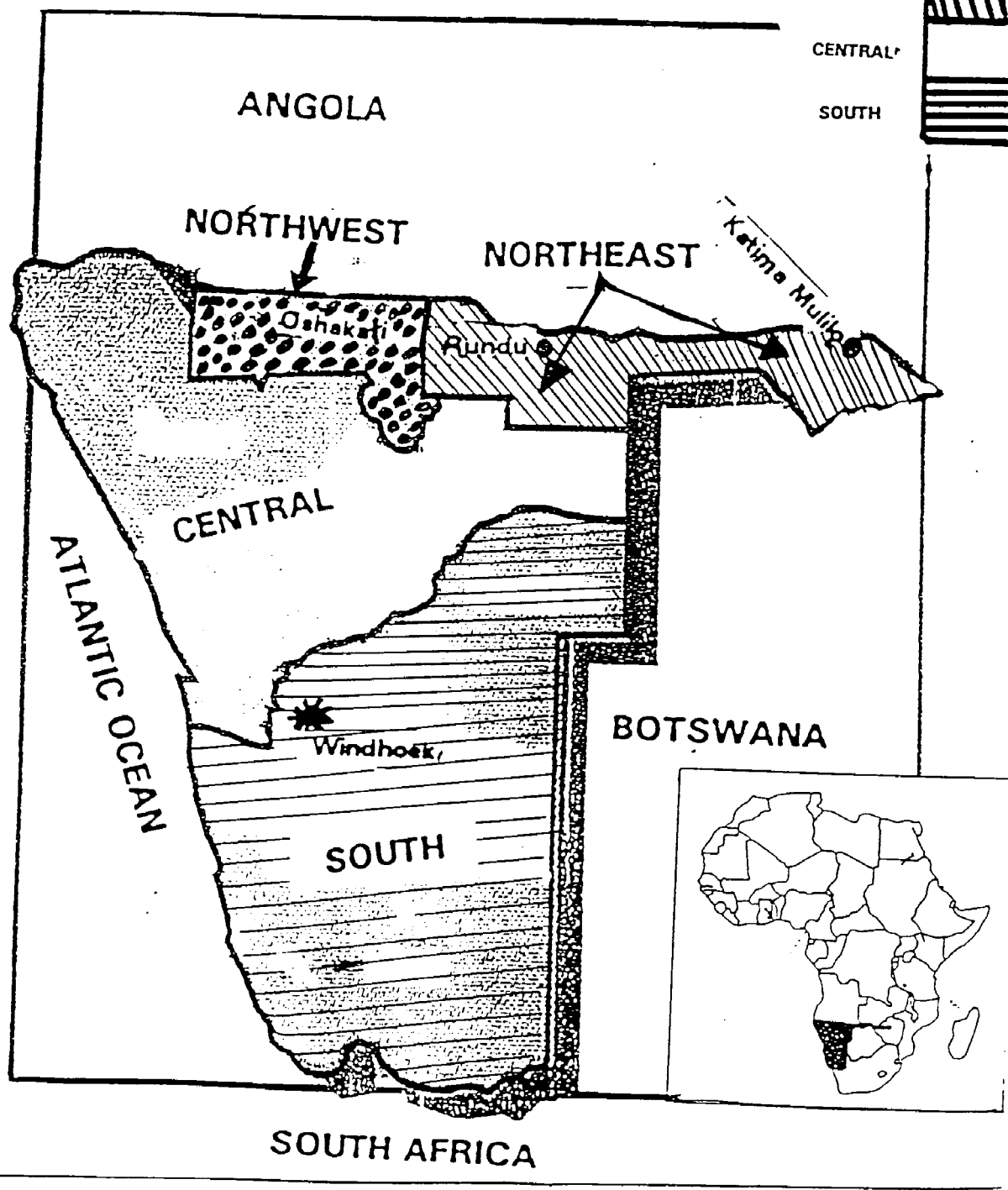
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December, 1998***

MAP OF NAMIBIA

HEALTH DIRECTORATES

- NORTHWEST 
- NORTHEAST 
- CENTRAL 
- SOUTH 



DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, David and our children Kelao Kitagos and Dave Chè who missed my support during my training for the whole of 1998, and my niece Lugambo Shapaka who looked after my children.

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ABSTRACT

This study is a qualitative interpretative study of conflict management in a multicultural Namibian institution.

The focus of the study is to understand how individual people in a particular organization perceive conflict, the possible sources of conflict as well as to explore the possible strategies of managing conflict. This is followed by an analysis of the general educational cultural and social characteristics of Namibia, which relate to the sources of conflict.

I also make an attempt to have a deeper understanding of people from different cultural and educational backgrounds in viewing conflict and how these differences might be seen as major sources of conflict and how they deal with it - by using a case study approach.

I interviewed 5 participants from different cultural backgrounds. The major research methodology I used in this study is in-depth interviews that allowed me to explore people's understanding of, attitudes to and views on conflict.

I supplemented the interviews with participant observation, which allowed me to get first-hand information on how people interact socially and in meetings in order to explore possible sources and existence of conflict in meetings and how the staff dealt with it. Furthermore, I tried as much as possible to observe daily activities as an observer.

People interviewed have different perceptions about conflict. Some use conflict to their advantage to arouse discussion and stimulate creative thinking. Some people find conflict to be a burden, something to be minimized. This avoidance leads to poor decisions and poor use of teams as a way to improve both decision making and acceptance of the decisions that are made. Cultural differences among staff and the process of reform emerge as the major sources of conflict. Whether a conflict will result in negative or positive consequences, or both, will depend to a large part on the strategy taken to resolve the conflict.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

In order to provide the context in which the study has taken place I shall give a brief geographical and socio-political description of Namibia. I shall also give an overview of the educational system in Namibia during the colonial times which ended in 1989 and which had and still has a major impact on individual perceptions. The historical background of education: traditional education, missionary education, education under German control, education under South African control will be presented. The discussion on the overview of the education system will lead to a short discussion on the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED), the site of my study. In the last part of this chapter I will discuss the purpose of my study, and its significance for those confronted by conflict.

The geographical and socio-political characteristics of Namibia

The land and its people

Namibia is situated between Botswana, Angola and South Africa. In the west, Namibia borders the South-Atlantic Ocean, and on the North Eastern part it borders Zambia and Zimbabwe. Namibia is a vast (824, 000 km²) and sparsely populated country, with 1,4 million inhabitants according to the 1991 census. At present the population is estimated at 1,6 million. More than 800, 000 people live in the North, near the border of Angola; the remainder inhabits the central and eastern part of the country. Namibia has a rich diversity of ethnic groups: Ovambo, Herero, Damara, Nama, Kavango, Caprivian, San, Tswana, Afrikaner, German, English and Coloured. The population is sparsely distributed: 30% are urbanized while 67% live in rural areas, including communal areas and commercial farms (Demographic Health Survey) (DHS: 1992).

The colonial period

The country and its inhabitants clearly bear a stamp of the German domination starting in 1884 until World War I, and afterwards until independence, South African rule, mandated by the United Nations.

The arrival of whites, attracted by the country's promising economic opportunities, happened at indigenous inhabitants' expense. Large parts of the best land, as well as mineral deposits, were taken over by the white colonials. The native people were driven away to less productive areas.

Racial segregation was extended and provided with a legal foundation. A police zone, established under German rule, which enclosed a large part of the country, became a white residential area, controlled by white laws.

The black natives were forced to move to assigned homelands according to their ethnic backgrounds. They were forbidden to enter the police zone without permission from the white authorities. Supposedly, these ethnically defined homelands remained under traditional rule, but in reality, traditional administration was appointed, controlled and, if necessary, discharged by South Africa authorities.

The South African Government made considerable effort to further extend its control over Africans in Namibia. They claimed that ethnically defined territories were in the best interests of African Namibians.

The period since independence

Namibia became officially independent on March 21, 1990. Namibia is a multi party democracy. Since independence the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) has been the ruling party. The President of Namibia is the Head of State and Government. The cabinet, which is

appointed by the President, is responsible to the Parliament. The national council comprising elected councillors, forms the second house of the Parliament (DHS: 1992).

In the period since independence, the previously segregated services have been restructured along non-racial lines. Today, the Government of Namibia faces a big task to reshape the society, which is still divided along ethnic lines. Major changes occurred in all sectors, particularly “restructuring” to meet the challenges facing the new nation in the post-apartheid era. The Government of Namibia declared its commitment to the equitable distribution of resources and equal access to basic services for those who are socially or economically disadvantaged (DHS 1992).

The majority of the black population is still forced to make ends meet; education is poor in many areas, badly paid labourers work in mines, cities or on farms owned by whites. The Namibian Government adopted a policy of National Reconciliation at Independence. This philosophy stipulates that all sections of the population should benefit equally from the country’s development.

But old times are hard to forget and many cultural differences do exist between segments of the population. Still many difficult issues will have to be dealt with before it is possible to speak of One Namibia, One Country (Novib, 1990).

An overview of the Education system in Namibia

The education system before independence

Traditional Education

Education in Namibia started long before colonialization. Traditional African Communities educated their young about their culture and skills (Mbamba, 1981). Although there were variations between different indigenous communities, education in pre-colonial Namibia was generally part of everyday life. It was not the responsibility of a specialist labour force called teachers, principals, coordinators, consultants, or supervisors. Rather, every adult had the

responsibility, almost equal to that of the parents, to teach, correct, or even punish any child who did something wrong.

According to Ellis (198; 13):

The roles and skills of adult society were learned through stories, riddles, poetry and memory tests, as well as through traditions of song, dance and games.

Transition to adult status was often accompanied by initiation ceremonies, stressing attitudes of solidarity and co-operation. The differentiation of adult roles was along sexual lines. Skills were often passed from father to son or from mother to daughter.

The aim of traditional education in Namibia has to conceive and transmit the people's cultural heritage, beliefs, behaviour patterns, attitudes, values and skills from one generation to another.

Much of the value in African culture has been destroyed or lost, but it is also true that many values and ways of communication persist. Some should have a place in building this future, e.g. the respect of elderly people, while other values are changing, e.g. women especially are rejecting any subjugation (Ellis 1984). Similarly, Namibians want to foster a national identity rather than the narrower tribal feeling which was the basis for social solidarity in the past.

Missionary Education

The beginning of the missionary era brought a new culture, a written culture, which required a formal system of education. The introduction of formal education in Namibia started with the settlement of the missionaries in 1805.

The arrival of more missionaries in Namibia expanded the educational services throughout the country. Teaching was restricted to evangelism and basic literacy (Mbamba cited in Auala 1989).

Schools were established to strengthen the work of Christianity, and to change the cultural and traditional partners that were considered to be pagan (O'Callaghan cited in Auala 1989:59).

Because the missionaries tried to change the indigenous people's culture, the reaction to missionary activities differed, ranging from acceptance to suspicion and hostility.

These factors prevented the missionaries from establishing meaningful education programmes. Nevertheless, the missionaries laid the foundation for future educational development (Auala 1989:64).

The education provided by the missionaries was selective in the sense that it reached those who wanted to be converted or those who lived in the vicinity of the mission stations. No attempt was made to extend education beyond the boundaries of the mission work (Auala *ibid*).

The following missions were represented: Rhenish, Catholics, Methodist, and Anglican. The language in which teaching was to be undertaken was discussed. The Rhenish mission chose Afrikaans, the Catholics opted for English. Indigenous languages could not be used because of the lack of reading materials (Auala, 1989:65).

Each group of missionaries established its schools to teach converts literacy in order to read the catechism and the Bible. The content of the curriculum was based on practical needs as deemed necessary by missionaries themselves. The main aim of the missionary education was the moral and spiritual development of the student.

A missionary by the name of Hoeflick summarized and stated the objectives of missionary education in Namibia as follows:

For its development.... the country does not need "educated Negroes," but competent, intelligent workers. The main emphasis will therefore be on education for obedience, order, punctuality, sobriety, honesty, diligence, and moderation, rather than academic learning (Melber, cited in Auala 1989: 66).

The Education Proclamation of 1921 had attempted to lay the basis for agreed principles of education for each group. Under the proclamation both European and non-European education came under government control. The government provided the necessary funds and left the

management of non-European education to missionaries provided that, if they accepted government financial grants, they would also conform to government regulations regarding the establishment, recognition, control, syllabuses and classification of schools, the employment of teachers and conditions of service. The missions were relieved to have assured financial support. The missionaries introduced formal education in Namibia (Auala 1989:66).

Education under German control

The German colonial administration (1884-1915), although it opened educational services for whites, did not try to change the pattern of the existing mission education among the African population.

The German settlement led to two separate systems of education, one for whites and one for Africans. The system of education for Africans was mainly focussed on conversion and then on preparing Africans for semi-skilled employment. White schools attempted to reproduce the European system.

According to O'Callaghan (cited in Auala 1989:67), the German government retained the right to inspect mission schools. From 1902 onwards-small subventions were accorded by the German government to those schools, which taught the German language satisfactorily. Otherwise, the schools were financed by the missions themselves.

Bley (cited in Auala 1989:67) explained the German education policy towards African people as follows:

We (Germans) cannot carry out settlement without additional labor. This must be provided by the natives and we shall train them for it. We shall make people realize that we Germans are the masters of this country (Namibia) and the natives the servants.

By 1904, there were six state schools for Europeans throughout Namibia. No post post-primary school facilities existed prior to 1909 and parents who felt their children should have a high school

education and who could afford it were sent to Germany. The German colonial government provided some financial aid and encouraged parents to send children to Germany.

At the end of the German occupation there were 17 primary schools for whites. Afrikaners who had settled in Namibia were authorized to open their own private schools, but in 1902 they were sending their children to government schools.

O'Callaghan (cited in Auala 1989:68) indicated that by the beginning of the twentieth century the basic structure of education in Namibia had been separated. There were schools for Africans, which gave a rudimentary education, and which were mainly run by the missions and schools for whites run by the government.

Tjitendero (cited in Auala 1989:68) emphasized that:

European education come under government support as early as 1909, African education was left to the limited resources of small-scattered missionaries operating in small African communities in certain parts of the country.

The German settlers tried organizing education and bringing it on a sound basis compared to what the missionaries had achieved. But on the other hand, education for Africans never progressed beyond simple literacy, while every effort was made to give the white people the best education possible up to secondary level. Germany ruled Namibia from 1885 to 1915, when the German forces surrendered to the British and South-African troops in Namibia (Auala *ibid*).

Education under South African Control

In 1915, Namibia, formerly known as South-West Africa, was placed under South Africa's military rule. In 1920 Namibia became a League of Nations mandate under South Africa administration with the understanding that South Africa was to educate, develop and care for the mental and physical wellbeing of Namibians, and to prepare them for independence.

Article 22 of the covenant of the League of Nations stated:

.....there shall be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that the securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in the covenant (Fraenkel, cited in Auala1989:67).

An organizing Inspector of Education was appointed and instructed to build a school system in Namibia based on the school system of the Cape Colony in South Africa.

In terms of Proclamation No55 of 1921, all educational services were placed under state control and a department of education was entrusted with implementing government policies. The Government provided the necessary funds and left the management and supervision of non-European education to missionaries provided that, if they accepted government financial grants, they would also conform to the Government regulations regarding the establishment, recognition, control, supervision, syllabuses and classification of schools, the employment of teachers, and conditions of service (Auala 1989:69).

The Proclamation of 1926, while leaving African schools under mission control, provided for the establishment of government schools for Coloureds. It was not until 1933 that the government decided, by Amendment Proclamation No 10 of 1934, to provide for the establishment of native government schools.

In terms of content, nothing significant during South-African control had changed. The only new major change taking place was that Afrikaans was given a prominent place in the entire school system.

However, the government made sure that programs designed by the Department of Education were introduced into mission schools. Education for whites became compulsory, but not for coloured and Africans.

To understand the background of the situation, however one has to try and look at events in South Africa which had an impact on education in Namibia.

In 1948, the Nationalist Party came into power. The Nationalist Party was consolidated around Afrikaner nationalism, itself heavily influenced by the fascist ideology of the 1930's as well as by the history of the European – African conflict (O'Callaghan cited in Auala '98:70). The Afrikaners started to introduce the policy of separate development, commonly known as "apartheid". One prominent member of the Nationalist Party declared in the House of Assembly:

As has been correctly stated here, education is the key to the creation of the proper relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans in South Africa Put native education on a sound basis and half the racial questions are solved I say that there should be reform of the whole educational system and it must be based on the culture and background and the whole life of the native himself in his tribe..... This whole (present) policy is also a danger for our new Western Civilization (De Wet Nel, cited in Auala 1989 67).

A commission of Native Education was appointed under the chairmanship of W.W.M Eiselen to study the existing system of Bantu education from the standpoint of its value to the Bantu, the country as a whole, and the maintenance of desirable race relations.

The Eiselen Commission reported in 1951. Its recommendations formed the basis of the African school system that was followed by South-Africa and extended to Namibia after the adoption of the Bantu Education set, no 47 of 1953. The commission followed eleven principles which Tobias (cited in Auala 1989:71) summarizes as follows:

1. Black education must be broadly conceived so that it can be organized to provide adequate schools with Christian character.
2. Black education should be planned and administered by a government department to ensure efficient and thorough coordination of planning.
3. Black education must be a coordinated and carefully planned policy for the development of black societies, with special emphasis on economic development.
4. Increased emphasis must be placed on the education of the mass of the black people to enable them to co-operate in the evolution of new social patterns and institutions.
5. The "Bantu languages" must be developed to include both terminology for expressing modern scientific concepts, and also to include more effective numerical systems.
6. The limited funds available for black education must be spread as far as is consistent with efficiency.
7. Black schools must be linked as closely as possible with existing black social institutions, and a friendly though not necessarily uncritical attitude maintained between the school and these institutions.
8. The mother tongue should be used as medium of instruction for at least the duration of the primary school.
9. Black personnel should be increased to make the schools as black as possible.
10. Black parents should as far as possible have a share in the control and life of the schools.
11. The schools should provide for the maximum development of the black individual mentally, morally and spiritually.

According to McGill (cited in Auala 1989:72) education is seen as the primary method of inculcating its racial scheme in the minds of the young of all racial groups. For the whites, the value of Christian nationalism, the Calvinist inspired doctrine of creating a White Afrikaans society, should be a guide to education, while for non-whites the value of tribal life, rural skills and separate communities should be taught.

The government's intention for Bantu education was made clear by Dr Verwoerd who emphasized that:

There is no place for the native in the European community, above the level of certain forms of labour.... Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze.... When I have control of native education I will reform it so that the natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with European is not for them..... People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for natives (Ellis, 1984, p.23).

Under Bantu Education, each ethnic group in Namibia was considered a "separate nation". The community schools under Bantu education created strong racial, ethnic and tribal identities. Tobias (cited in Auala 1989: 73) stated that:

The syllabus of the different racial groups differed considerably. Literacy among the black people remained high. The blacks were to be trained for skilled manual labor, and the white people for higher managerial posts.

Summary

Another tool for controlling the African population was the education system. "Bantu" education was introduced with the aim of subservience and subjection of the Africans on the one hand and inculcation of racial bigotry on the other hand (Ministry of Education and Culture) (MEC: 1993).

Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 and the Odendaal Report of 1962 conceived that:

Bantu Education should be an integral part of a carefully planned policy of socio-economic development for the Bantu peoples. Furthermore, education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live ... "Native education," it was argued, should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the State (Green,cited in Auala 1989:72).

Apartheid education has been dehumanizing, manipulative, and divisive. Schooling systems were initially set up to train pupils to be neat and obedient, and to respect the authority of the teacher, the "expert". These systems were based on assumptions that society was necessarily and properly organized as a hierarchy.

Initially education for black Namibians was justified in terms of its vocational utility. For the most part, its task was to prepare people for the specific jobs that German and South African rule required. Except for a very small number of people who were to become messenger, clerks, and other functionaries in the administrative system, basic literacy and numeracy were deemed sufficient. Girls were taught needlework, laundering and ironing in order to prepare them for housework and domestic services.

According to Leu (cited in Auala1989), Namibia's education system reflected the apartheid philosophy. He emphasizes that:

According to this theory, the non-white Namibian population is to be divided into eleven mutually incompatible "nations". Thus, education for whites and non-whites is separately administered and students are physically separated by race and, in the case of non-whites, further separated by "nations". Depending on "nationality" there are

inter alia differences in laws, curricula, teacher training and salary-scales, teacher/pupil ratios, amounts spent per pupil on education, attendance rates, and among administering authorities.

As in much of the rest of Africa, formal education in Namibia prior to our independence was limited and segregated. For nearly all of this century, schools were simply not open to most of our parents. Much of the schooling during this period was private. Until the seventies the territorial government itself invested relatively little in education.

In practice, prior to our independence, our schools had to make a dual selection. First, they separated people on the basis of race. Then, within each group created by that segregation, there was a further selection of the few who would reach the higher levels of the separate education systems. At that time, there were not one but eleven education systems and authorities. That system of separation did not provide a solid foundation for effective integration.

The uneven allocation of resources ensured that a larger percentage of white than black children would be selected for further education. The segregation of the society ensured that with very few exceptions, the black elite remained inferior to the white elite in terms of its education, job authority, influence and income. For black women the situation was even worse (MEC, 1993:5).

Education after independence and its challenges

With Namibian independence in 1990 the in-coming government was determined to establish an education system which would break down the educational and racial barriers which had been established under colonial education. Therefore, as part of the democratization of Namibia, education needed to not only teach about democracy, but to be democratic. Because of this education reform is based upon principles of access, equality, quality and democracy (Pomuti et al cited in MEC : 1993).

Clearly to achieve this kind of education requires not just change in policy, organization and practices of education, but requires significant changes in the philosophy and principles, and in the underlying assumptions about people's knowledge, on which that education system is based.

Assumptions about society as necessarily hierarchical, and racially divided, had to be replaced with the idea about equality of rights and responsibilities. Assumptions about knowledge as objective, value-free, unchangeable facts need to be replaced with a recognition of knowledge as being developed and promulgated by people in a particular socio political context and within those particular value assumptions. And, based on these assumptions, different ways of teaching and learning need to be learned.

These changes are not easy to achieve. Namibia has still to wage yet another battle against a system of education, which was not only repressive but also deeply entrenched in the thinking, and traditions of colonial education. All of the teachers and even the student teachers that had their schooling in Namibia have had most, if not all of their learning experience under the previous regime. And although they may strongly reject that form of schooling and assumptions, which informed the way that system was organized, their own personal experiences as learners function as an "apprenticeship" of observation.

The transition between the eleven education systems and authorities of the past and the single Ministry of Education and Culture was indeed a challenge. The Namibian society expectations on educational changes remain sharply divided. The majority marginalized in the old system demand the redress of unequal allocations. On the other hand, there persists concern, even fear, among the privileged minority that this redress may lead to declining quality in education and other adverse effects for them and their children.

Books and other curricular materials in an egalitarian system do not have images that portray the world from only one group's perspective or that suggest that one group is better suited for particular occupations or positions in life. Differences in school facilities and equipment and in the level of preparation of the teachers did not disappear on the day of Independence. We have a difficult legacy to overcome (MEC: 35).

Educators feel these tensions as well. Understandably in a transitional situation, the preparation of the majority of policy documents generate apprehension. How will the institutional framework and specific positions be affected?

The Government inherited not one, but eleven education systems and authorities. That system of separation did not provide a solid foundation for effective integration.

It is not surprising that different parts of our population had different expectations about what our independent education system would bring:

The majority saw education for all as the vehicle for ending and than overcoming the segregation and inequalities of the past. The privileged minority however feared that education for all would lead to a decline in education standards to a lowest common denominator and that they and their children would be disadvantaged in the new system (MEC 1993:29).

Our current education system is transitional. The Ministry of Education intends to retain the best features of the old system even as we reject its discriminatory and divisive organization. The ministry is committed to a thorough overhaul of the education system we inherited. But we also know that the obstacles and distractions are many, and it will take time to reach our goals.

During this transitional period the legacy of the previous system will continue to trouble us. Although there is broad agreement on the general directions our education system should develop, some of our citizens are resistant to change. There remain problems of communication and suspicion about motives. Perhaps most troubling is the continued reluctance of some to make the transition from educating elite to education for all and to the new education philosophy, principles, and pedagogy that transition requires.

The Government however has been committed to fostering national harmony and mutual understanding. To achieve this, it followed a policy of National Reconciliation, which stipulates that those who had belonged to the different authorities, and who had become used to working in

unrelated systems, were brought together. They had to start to work together as a team with a common goal, attending to the needs of all the learners.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has been faced with many challenges. One of its challenges was to build a new education system, with quality education for all as the corner stone. There was a need for education, which is relevant for Namibia, adaptable to the changing needs of Namibian society, and determined by Namibians themselves. The new situation requires a new approach the learner-centred approach. This approach, presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of learners, valuing the learner's life experience as a starting point for their studies. Teachers must therefore have sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to interpret syllabi and subject content in terms of the aims and objectives of Basic Education.

A learner-centred approach demands a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production. Teachers are key to the development of our country and are important resources to their communities (MEC: 81).

This has led to the introduction of new educational reform, with its new philosophy of learner-centred education. Before changes can be felt in the classroom, new curricula had to be developed. In order to ensure the development of new curricula, there was a need for a central/national coordination of the curriculum development/implementation. This has led to the establishment of the National Institute for Education Development (NIED).

The National Institute for Education Development (NIED)

The National Institute for Education Development (NIED) was established in 1990 as a department within the Ministry of Education and Culture with the continuous task of ensuring that education in Namibia is developed and improved in accordance with the latest developments in education and the needs of the people of Namibia.

In 1995 NIED became one of the Directorates in the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. NIED is headed by a Director. It has two divisions: the Curriculum Development and Research divisions. The Curriculum Development division is mainly for developing curricula for Basic Education and Human Resources Development. The Research Division is responsible for pre-service and in-service teacher education and the development of instructional materials.

Thus, NIED is responsible for the huge task of developing, designing and evaluating curricula for the education system, introducing effective approaches to teaching, coordinating the development of instructional materials, educational research, preparing and coordinating an effective system of pre-service and in-service teacher education and providing training for educational managers.

NIED has already spearheaded the reform of the formal education system, but this work is not something that happens just once after independence. Once NIED has completed the first cycle of educational reform, it will constantly evaluate the education system and make adaptations to ensure its relevance, efficiency and sustainability.

Why choose NIED as the research site?

I became interested in this institute because of its huge tasks, of meeting one of the Ministry 's biggest challenges, of building a new education system, which is relevant for Namibia, adaptable to the changing needs of Namibian society, and determined by Namibian themselves.

If one goes back to the situation before independence, Namibia had eleven education systems and authorities. This system of separation might hinder effective integration. There have been tensions about the outcomes of the introduction of the new education reform.

NIED has now to coordinate the introduction of the new education reform. Who will be doing the tasks? Where do they come from? NIED is a multicultural institution staffed with people from different cultural and educational backgrounds. Those who had belonged to different authorities, and who had become used to working in unrelated systems, were brought together.

NIED staff has now to work for a common goal, which is to design and develop unified curricula for the unified Namibian nation.

If most of the staff at NIED have been transformed from an old ethnically segregated educational system to a new non-racial non-discriminatory system, one can imagine how these people have experienced changes and tensions at both personal and professional levels. How does the NIED's management manage to build working relationships? How has the management survived such tension and stress? Do the staffs have common or different views about issues in education? All these questions made me decide to try to obtain a deeper understanding of NIED as an institute and organization. I then decided to study this institute by using a case study approach in order to examine how the organizational members perceive conflict and how they manage it.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to obtain an in depth understanding of the organization's perception of conflict, its sources and possible strategies of resolving conflict at NIED. I also observed the social interaction of staff during day activities and in meetings in order to explore possible sources of conflict. My analysis is informed by theories relating to the sources and management of conflict. Therefore a critical investigation of different views about conflict, its source and management is the overall aim of my study.

Significance of the research

In a country such as Namibia where unprecedented changes are taking place in education, where conflict is a factor influencing not only education, but any organization, the issue of researching and interpreting the meaning of conflict, the causes and its management are important for those confronted by conflict

Since this study did not put much emphasis on conflict as a negative concept, but rather more as a natural part of any properly functioning organization, I see this study as an eye opener to those who have been viewing conflict only in negative terms. I see this study as something which will bring

awareness to people that conflict should be accepted as part of our everyday practices, everyday interactions with our colleagues, our supervisors, employers and employees. It should not be something to be avoided, but rather we should look for ways of how to deal with it. Conflict management is one of the qualities of good leadership, team management and team building.

Educational policy makers will want to know to what extent the teacher training programmes and staff development practices need to be adjusted to include conflict management.

Curriculum planners will be interested and will want to know how to prepare principals and heads of departments to deal with conflict.

Research focus

My research focus is to understand the individual and collective experiences of people working in an ethnically, racially and culturally diverse staff, and how they perceive and manage conflict.

Gaining access to NIED

I approached the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in July 1998. Their research committee reviewed my proposal. I was given complete access to NIED and allowed to attend their meetings, which I deemed relevant to my project. Lincoln and Guba (1985:225) provide a point of entry for this exploration:

A research studying the experience of people at a particular site, whether it is a factory, school, church, human service organization, or business must gain access through the person who has responsibility for the operation of the site

Even with this carte blanche from the administrator, I realized that my entry into the field was dependent on acceptance by staff at all levels of organization. I spent several hours introducing myself, discussing the project with them, and answering their questions. I have used pseudonyms throughout for participant names.

Occasionally, ideas brought out at these meetings were fed back immediately after the meeting. This has also provided me with an opportunity to consult the field notes, for accuracy. While there is no way to compare this approach with what would have happened without a personal introduction, no staff member refused me an interview.

Organisation of the study

The study consists of the dedication, acknowledgements, abstract, table of contents, chapter one to five, and the references.

CHAPTER ONE: Gives an introduction to the study: the geographic and socio-political characteristics of the education system in Namibia, the National Institute for Education Development, the purpose of the study, significance of the research, research focus and the organization of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: Presents a review of the literature and research on conflict management. It will also answer the question on why conflict fails to occur in top management teams.

CHAPTER THREE: Deals with the methodology used: rationale for a qualitative approach, rationale for a case study, research techniques, sampling and data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: Presents a description of participants' views of conflict. These descriptions are based on the perceptions obtained from the participants interview excerpts.

CHAPTER FIVE: Discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER SIX: Provides a summary, conclusion, recommendations as well as highlighting the limitations of this study.

The next chapter will provide a brief explanation of the work done on conflict through a literature review, in order to explore different perspectives/theories on conflict, types, major sources, and its management. The chapter will also attempt to answer the question why conflict fails to occur in top management teams.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Conflicts are ubiquitous within organizations, they occur continually, arise for many reasons, appear in a variety of forms, and affect the organization both favourably and unfavourably. The presence of conflict is in itself neither good nor bad, it simply exists and should be expected. People not only react differently to conflict but react differently from case to case and from time to time. Thus, the most effective strategies for dealing with conflicts must vary according to the conflict, the organization, and the parties involved. That is, an appropriate conflict management strategy will depend on the type of conflict, the intensity of the disagreement, the persons participating in the conflict, the seriousness of the issue for them, the authority, resources, and knowledge they possess (Schmuck & Runkel 1994:327).

The above quotation summarizes the variety of views on the sources of conflict and the different strategies in dealing with conflict. The paragraphs below will systematically take us through exactly how individuals define, view and manage conflict.

Definition of conflict

Conflict is a condition in which an individual is uncertain about what work he or she is expected to perform, when some work demands conflict with other demands, or when an individual is expected to do more than he or she feels capable of doing (Stoner 1978:345).

According to Schmuck and Runkel (1994) conflict refers to a social condition in which two or more persons or groups cannot have the same thing at the same time.

Schmuck and Runkel are no lone voice. Battley (1989:256) had a similar definition.

Organizational conflict is a disagreement between two or more organizational members or groups arising from the fact that they must share scarce resources or work activities; from the fact that they have different status, goals, values and perception.

Forsyth (1990:353) defined conflict as disagreement, discord, and friction among members of a group: interaction in which words, emotions, and actions “strike together” to produce disruptive effects.

These are four of the ways conflict has been defined by different authors, indicating that conflict means different things to different people.

Perspectives and theories of conflict

Stephen Robbins cited in Stoner (1978:343) has identified three basic views toward conflict in organizations:

The Traditional view

The traditional view regards conflict as unnecessary and harmful.

Early managers and management writers generally thought that the appearance of conflict was a clear signal that there was something wrong with the organization. They believed that conflict would develop only if managers failed to apply sound management principles (Stoner 1978:343).

Frederick Taylor (cited in Stoner 1978) believed that if the principles of scientific management were applied, the age-old conflict between labour and management would disappear.

Dailey (1994) similarly argued that traditional views see conflict as dysfunctional and unhealthy for the organization. They also encourage the suppression of conflict. In other words, group and organizational norms emerge which keep conflict under strict control (Dailey (1994:24) goes so far to explain that:

When disputes do occur, they are handled quickly by the formal hierarchy. In other words, the dispute rises to a level in the hierarchy where a manager has sufficient legitimate authority to insist on a solution

When an organization adopts the traditional view, conflict is usually experienced as destructive, which produces negative results for the organization and for the people involved.

The behavioural view

The behavioural view of conflict is that it is a frequent occurrence in organizational life. Organizational members are human beings, after all, with needs and interests that can often clash. Managers of different departments, for example, may have conflicts over priorities and resources allocation. Subordinates may argue with superiors over whether or not work can be completed in the allocated time.

The behavioural view does suggest that conflict can sometimes be functional because it can pinpoint problems and lead to better solutions. However, behaviouralists also see conflict mainly as something harmful, to be resolved or eliminated once it arises (Stoner 1998:344).

The interactionist/contemporary view

This thinking about conflict among most management writers and growing numbers of managers is that conflict in organizations is inevitable and even necessary, no matter how organizations are designed and operated.

This view still suggests that much conflict is, in fact, dysfunctional, it can harm individuals and can impede the attainment of organizational goals.

But some conflict can also be functional, because it makes the organizations more effective, for example, one functional aspect of conflicts that it leads to a search for solution. The task of the manager is not to suppress or resolve all conflict but manage it, so as

*to minimize harmful aspects and maximize its beneficial aspects
(Stoner 1978:345)*

So too, Dailey (1994:25), in his contemporary view of conflict referred to those conflicts between groups that can be a useful deviation from the status quo.

The idea is that if deviation can be managed, then positive by products can emerge. It also holds that the suppression or avoidance of conflict is impossible and far too costly for serious managerial consideration. Indeed, managers working in organizations with this view on conflict often become suspicious if too much harmony is evident (Dailey *ibid*).

The contemporary view recognizes that destructive conflict can occur (and it must be dealt with) as well as constructive conflict. These are disagreements, which can lead to benefits for those involved and for their organization.

This view encourages the development of an organizational system, which manages and channels conflict to valuable organizational ends. As a general rule, conflict can have beneficial results when the organization practices allow participation and finds ways to raise employee involvement in “core issues” such as product, service quality, productivity, employee management system, and grievance handling procedures (Dailey 1994:25).

The perspective taken by Eisenhard et al (1998) is that conflict is dynamic in that it unfolds as executives gain a deeper grasp of their business and their preferences for action through constant immersion in alternative view points.

Conflict is not a static reflection of fixed self-interests among senior executives understanding of the world that is gained through interaction with others around alternative viewpoints (Eisenhard et al 1998:44).

Similar studies by Amason et al (1998) found that high conflict led to the consideration of more alternatives, better understanding of choices and, overall, significantly more effective decision making.

Similar work by Tjosvold (cited in Eisenhardt et al 1998) also revealed that high substantive conflict was related to superior performance.

Janis (cited in Eisenhard et al 1998:44) observed that conflict within the top management cadres played a vital role in successful interaction among senior level. He also found that a lack of conflict resulted in what he termed “groupthink” which is a primary causal factor in major obstacles.

The overall argument is that conflict provides a more inclusive range of information, a deeper understanding of the issue, and a richer set of positive solutions.

Types of conflict

Stoner (1978:346) identified four types of conflict within the organizational life.

Conflict within the individual

This type of conflict occurs when an individual is uncertain about what to do or when the individual is expected to do more than he or she feels capable of doing.

Conflict between individuals in the same organization

This type of conflict is frequently seen as being caused by personality differences. More often, such conflict erupts from role- related pressure (as between managers and subordinates) or from the manner in which people personalize conflict between groups.

Conflict between individuals and groups

This type of conflict is frequently related to the way individuals deal with the pressure for conformity imposed on them by their work group.

Conflict between organizations

This conflict is considered as inherent and a desirable form of conflict in our economic system, at least if this conflict is restricted to economic competition.

Forsyth (1990:386) categorized conflict into two groups: intragroup conflict and intergroup conflict.

Intragroup conflict

Intragroup conflict occurs when the actions or beliefs of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to and hence are resisted by one or more of the other group members. In many instances conflict in a group occurs because members must compete for limited resources (Forsyth 1990:353).

Intergroup conflict

Intergroup conflict involves two or more groups. It occurs at all levels of social organization, from fighting between gangs to organized disputes in industrial settings to riots stemming from a breakdown in racial relations to conflicts between nations (Forsyth 1990:393).

C-type and A-type of conflict

Amason et al (1998) examined two distinct types of conflict: C-type and A-type conflicts. On the one hand, C-type (cognitive) conflict arises from substantive, issue-related differences of opinion. This type of conflict is desired because it airs concern from different perspectives and operating

philosophies and leads to better decisions. C-type conflict occurs as team members examine, compare, and reconcile these differences.

C-type conflict occurs as teams are confronted with and resolve their differences. C-type conflict is beneficial because it requires teams to engage in activities that are essential to a team's effectiveness (Amason et al 1998:23).

Amason et al (1998:24) categorized A-type of conflict as:

Disagreements over personalized, individually oriented matters, that lowers team effectiveness by provoking hostility, distrust, cynicism, and apathy among team members

The description we heard about A-type conflict is usually directed at specific individuals rather than specific ideas. A-type conflict fosters cynicism, distrust, and avoidance, thereby obstructing open communication (Amason, 1998:25).

A-type conflict undermines a team's ability to function effectively in the future. Team members who have been burnt by A-type conflict are less likely to participate fully in future meetings (Amason ibid).

Schmuck & Runkel (1994) identified 3 types of conflict:

Factual – conflict entails argument about the realities of a current situation

Value – conflict entails arguments over values, goals or objectives

Strategy – conflict entails arguments over the best way of moving from a present situation to a future condition.

Amason (1998:23) goes so far to explain that:

By facilitating frank communication and open consideration of different alternatives, C-type conflict encourages innovative thinking and promotes creative solutions to problems that otherwise might

seem incurable. In addition to improving decision quality, C-type conflict also seems to promote acceptance of the decision itself among the team members. By encouraging open and frank communication and by integrating the various skills and abilities of the team members, C-type conflict builds understanding and commitment to the teams goals and decisions.

Major Sources of organizational conflict

Intragroup conflict has many causes. Blake & Mouton (1984) Hipe, (1984), and Tjovold (1986) prefer to emphasize communication difficulties, organizational structures, and other social and psychological factors as major causes of intragroup conflict.

Unfortunately, all these factors interact to produce conflict, making a complete listing of potential problem areas impossible.

Competition

Conflict often arises because group members compete for desired goals and resources.

As group dynamist Morton Deutsch (1980) explained, when a situation involves competition, the success of any one member of the group means that someone else in the group must fail.

In contrast, conflict becomes less likely when the success of any one group member will improve the chance of success for the other members.

Other researchers, too, have found that competitive situations tend to be unfriendly, non-intimate, and uninvolved. One researcher, for example carried out a long-term observation of two employment agencies that varied in competitiveness and concluded that:

In one the personnel considered the successful placement of an applicant a team success, and thus cooperation was high. In the second agency, however, personnel competed by working alone and keeping job information from one another. Naturally, conflicts, anxiety, and ineffectiveness were more pronounced in the second agency (Blau, 1964:25).

Realistic conflict theory maintains that intergroup conflict is caused by competition among groups over limited resources.

This theory notes that:

The things that people value, including food, territory, wealth, power, natural resources and energy, are so limited that if the members of one group manage to acquire a scarce commodity, the members of another group will go without it. Naturally, groups would prefer to be "haves" rather than "have-nots", so they take steps to achieve two interrelated outcomes: attaining the desired resources and preventing the other group from reaching its goals (Campbell LeVine cited in Forsyth 1990:394).

Competition-based theories of conflict have been invoked to explain class struggle, racism, tribal rivalries, and even the development of culture and social structures.

What happens when group members who are supposed to share resources begin to compete for these resources? In many cases the situation becomes a social trap; the individuals are tempted to act in their own self-interest to the detriment of the group's overall needs (Platt, cited in Forsyth 1990:359).

Interpersonal Orientation

Extensive reviews of previous research conducted indicate that many group characteristics are related to conflict. One variable that is consistently stressed more than others is the interpersonal style of interacting group members. (Samuelson cited in Forsyth 1990:362).

As you would expect, when individuals with different interpersonal orientations meet in a group, the result is often conflict.

The competitor's style is often abrasive, spurring cooperative members to react with criticism and requests for fairer treatment. Competitors, however, rarely modify their behaviour in response to these complaints, because they are relatively unconcerned with maintaining smooth interpersonal relations. Also when two competitors meet, the results is often an intense conflict; when the interaction is complete and one of the individuals has won, the loser often withdraws from the group altogether (Cummings, Harnett, & Stevens cited in Forsyth 1990:363).

Schmuck & Runkel (1994:335) similarly explained that:

Every participant brings to an educational organization a set of needs and experiences, of styles of coping with stress, and of rhythms for getting things done. At times these interpersonal styles can work against one another, creating friction and conflict that may destroy productive collaboration.

Some people enjoy conflict, debate and argument, and when kept in proportion, mild forms of discord can stimulate organizational members and improve their performance. A few individuals, however, manage their conflicts, debate and arguments in such a way as to escalate them into battles that are quite disruptive. In general, the potential for such intergroup conflict is highest when organization members differ markedly in such characteristics as work attitudes, age, and education (Stoner 1978 *ibid*).

Categorization and Identity

Social categorization plays a fundamental role in helping us understand the world around us (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). Tajfel and Turner believed, however, that social categorization sours the seeds of conflict by creating a cognitive distinction between "us" and "them" the "mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups- that is, social categorization per se is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group" (Tajfel & Turner, 1987).

Many researchers, however, now believe that **social-identity theory** offers an explanation for Tajfel's results. This theory, which draws heavily from prior social-psychological theorizing, is

based on three basic assumptions. First, as the concept of social categorization maintains, we can readily distinguish between in-group members and out-group members.

Second, we are motivated to maintain positive social identities. Third, we derive much of our social identity from our group identities.

These three assumptions, taken together, suggest that we favour members of our own group in order to maintain and protect our own social identity (Meindl & Lerner, 1984).

Power Struggle

Social evolutionists argue that one of the first steps in the development of complex forms of intergroup conflict occurs when one group tries to dominate other groups. This can occur when adversaries compete for a commonly desired reward, such as a promotion or merit pay for good teaching, when self-interest conflict is present and when opinions differ on the relative autonomy or interdependence of individuals or sub groups (Schmuck & Runkel 1994:332).

Power struggles also develop over conflicting views of the appropriate power relationships between members of the school organization. That is, who should be accountable to whom, or who should tell whom what to do and when and how to do it.

Role Conflict

Role conflict is a common cause of conflict in organizations, bringing together organizational interpersonal and personal factors as the individual and the role senders try to find expectations that will be acceptable to all:

If the expectations of new instructors conflict with those of others in the college or school, their own expectations are likely to go unfulfilled. As time elapses, neophyte instructors will conform to the expectations of members of their role set, try to change the expectations or create tension within themselves and within the educational organization. If the conflict remains strong, they will

usually move to another kind of job within the field or leave the field altogether (Schmuck and Runkel 1999:335).

High conflict teams usually have multiple roles. Often these roles are organized around poles of conflict that are natural within business. High conflict teams typically have one or more executive filling most or all of these roles. Since these tensions force confrontation of important yet competing considerations, senior executives gain a deeper grasp of their business and a better understanding of their preferences and those of others, from which conflict can emerge. The interplay among roles sharpen the preference of team members and highlight these fundamental tensions (Eisenhardt 198:55).

External Stress

Disagreements will arise within organizations over the methods to be used in coping with external demands and assuaging external pressure groups, while diverse inputs from the community that lead to increased differentiation within the organization will not only increase tension in the college or school but exacerbate conflicts already in existence (Schmuck & Runkel 1994:336).

Group differentiation

Coser (1956:38) suggested that conflict occur as a result of group differentiation:

Each group tended to emphasize the major distinction between the two groups. The groups began to isolate themselves from each other and asked that they be allowed to eat separately. Unique group norms also began to develop, and if one group adopted a style of action, the other soundly rejects this behaviour.

Such differentiation is typical during intergroup conflict. Rather than shared similarities, the groups tend to emphasize their differences.

One path to creating high conflict top management teams is simply to build a heterogeneous team. Teams that have members who differ across demographic characteristics such as education, gender, functional background, ethnicity, and socioeconomic origin are more likely to have conflict. Particularly powerful are age differences (Eisenhardt 1998:46).

Shared Resources

If every unit in an organization had access to an unlimited amount of human resources, money, materials, equipment, and space, the problem of how to share these resources would hardly arise.

The potential for conflict exists because these vital resources are limited. They must be allocated, some groups inevitably will get less than they want or need. Lack of cooperation or even direct conflict can result as organizational groups fight for the greatest possible share of available resources. Even if it was possible to allocate resources strictly according to the productivity of each group, managers would still argue about the relative importance of their group to the organization (Stoner 1978).

Differences in Goals

Organizational subunits tend to become differentiated or specialized, as they develop dissimilar goals, tasks, and problems. Such differentiation frequently leads to conflict of interests or priorities even when the overall goals of the organization are agreed upon.

Because members of each department develop different goals and points of view, they often find it difficult to agree on programmes of action.

Interdependence of work activities

Work interdependence exists when two or more organizational units depend on each other in order to complete their respective tasks. In such a case, the potential for a high degree of conflict exists,

depending on how the situation is managed. Sometimes conflict arises when all the groups involved are given too much to do.

Tension among the various group members will increase, and they may then accuse each other shirking their responsibilities (Stoner 1978:348).

Conflict may also flare up if the work is evenly distributed but the rewards are dissimilar. Potential for conflict is greater, however, when one unit is unable to begin its work until the other unit completes its job (Stoner *ibid*).

Differences in values or perceptions

The differences in goals among the members of the various units in the organization are frequently accompanied by differences in attitudes, values and perceptions that can lead to conflict, for example:

Members of the engineering department might value quality products, sophisticated design, and durability, while members of the manufacturing department might value simplicity of design and low manufacturing costs (Stoner 1976:349).

Such incompatibility of values can lead to conflict.

Organizational ambiguity and communication problems

Intergroup conflict can sometimes stem from ambiguously defined work responsibilities and unclear goals.

*One manager may try to expand the role of his or her subunit. This effort will usually trigger a defensive reaction from the other units involved, also if members of different groups know little about each other's jobs, they may make unreasonable demands on each other. These demands may trigger conflict (Stoner 1978 *ibid*).*

Communication breakdowns are a common cause of intergroup conflict. For example, the same phrase may have different meanings to different groups, and undefined use of that phrase may lead to harmful misunderstandings (Stoner 1978:350).

Conflict management

Some conflicts stem from limited resources, limited materials, space, money, or time.

If two secretaries fight over time at a copying machine, no amount of added information or explaining to each other will reduce the demand on the machine. You could resolve it by buying a second copying machine. You could conceive the conflict as a shortage of time, and hire an aide to do the copying. You could conceive the conflict as a shortage of money, and ask for money to buy a second machine or to hire an aide (Schmuck & Runkel 1994:340).

There are several ways of dealing with limited resources. The parties to the conflict can use one of the following methods:

Avoiding

Avoidance means the conflict is prevented from coming into the open. Avoiding conflict can occur by ignoring the conflict and refusing to deal with any information or behaviour associated with the conflict within or between groups.

Senior managers generally agree that avoiding conflict is usually a short-term damage-control strategy.

The common reasons given by managers for selecting conflict avoidance are:

When the issue is trivial and more important issues are pressing, when the decision maker believes there is no chance of satisfying his concerns, when the cost of disruption outweighs the benefits of

resolution, when it is necessary for people to calm down and gain perspective and when gathering information is more important than immediate action (Dailey 1994:25).

Accommodating

This refers to letting others have their way. This is the strategy of appeasement or self-sacrifice.

Research indicates that senior managers select this approach when:

A manager decides he is wrong and shows his reason by letting others be heard, and when the issue is more important to others than it is to the decision-maker, the decision-maker is losing and minimizing losses is necessary, the goals of harmony and stability are necessary due to the potential public damage created by conflict, and development can be achieved by letting subordinates learn from their mistakes (Dailey 1994: ibid).

Forcing

This refers to the use of power, coercion or pressure to impose a solution through intimidation. Environmental disasters such as oil spills, nuclear reactor dangers and chemical fires may require instant decisions which leave no room for discussion or disagreement.

Not surprisingly, executives cited the following situational characteristics as determinants of the forcing strategy:

Emergency conditions exist and decisive action is vital, the issue is extremely important and unpopular decisions must be implemented, when company welfare is at stake and the decision maker knows he is right, when an organized opposition would take advantage of non-competitive behaviour (Dailey 1994:26).

Focused activity

Effective groups are focused. Focused groups get to the core issues of the problem and stay closer to the core. They stick closely to the information at hand and make decisions quickly and efficiently. Less effective groups allow issues to wander. They labour over trivial points and allow task goals to take a back seat to social facilitation (Amason et al 1998:27).

Open communication

Open communications are central to team effectiveness and conflict is a key to maintaining open communication.

Naturally, open and honest communication produces some disagreement and conflict. Again, however, if teams members recognize that the conflict is task-oriented and designed to improve their overall effectiveness, they tend to respond to it positively. It is when the conflict appears to have unhealthy motivation that it begins to undermine team communication. When disagreements seem to be self-serving, promoting the interests of one at the expense of another, team members adopt a definitive stance that prevents open and honest communication.

Teams that can manage conflict can keep the lines of communication open. In the theory, open communication and C-type conflict are two sides of the same coin. Each should flourish in the presence of the other. When teams do not manage their conflicts well, however, A-type conflict enters and team communication inevitably suffers (Amason, 1998:28).

Reorganize duties

Schmuck and Runkel (1994:340) explained that:

If a school district's funds are too limited to hire a succession of outside consultants or hire some permanent inside consultants to help with organizational problems, the district can reorganize the duties of a couple of dozen of its present employee so that they can

devote 10 percent of their time to helping with organizational problems throughout the district.

Increase the resources

In one school, teachers were in conflict because of demands on their time. They resolved a great many of their conflicts by recruiting parents to take over some of their duties. During one year, those schoolteachers had more than 50 parents working as volunteers.

When the budgets for materials and equipment are tight, many colleges have reduced conflicts over money by obtaining equipment and materials from federal grants (Schmuck & Runkel 1994:341).

Compromise

Sometimes both parties can agree to give up a little. Compromise requires mutual concessions (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986).

Compromising tends to occur when the parties in conflict have about equal power, and a fixed amount of resources must be divided in some way. The process of compromising is frequently punctuated by the effort of both parties to distort information, make strong emotional appeals, and attempt to argue for their positions in the court of public opinion if the conflict is a high visible one (Dailey 1994:26).

Instilling Trust

Trust lies at the core of successful problem solving. Whereas consistent cooperation among people over a long period generally increases mutual trust, for a group that has been wrecked by disagreement, confrontation and escalating conflict, mutual trust becomes much elusive (Haas & Deseran, cited in Forsyth 1990).

As Lindsfold explained, when people cannot trust one another, they often compete simply to defend their own best interest. Writes Lindsfold (1982:79-86):

If the other party could only be trusted to be cooperative in search of the mutual beneficial solution, then the cycle could be reversed, and both parties could gain rather than lose.

But how can trust, once lost, be regained? Communication, consistency and cooperative initiatives are critical (Deutsch 1973, Lindsfold 1986). First, group members should communicate their intentions in specific terms. Second, to be viewed as objectively credible, they must make certain that their behaviour matches their announced intention. Third, group members should respond cooperatively to other members who act competitively, even when they know in advance that the non cooperators plan to compete (Brickman et al, cited in Forsyth 1990:385).

This strategy is effective because even individuals who are acting to promote their own interest will cooperate when they realize that continued conflict is self-defeating.

Negotiation

Negotiation is a reciprocal communication process that is used to identify a basis of agreement between two parties in a conflict. Through discussion the two parties examine specific issues, explain their positions, and exchange offers and counter offers. This sequence of offer/counteroffer is repeated over and over until a mutually satisfying solution is obtained (Pruitt & Rubbin, 1986).

Negotiation takes many different forms. In some cases it amounts to little more than simple bargaining or mutual compromise. Both parties obtain their competitive orientation and take turns making small concessions until some equally satisfying middle ground is reached.

In contrast, integrative negotiation occurs when the parties work together to find a solution that will benefit both sides. When this integrative method is used, negotiation combines many interpersonally advantageous elements: open communication between disputants (Deutsch, 1980),

mutual cooperation in seeking a solution, breaking down of the general conflict into smaller, and specific issues that can be dealt with one at time.

Representation

Although disputes between very small groups can be negotiated directly, in most cases this arrangement is impractical. Authority is usually delegated to a group representative who meets with a representative from the other side in a discussion of the issue.

Representatives are often skilled in negotiations and therefore work more effectively toward acceptable solutions. With just a few participants fewer communications problems crop up, and issues can be considered rapidly and efficiently. When negotiators take their roles seriously, they often strive to seek the best solution while controlling their emotions, keeping the overall problem in perspective, and refusing to commit themselves to positions that the rest of their group may reject.

With as many positive features as negative, the use of a representative to solve conflict may not always be a successful strategy.

Reducing prejudice through cooperative learning

Why do desegregated schools so often fail to eliminate racial and ethnic prejudice?

Many researchers argue that although such schools bring students from various groups into contact, they rarely promote cooperation between these groups (Worchel 1986). Studies of racially integrated schools, for example, indicate that Blacks interact primarily with Blacks and Whites interact primarily with Whites (Brewer 1986). Many school systems contribute to this problem by grouping students on the basis of their prior academic experiences, and as a result educationally deprived students (who are typically Black) are segregated from students with stronger academic backgrounds (Schofield cited in Forsyth 1990:419).

These studies argue that desegregation must be supplemented by educational programmes that encourage cooperation among members of different vacuole and ethnic groups. One technique that has yielded promising results involves forming racially mixed teams within the classroom.

Third party intervention

When a conflict develops that members believe will be difficult to resolve, or when they deal with a conflict but are unable to resolve their differences, they can call on an OD specialist for help.

Such specialists act as objective, neutral facilitators. They use communication skills, probe for concrete clarification, suggest role negotiation or problem solving, lead parties toward agreements about new actions, and urge the parties to select a follow-up date to check on how things are going (Schmuck & Runkel 1994:359).

In general, third parties are effective, particularly in situations involving intense conflict.

Hiltrop & Rubin, (1982) after reviewing the results of a number of studies is dealing with the process and effectiveness of third-party interventions, summarized their conclusions as follows:

Third parties help opponents conciliate without embarrassment and thereby promote more rapid and effective conflict resolution (p380). Traditional third parties intervention techniques (for example, mediation, arbitration, and counseling) that are effective when conflict intensity is low may prove to be ineffectual and even exacerbating when conflict intensity is high (p. 383). The parties to conflict may view third party intervention as an unwelcome and unwanted intrusion, disputants may wish to resolve the conflict on their own accord (p. 385).

The effectiveness of third parties also depends on their power, relative to the disputants.

Given the likelihood of conflict in the kinds of situations that top management teams face and the importance of conflict to successful performance, it is surprising that conflict is often minimal

within top management teams. The work by Janis (1989) gives a number of examples in the public domain where senior executives engaged in strikingly conflict free group interaction, despite vast uncertainty and high stakes.

Academic studies by Eisenhardt et al (1998) indicates that conflict is much less widespread among top management teams than would be anticipated.

Yet, the evidence is also overwhelming that low conflict levels are associated with poor decision making and too little conflict can be disastrous (Eisenhardt et al 1998:44).

Why does conflict fail to occur in top management teams?

According to Eisenhardt et al (1998) executives come to value the camaraderie of the executive team more than critical thinking. They suppress their own conflicting point of view, engage in self-censorship to maintain the veneer of harmony. Lack of conviction about one's own perspective and ignorance of others' point of view, coupled with the implicit assumption that everyone agrees, limit conflict in such settings.

A third reason may be that executives find conflict unpleasant. Many fear that conflict may spiral down into interpersonal animosity, which will harm working relationships. They also eschew conflict to avoid appearing uncooperative, offensive or even foolish. Finally, some top management teams may avoid conflict simply because of fear that endless debate will lead to slow decision making and divert attention from critical issues. Overall, a whole range of cognitive, emotional and power barriers to conflict can stymie conflict. How can these be overcome?

Many authors have written on the topic of conflict, covering different aspects thereof. This is not an exhaustive review. I note the absence of African literature on conflict management. The United States literature is limited in that I found no evidence of multi cultural differences as a major source of conflict. In addition, there are few qualitative studies that consider views of conflict in

educational institutions. I will try to address some of the above mentioned shortcomings of conflict research in this study.

But there are still, it would appear, few studies of this nature. There are, as far as I could establish few studies of educational teams conducted along the qualitative lines. This study, then is an attempt to address those needs. The next chapter is devoted to an explanation and justification of the qualitative approach adopted, different research techniques, sampling methods used and the description of the data analysis procedure.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study design

I planned to begin my research with an explanatory phase in order to gain insight into the concept by understanding the institution's staff's perception about conflict, its causes, as well as possible strategies of resolving it. I discussed my research proposal with knowledgeable people in the institution (key informants): the director, the deputy director, and senior education officers.

After this phase I was able to develop a list of questions adapted to the situation at NIED and a more descriptive phase began in which I solicited in more detail the views of the staff about conflict, as well as its management.

I will first provide a brief rationale for my approach and for my choice of a case study. After this I will give an overview of the different research techniques used. In the last section of this chapter I will discuss sampling methods, followed by a description of the data analysis procedure.

Rationale for a qualitative approach

I have chosen a qualitative approach to my study for a number of reasons. I tend to favour a research strategy which is relatively open and unstructured, rather than one which has decided in advance precisely what ought to be investigated and how it should be done.

It is also often argued that an open research strategy enhances the opportunity of coming across entirely unexpected issues, which may be of interest to the participants.

I naturally inclined to an approach that recognizes the "human element". In other words human-as-instrument simply means that it is the person with all of the skills, experiences, background, and knowledge as well as biases which is the primary, if not exclusive, source of data collection and analysis (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) further illustrated the unique position taken by a qualitative researcher that is, human as instrument, the only instrument which is flexible enough to capture the complexity, subtlety and constantly changing situation which is the human experience (p.193).

Further, Mayakut (1995) argues that human instruments are responsive, adaptable and holistic. A human investigator has knowledge-based experience, possesses an immediacy of the situation, and has the opportunity for clarification and summary on the spot. I was flexible enough during the interviews and questions were clarified immediately.

Qualitative research generally examines people's words and actions in descriptive ways, more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participant (Mayakut et al 1994:2). Using the subject's words better reflects the postulate of the qualitative paradigm.

The qualitative researcher looks to understand a situation as it is constructed by the participants. Qualitative research attempts to capture what people say and do, that is, the products of how people interpret the world. I entered the setting to (examine) understand how people view conflict in their own situation as they experience it themselves.

Mayakut et al (1994:18) said:

The task of the qualitative researcher is to find patterns within those words (and actions) and to present those patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it.

And Bryman (1988:46) puts it thus: An approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied.

Further, to present the result of the research to the participants in a manner which they can understand, it is necessary to include the participants in the discovery process. Morehouse (cited in Mayakut 1994) puts it as follows:

If the knower and the known are interdependent, then there must be integrity between how the researcher experiences the situation and it, and how those result are presented (p 14).

According to Rist (cited in Bryman1988: 161) the emphasis here is on the need to interpret what is going on in terms of an understanding of the whole society and the meaning it has for the participants. The most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is the strategy of taking the subject's perspective in terms of seeing through the eyes of the people you are studying.

Naturalism is one of the intellectual under currents to qualitative research in that it proposes that the study of social phenomena should involve the researcher getting close to his or her subjects and not imposing the technical paraphernalia of quantitative research on them.

Qualitative researchers invariably seek to go beyond pure description and to provide analyses of the environments they examine.

Qualitative research exhibits a preference for contextualism in its commitment to understanding events, behaviour, etc. in their context. It is almost inseparable from another theme in qualitative research, namely holism which entails an undertaking to examine social entities – schools, tribes, firms, delinquent groups, communities, or whatever as wholes to be explicated and understood in their entirety.

The basic message that qualitative research conveys is that whatever the sphere is in which data are being collected, we can understand events only when they are situated in the wider social and historical context. Further, qualitative researchers argue that this is precisely how

people experience social reality, so that the inclination to emphasize process is part of the product of the qualitative researcher's commitment to the participant's perspectives.

Mayakut et al (1994) however point out that:

Qualitative researchers understand that they are also subjects or actors and not outside of the process as impartial observers. Subjective researchers are exposed to the same constraints in understanding the world as are the person they are investigating (p.20).

For qualitative researchers, it is only by getting close to their subjects and becoming an insider that they can view the world as a participant in that setting.

Adler (1985:28) endorsed this view when writing about her qualitative research on upper-level drug dealer:

By studying criminals in their natural habitat I was able to see them in the full variability and complexity of their surrounding subculture.

I was allowed to participate in discussions during staff meetings. This however, let me feel that I was also a subject and not an outsider. This qualitative approach has more potential to establish rapport and trust than more manipulative and one-sided approaches. After I spent some time with NIED staff, I developed a good rapport with them.

NIED represents multiple realities as it is staffed with people from different cultural and educational backgrounds. According to Kuhn, cited in Smith (1995), different cultural groups have different worldviews that provide a frame of reference for perception, belief and behaviour. In addition, individuals have had different experiences and have different interests and personalities. I favour a qualitative approach to research as it facilitates the expression of these multiple perspectives.

Rationale for a case study

I conducted a single case study using qualitative research methods. My rationale for using a single case study is as follows:

NIED is a unique educational institution, which focuses on developing curricula for the Namibian nation, staffed with people from different cultural and educational backgrounds. Most of the staff have been transferred from an old ethnically segregated educational cultural system to a new non-racial system. My purpose was to understand whether these staff have a different or common understanding of conflict.

According to Schuhmacher and McMillan (1993) a case study design seems to be appropriate in this case because its flexibility to a range of context, process, people and foci provides most of the useful methods available in educational research.

The impact of qualitative case study on educational inquiry is a dynamic one, because the design allows researchers to discover what the important questions to ask of a topic are and what the important topics in education are.

Case studies can provide a detailed description and analysis of processes or themes voiced by a participant in a particular situation. Case studies are appropriate for exploratory and discovery oriented research, which examine a topic in which there has been little previous research. They are also designed to lead to further inquiry.

The case study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researches because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale.

A case study is concerned principally with the interaction of factors and events and, as Nisbet and Watt (cited in Bryman 1988:55) point out:

Sometimes it is only by taking a practical instance that we can obtain a full picture of this interaction.

The great strength of the case study method is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify, the various interactive process of work.

Bassey(cited in Bell 1993:85) make a strong case for this approach;

...an important criterion for judging the merit of a case study is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a researcher working in a similar situation to relate his decision making to that described in the case study.

He considered that if case studies:

are carried out systematically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are reliable, and if by publication of the finding they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research (p. 86).

According to Spindler cited in Smith (1995) the single case is the predominant mode adopted in education research approaches using ethnographic techniques such as interviews and observation.

Furthermore, Yin (cited in Smith 1995) recommended that novices [like me] begin a case study career with a simple and straightforward case study (p. 37).

I agree with Hyman in (Smith 1995: 35) that:

Investigators like explorers can find untapped wealth in a small part of a large realm. Still greater wealth - from further exploration of the realm may require long-term commitment to the environment.

Research techniques

First I welcomed the participants and restated my interest in hearing from them about their own experiences and asked permission (with assurances of anonymity) to record the interviews.

I used 1 research technique.

In-depth Interview

I used 2 forms of qualitative in depth interviews.

Interviews: guided approach

For the individual interview, I used an interview schedule with mostly open-ended questions. I selected in advance, the sequence and the wording of the questions during the interview. I used this approach in order to establish rapport with my interviews.

A disadvantage is that the interview was to some extent determined by myself as the interviewer. I interviewed almost all the interviewees in their offices. This made them more comfortable.

The informal conversational interview

During this interview, I asked questions that emerged from the immediate context. I didn't have any pre-determined questions. This type of interview assisted me to get more in-depth information than emerged from the interview guide. I also made use of my own experience to provide a context for further exploration.

Seidman (cited in Smith1995) argued that:

In some research situation in-depth interviews is an appropriate primary method of investigation.

According to him the roots of in depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (p.3).

Seidman cited in Smith (1995) furthermore argued that the best way a researcher can investigate a process [such as conflict management in my case] is through listening to the individual and the collective experience of the people who live out the process.

Interviews can also complement other data gathering methods such as participant observation.

According to Judd et al cited in Smith (1995):

These interviewing techniques are used in an effort to obtain a more intensive study of perception, attitudes and motivations than a standardized questionnaire. This type of interview is useful in scouting a new area of research to find out what the basic issues are, how people conceptualize the topic, what terminology people use, and what the level of understanding is (p: 41).

Interviewers also open up for readers the possibility of connecting their own stories of those presented in the study.

They will appreciate and understand the intricate ways in which people's lives interact with their social and organizational contexts, and discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context (Seidman cited in Smith 1995:42).

Sampling

I selected most of the key informants according to the advice of the director of NIED, who was my initial key informant. Two more informants were selected during the study because of the relevant knowledge they demonstrated on the subject during staff meetings and social interaction.

A combination of convenient and reputational case sampling methods were therefore used to select staff for individual interviews. In other words I obtained the recommendation of knowledgeable experts on the subject (Macmillan 1993:382)

I attended their staff meetings where I observed how individuals demonstrated their knowledge on various issues. Staff members whom I found knowledgeable were interviewed until the desired sample size of 5 was obtained. This type of sampling had some advantages because I was able to follow up the interviewee if more explanation and clarification was needed.

Data analysis

The major challenge I faced in analyzing the data, was how to create some kind of order in the data that would make it possible for myself, and, ultimately, for readers in general, to obtain a coherent sense of how each participant viewed and managed conflict (Van der Mescht 1996:60)

Although I completed some analysis of data while in the field, for example developing analytical questions and concepts which served as a focus for data collecting, trying out themes on subject, most of the analysis was done after leaving the field.

In general, I followed the suggestion for data analysis outlined by Bogdar and Biklen (cited in Macmillan 1995). I read through all the data, jotting down ideas, words and phrases and patterns of behaviour. These notes later formed the basis for "coding" a process by which the data are sorted into broad themes such as perception of conflict, sources and management.

Once I developed the list of coding categories, I went through the data again organizing them according to my codes.

My analysis was guided by Wolcot's (1990: 35-36) advice:

The critical tasks in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data, you can but to "can" it (i.e. to get rid of) most of the data you accumulate. (p.35) The challenge is to be selective rather than be exhaustive (p.36).

I did, of necessity, omit points which seemed of minor importance, or perhaps even irrelevant.

CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTIONS OF CONFLICT

In this chapter I will describe the participants' perceptions of conflict. I will then pay attention to the views, sources, and management of conflict as perceived by the participants.

Views of conflict

Conflict is viewed differently by various participants. A few view conflict as problematic. They view conflict as harmful to the working relationship, something unpleasant, unnecessary something that causes tension and frustration among the staff. They found conflict to be a burden - something to be avoided.

Maria says:

I really don't like conflict, I am not a person who can fight, and I really try to avoid it. If there is conflict there will be no progress. Conflict can damage the image of the institution.

For Martin:

There are also other conflicts, which have a negative effect on the work, the working conditions and the environment. These need to be avoided.

Other participants exhibit very high levels of disagreement surrounding organizational goals, key decision areas and organizational goals. These participants view conflict to their advantage, to arouse discussion, stimulate creative thinking. Conflict was also viewed as disagreement or misunderstanding, that is a natural part of any organization. It was considered natural because as team members gather to make important decision, they bring different ideas, opinions and perspectives to the table.

Positive conflict occurs as team members examine, compare and reconcile these differences. Thus most of the participants with whom I spoke believe that conflict can improve team effectiveness and productivity.

According to Nancy:

Conflict is something that is part of human nature. I do not see it as a negative concept as some people conceive it. It is something that you have to learn to live with when you are working with people with different interpretations, different personalities and attitudes.

Conflict is part of any organization through crisis or conflict you can't get something very productive. You always go through pain but eventually it will turn somehow in a positive way.

Sanna believes that:

Conflict is when people have different understanding of a situation or issue. Conflict does not necessarily need to have negative consequences, it leads to innovations and creative ideas...It depends on how you handle the conflict, by negotiating job description once, you actually create the ground for conflict, but in another sense you minimize conflict, because after that you will understand better.

Petrus describes the process as follow:

Conflict or a strike produces a strategy that resolves the problems now if I can say that the conflict ... that one can benefit from it ... maybe one can say that if maybe it can lead to positive results for the company then it can be really beneficial. I mean just that there is nothing wrong with a strike if it leads to a positive solution.

Petrus continues:

Some places in private sectors where for example the people are treated very unfair. The strategy can be a conflict or a strike that resolves the problem.

According to Sanna:

Conflict to my mind comes about when people have different understandings of a situation or issue. When they have different perspectives and they cannot agree. Also when one person feels that for example, he has wronged him or her, that he or she had been treated unfairly and as a result some frustrations build up.

Sanna continues:

Sometimes it is better of people to disagree, it is out of that disagreement, self-reflection can take place and then new ideas come out. So we also try to have open dialogue and we encourage that.

David sees conflict as:

One which causes discontent between two people and maybe a group of people ... it happens that people are not satisfied about the particular issue and the other does not want to work on it. So later on the conflict develops, ... conflict can be advantageous to arouse discussion and stimulate creative thinking.

Sources of conflict

Conflict occurs at all levels of social organization. Although conflict between groups is one of the most complicated phenomena, the goal of greater understanding and the problem of reducing tension remain enticing. The natural starting point for such an investigation is the deceptively simple query: What causes conflict?

Different experiences/background/culture:

NIED is an organization, which consists of staff from different cultures, educational background and different experiences that are striving to achieve a common goal. These differences are seen as major sources of conflict.

Nancy puts it as follows:

I come from a situation where I was a teacher educator going for.... Education reform with a new education policy of learner education centered and then my colleagues are not really aware of an idea when it comes to education. I can see that conflict can be caused by your experience that you pick up as a learner from primary school, how to copy or imitate your teachers and also how you were trained and your present experience when you work with people.

Nancy continues:

So this is why I said that at NIED there are people with different expectations because of their experiences and even now you can see we are working as colleagues but still you see that different visions depending on our background and depend really on what comes as important for you.

For Sanna:

There is also different backgrounds and they came from different context (aa) and so sometimes what is said from our side is understood within the context of their own country and then there is misunderstanding. They say something that is acceptable in their culture but is not acceptable in our culture and you know those things can create conflict.

Sanna continues:

You know example of Americans they are quite outspoken about certain things in their culture, but that is not acceptable in our culture. What is totally acceptable in their culture might not be totally acceptable in our culture. In our culture we think that people should be more diplomatic, tactful and that necessarily may not be possible in their culture.

For Maria:

Conflict exists especially from one or two people from the old white regime.

Also among our own people some of them are coming from a white administration, some of them from Herero administration, Coloured, Ovambo national administration you name it. You know with their own way of doing things, now they have to work together. So this means there is very fertile ground of conflict.

David has a similar perception:

The other thing that I would like to mention is very important especially in the emerging situation in Namibia while we were previously separated according to community and background. People did not realize this so much but now where we have one nation, where we have to work together there is a huge difference in cultural background, working environment and if you do not understand the culture or background ... this leads to unnecessary misunderstanding and it causes conflict.

Changes in Educational Philosophy

The Ministry of Education's changes in educational policy can be seen as somewhat confusing created by rapid and accelerating change. One of the significant features of state education is the tension between national policy makers and practitioners. The reforms introduced prior to independence, which replaced the philosophy and practice of education from teacher centered to learners centered, are seen to be **one of the major sources** of conflict, since old times are hard to forget and still many difficult issues will have to be dealt with before it is possible to talk about education for all.

Nancy recalls:

Just after independence so you can see changes compare to the old system. You know that the old system was more autocratic, teacher centered type of educational system with its advantages and disadvantages and now the philosophy is more democratic and learner centered and you know it has been a very different

situation to work if I can recall back ... just to give you some background.

She continues:

I was trained in the old system and the students I was teaching they also experienced the old system. Then you have to start with the reform then you find it is very difficult. There was uncertainty whether what I was doing was right. The new educational philosophy is learner centered. They have a problem because they haven't experienced it themselves as learners or they were not trained through that system.

Sanna has similar views:

People have been working in highly fragmented areas. The highly fragmented areas need to be brought together into one system. You know when you bring people together in such situation, then you create conflict. This is the most favorable ground for conflict.

Reform process

The process of change must always expect and even encourage conflict. Whenever people are confronted with change, they need the opportunity to react, to articulate their ambivalent feelings and work out their own sense of it (Uirab 1997:36). Old times are hard to forget, especially when you feel unsure in what you are doing in the present situation. This may cause conflict among the staff.

Nancy puts it as follows:

There is some resistance from the people because they feel that what they have been doing in the past was right and they feel insecure. So it means that they tend to feel that they still have to stick to what they were taught in the past. They feel that learner centered education was not a system for them, it is not theirs. They do not feel ownership of the philosophy.

Maria has similar perceptions:

You know it is very difficult to say, I am older now I was very used to an authoritarian system in the old days... having been told to do a thing this way and not that way gives you some kind of unsafety Yes, some of the people from the old system still have this preambule-ship attitude towards colleagues... They try very hard to get rid of it, but they still have this attitude of things to be done this way. It is a problem for me... it bothers me.

Different expectations and personalities

Every participant brings to an organization a unique set of needs, interest, expectations and misunderstandings. At times these interpersonal styles can work against one another, creating friction and conflict that may destroy productive collaboration. As we shall see later, not everyone shared this opinion.

Sanna shares this sentiment:

They have certain expectations... and many times these expectation do not necessarily cohere (laugh) and that's why there are these conflicts. Some people came in with different expectations, very different perceptions...

In Maria's view:

I know of conflicts where personality clashes were the major issue. One person may not like the person who is putting the request or order then personal conflict with that person exists or ... little things that has happened at home the day before carried it to the present situation. Someone could feel quite well today and do anything you ask him or her to help out, and the next day it is totally different, because something has happened, or the person may be tired.

David describes the situation as follows:

Personality differences between people might lead to conflict. Also on the other hand as a manager or a teacher ... some of the staff does not respond to the commitment and that can easily lead to conflict.

Petrus could say:

It happens that people know their needs ... at work and they definitely want their needs to be met. In some cases there are some demands that are put by the workers themselves and then the employers do not want to meet the needs of the employees so that is how conflict develops.

Inadequate communication

Members of different departments or subgroups who have access to different kinds of information from their colleagues in other department are likely to take a different view of the facts of a situation and to entertain different strategies for accomplishing their primary tasks. The same problem is tackled from a widely diverging point of view, the presence of various differences will produce interpersonal and intergroup conflicts.

David emphasizes this:

Especially for a Ministry like this were there is quite a diversified group but different areas that depend on each other, it means that different sections/divisions always run... into trouble at a crises situation and there, things lead to conflict.

David continues:

You may find out for example, people in the support services or in the production unit or in admin unit could not process the important information in a proper way ... some people only expect to do certain things without knowledge of other situation.

Sanna has similar view:

We still have a problem that information does not always go through as it is supposed to. Because of your own perspective you interpret something the way it was not intended and also when information is transferred to the next group. And that also causes problems. Now people always think that my subject is the most important subject and forget that all other subjects play a role to reach that goal. So people become very protective of their areas and they only fight to get resources for their own areas.

For Maria:

Some people just do not have communication skills to put over something like that.

For Petrus:

Communication here is a top down; it is not always for the subordinates to address their problems freely. I do not know whether we are allowed to do it. But immediately there is a tension. I think the main reason is especially from the behavior of those ones. Whether the people will be free and open to talk frankly, depends on how you create that kind of confidence in those people.

Petrus continues:

Now the problem is that I see that I am a Director or I occupy a higher position so that I am trying to separate myself from the subordinates who are there. I do not want to go and talk to them in a very friendly way and find out about their life outside the work so that they can come to you ... maybe one day if they have a problem.

Ineffective management of meetings

If managed effectively, meetings can be the principle channels for bringing organization members into collaboration to reach common understandings. Yet the staff interviewed felt that most of the meetings are ineffective, and often inhibit clear communication and wide participation. Most of them regard meetings as a dull waste of time or as a burden to be endured while more interesting work awaits them elsewhere. This mis-management of meetings can arouse conflicts among the staff.

Nancy recalls 2 or 3 meetings she attended:

The chairperson did not have good protocol on how to manage a meeting. It can take three or four hours just centering around one issue and no decision is taken and sometimes we take decisions, but these decisions are never followed up, and as a result at the next meeting that issue will come again. Those things are really causing frustrations.

She continues:

Staff meetings are not announced in advance so that you can get there well prepared. You may find a paper inviting you to a meeting a few hours or a day before the meeting is taking place. Since we are really working in a hectic situation where we are understaffed, we feel that meetings are sometimes wasting our time because it is not well prepared

Perception of Democracy

In the past, an authoritarian Government that preached to us about democracy fooled us. No people today will be deceived by an educational system that talks about democracy, that is why people misinterpret democracy.

Sanna said:

The way of interacting changed before and after independence. Because one of the goals of the government is democracy, people are now more willing to speak their minds and that can lead to conflict. Where people are too free to speak their minds

and our people do not always know where to draw the line in terms of speaking your mind too much.

Sanna continues:

So with the result, that sometimes we behave unprofessionally by thinking that it is my democratic right to speak out. The way in which people understand democracy and you know as a nation we have to decide and define what we mean by democracy people sometimes go across the boundaries of what is professional and what is not professional.

Gender

Sex differences was also seen as one source of conflict

Maria says:

The other thing is gender. In the way, we have noticed that some men are still in the old fashion of men is men. When a lady enters the room the conversation and the body language will change.

Lack of participation in decision making process

Petrus feels that sometimes there is no involvement in the decision making process, and this can cause conflict between supervisors and their subordinates.

Nancy shares similar views:

The issue of empowering the junior staff to take decisions or to take part in decision making, because you find that senior management level people might take decisions alone.

Lack of incentives

Incentives can motivate workers to be effective. One of the sources of conflict was lack of benefits as Petrus indicates:

The other major cause that I can also mention is when it comes to actual practices, like for example, the benefit, the incentives that the employees want and if the company is not able to give these things, then conflicts will arise.

Loneliness

Maria feels that loneliness can cause conflict:

She says:

I feel a bit lonely in my job because I work a lot with special education and my colleagues are in Windhoek and I have to do thing for them, writing a curriculum. In that way they are there and I am here. I wait for things to turn up and it frustrate me when you have to do things over and over.

Strategies for managing conflict

Whether a conflict will result in negative or positive consequences, or both, the approach taken to resolve conflict will depend on the causes of conflict, the organization, and the parties involved.

Sanna states it clearly that:

I will then try to find relevant literature on conflict management to see whether something has been written, theory about why in organization or in certain situations certain conflict arise and I will get some information how to approach a potential conflict situation.

Sanna continues:

From there I will also just speak to people in similar institutions or similar situations and find out how they deal with conflict and from all this information, try to analyze the problem by identifying what situations or what issues caused conflict, why do these issues cause conflict and I will bring forward some conclusions.

Understanding different cultures and views

The question for teams is not so much a matter of whether to allow conflict, but how to channel it when it exists. The research on the subject, supported by my own experiences, clearly shows that conflict can improve team effectiveness. The problem is that, once aroused, conflict is difficult to control.

One theme that surfaced repeatedly in my interviews was that understanding different cultural creativity and open communication must be the central focus in managing conflict.

David states it clearly that:

What we did here already is to place some of the management through a cultural sensitivity exercise where we have people of different cultural backgrounds and we put them through a program to make them more sensitive. The first thing I would like to address is cultural differences between people and to make people aware of that. What we are trying to do is to sit down and listen to the people, because we accept those different views. We really want the people to put their idea in front.

Maria says:

I would never push my opinions to other people. I would rather persuade other people to accept my views and I would always listen to other people to hear what they have to say from their point of view... accommodate and adapt, other views... so I would never say stop this I could try and do it differently.

Nancy says:

For multicultural education to become a reality in the formal school situation, the curriculum must be unbiased and must incorporate the contributions of all cultural groups. Instructional materials must be free of biases and stereotypes and cultural differences must be treated as differences rather than deficiencies.

Petrus shares similar views:

The moment we are sharing different cultures it means definitely that we are different. At NIED, because we have multicultural society, when we have work to be done for the curriculum or syllabus, we always get people together from different culture. We sit together and after all what we do here is for our children. We accommodate different ideas I have only seen good products come from that.

Open communication

Open communication is central to team effectiveness and conflict is a key to maintaining open communication. Information to be distributed must be definite so that ambiguities are reduced.

As Sanna expressed, that by having a flatter management structure they ensure that information goes through and communication becomes more effective.

She continues:

So we also try to have open dialogue and we encourage that. For example I have an open door policy. If people feel unhappy about something they come to me and I say OK lets come and discuss the problem. I suddenly start to see how it can be solved. I really feel that one has to listen to people, I operate on an "open door policy". It is very seldom that my door is closed. People can walk in my office any time during the day.

David has similar view:

We are trying to formalize communication to a very large extent. I think if you allow people to really have a channel, not only a channel that exists somewhere, but also an open channel then you ensure that these things can come out. The other very important thing is to ensure that the communication opportunities are kept alive and that is really functioning as the proper level to ensure that people have relevant opportunities and the skills to communicate. So if you have clear channels of communication, then you ensure that you have people that can take care of the staff. Communication on continuous level is very important. We are trying to make communication available up and down.

For David communication prevents a lot of unnecessary conflict. He said:

To communicate is to create an understanding for what everybody is doing and what the problems are that they are working with communication help us to avoid some of the negative conflicts that we experience.

Sanna also referred to communication without stress:

In order to minimize that type of understanding we try to ensure that we communicate effectively. That is one way we are trying and minimize by having a "flatter" management structure to ensure that information goes through and communication becomes more effective.

Sanna continues:

You know in that way, you help because as soon as people start speaking about what they see as a very big problem, in that process, just by sharing the problem, and by talking about it, I suddenly start to see how it can be solved.

Frequent interaction creates familiarity among the staff members so that they can be more relaxed and confident about offering dissenting points of views.

Building common understanding

If people share and understand issues than it is easier to manage conflict than to avoid it.

Sanna supports these:

We are trying to build a common understanding of different issues...when people have very different understanding of an issue or situation, then it is difficult to solve the problem or conflict, but if people share an understanding of an issue that it is easier to manage conflict.

Sanna continues:

We are trying to create a common understanding on specific issues. That is why you know, it took us long time to develop job descriptions, because we felt that people should understand what NIED stood for, they should understand the goals of the Ministry.

Common understanding can also be reached through orientation of people involved.

As Sanna expresses:

One way of minimizing conflict is when a new project comes in with new staff and so on. We are trying to go through an orientation (aa...) and through that orientation we are trying to create a common framework in which we will work.

Planning

Proper planning, including time management, were some of the strategies that can be utilized to minimize conflict as Sanna expressed that:

Planning contributes to that, and also time management goes with planning. I think good planning, strategic planning in fact, can also minimize conflict.

Facilitating change

People are best prepared for change when they are involved in the planning stage and see a need for the change. Those who will be effected by the change best determine the need for the change (Richard Gorton1981).

Nancy states it as follows:

Yes, we always help at NIED or at the centers in the regions. We are also writing manuals and models to assist our people to be able to understand the new philosophy. We also have a journal, which is called Reform Forum where teachers and other educators are invited to air their views about education.

Nancy continues:

At the beginning of 1997 we had a big conference, about curriculum issues where a lot of people from Namibia were invited. Things like curriculum development and teacher empowerment were really highlighted. We are also going to address the effectiveness of implementing the learner centered education and how it can help our teacher better. We are also trying to visit certain school to determine where the problems are

Effective meetings

Meetings can be the principal channels for bringing organization members into collaboration to reach common understandings.

Nancy recommends that:

I think if we had a meeting and decisions are taken in that meeting and the next meeting we have to give feedback, then we can have effective meetings. Again, planning meetings and informing people well in advance about the meeting is important

Collective decision making

Effective decisions begin by seeking the opinions of others. This encourages participation and allows people within the organization to develop ownership in the decisions that affect them.

Petrus says:

For an institution to operate in a democratic way, it should always address the issue of decision making. If, for example, I draw up something then I have to make a draft of that particularly thing and disseminate it among the people so that they can be free, to invite the comments and suggestions, to make some changes that is how we work together.

Nancy has a similar view:

The main issue I would like to raise is that junior staff should take decisions or take part in decision making.

Interpersonal relationship

For Petrus the focus is on the behaviour and attitude between employees and employers as he stated that:

Attitude of management level itself should be strengthened...which is between employees and employers...I focus on the mechanisms to maintain the relationships between employers and employees.

David has similar views:

I think the management group should have an attitude to be open. If that is not the case, then you will always get a type of dictatorship here.

Job satisfaction and motivation

Job satisfaction and motivation of people are also very important, because sometimes if people are not satisfied then conflicts will arise.

Democratic principle

According to David by applying democratic principles, people can understand all the information, and they will feel that they are part of the process.

He says:

We are try to really apply democratic principles...so everybody has the opportunity to talk and to have all the information so that they can understand the situation. So we are listening to all of them. That is the only way we can make people happy around here and to make them feel that they are part of the process.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

Chapter two of this study has indicated that my findings would, to some extent, articulate other researches have found, and also that this study would shed light on previously unexplored aspects of conflict. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of findings by comparing them with other writers. In the last part of this chapter I will discuss the major new findings that emerged.

Views of Conflict

What emerged from my study is that conflict is viewed differently by various people. A few view conflict as problematic. They view conflict as harmful to the working relationship, something unpleasant, unnecessary, something that causes tension and frustration among staff. They found conflict to be a burden, something to be avoided. Maria says that conflict is problematic, it is a burden. Martin says conflict damages the image of the institution so it needs to be avoided. Amason et al (1998) in their study of conflict call this view "A" type of conflict. They refer to it as disagreement over personalized individual matters.

They also point out that "A" type conflict lowers team effectiveness by provoking hostility, distrust and apathy among team-members. They also stress that "A" type conflict is usually directed at specific individuals rather than specific ideas. This also comes in my study. Sanna says that some of their colleagues tend to be selfish. Some people become very protective of their areas, and they only to fight get resources for their own areas.”

Amason et al (1998) refers to "A" type of conflict as a type that undermines team effectiveness by preventing teams from engaging in the kinds of activities that are critical to team effectiveness. They stress the fact that team members who have been burnt by "A" type of conflict are less likely to participate fully in future meetings.

The same view is shared by some participants who feel that most of the meetings are ineffective and inhibit clear communication and wide participation. Nancy regards meetings as a waste of time. She feels that some meetings do not have good protocols. Discussion might centre around one issue and decisions are not taken, and when taken they are never followed up.

Even though there were some participants who viewed conflict as negative, there were also those who viewed it as positive. During my interview, I heard people say things like: conflict can improve team effectiveness," and "conflict is something that is part of human nature".

Conflict is part of any organisation. Through crisis or conflict, you can get something very productive. Amason et al (1998) refer to this view of positive conflict as "C" type of conflict. They refer to the "C" type conflict as beneficial because it requires the teams to engage in activities that are essential to team effectiveness (Amason et al 1998:23).

One of the participants feels that sometimes it is better for the people to disagree. It is out of that disagreement that self-reflection can take place and new ideas come out. Amason et al (1998) share the same view by saying that through facilitating frank communication and open consideration of alternative views, "C" type of conflict encourages innovative thinking and promotes creative solutions to problems that otherwise might seem insoluble. They also emphasise that "C" type of conflict also seems to promote acceptance of a decision itself among the team members. By encouraging open and frank communication and by integrating the various skills and activities of the team members, AC@ type conflict builds understanding and commitment to the team goals and decisions. This view is shared by Sanna who feels that the positive conflict occurs when team members examine, compare and reconcile differences.

Stoner (1978) has a similar perception. He refers to it as an interactionist view. This thinking about conflict is that conflict in organisations is inevitable and even necessary, no matter how organisations are designed and operated.

So, too, Dailey (1994) in his contemporary view of conflict referred to those conflicts between groups that can be a useful deviation from the status quo. The contemporary view recognises that constructive conflict can occur. There are disagreements, which can lead to benefits for those involved and for their organisation. This view encourages the development of an organisational system which manages and channels conflict to valuable organisational ends.

The perspective taken by Eisenhardt et al (1998) is that conflict is dynamic in that it unfolds as executives gain a deeper grasp of their business and their preferences for action through constant immersion in alternative viewpoints. Similar studies by Amason et al (1998) found that high conflict led to the consideration of more alternatives, better understanding of choices and, overall, significantly more effective decision making.

Janis (cited in Eisenhardt et al, 1998) observed that conflict within the top management cadres played a vital role in successful interaction among senior levels. He also found that high substantive conflict was related to superior performance.

Nancy, Sanna and David who feel that “conflict can be advantageous to arouse discussion and stimulate creative thinking” share these views.

In summary, I can say that destructive conflict can occur (and it must be dealt with) as well as constructive conflict. As a general rule, conflict can have a beneficial result when the organisation practices allow participation and find ways to raise employee involvement in Acore issues.”

I am using Stoner ‘s traditional and interactional views, to compare the old and current views of conflict as follows:

OLD VIEW	CURRENT VIEW
<p>Conflict is avoidable</p> <p>Conflict is caused by management errors in designing and managing organisations or the troublemakers</p> <p>Conflict disrupts the organisation and prevents optimal performance</p> <p>The task of management is to eliminate conflict</p> <p>Optimal organisational performance requires the removal of conflict</p>	<p>Conflict is inevitable</p> <p>Conflict arises from many causes, including organisation structures, unavoidable differences in perceptions and values of specialised personnel, and so on.</p> <p>Conflict contributes to and detracts from organisational performance in varying degrees</p> <p>The task of management is to manage the level of conflict and its resolution for optimal organisational performance</p> <p>Optimal organisational performance requires a moderate level of conflict</p>

Sources of Conflict

Introduction

Conflict occurs at all levels of social organisation. Although conflict between groups is one of the most complicated phenomena, the goal of greater understanding and the problem of reducing tension, remain enticing. The natural starting point for such an investigation is the deceptively simple query: What causes conflict? The major sources of organisational conflict that has emerged from the study include: different experiences / background and culture, changes in educational philosophy, reform process, different expectations and personalities, inadequate communication,

ineffective management of meetings, perception of democracy, gender, lack of participation in decision-making process lack of incentives and loneliness.

In the paragraphs below, I will discuss some of the findings in detail.

Different expectations and personalities

Schmuck and Runkel (1994) say that each participant brings to an organisation a unique set of interests, needs and expectations. At all times interpersonal styles can work against one another, creating friction and conflict that may destroy productive collaboration.

Stoner (1978) shares similar views where he refers to it as individual style. He pointed out that some people enjoy conflicts, which improve their performance. A few individuals, however, manage their conflict in such a way as to escalate them into battles that are quite disruptive. In general, the potential for such intergroup conflict is high when organization members differ markedly in such characteristics as work attitudes, age, and education.

This study shows that different expectations and personality differences lead to organisational conflict. Sanna says that many people in organisations have certain expectations and many times these expectations do not cohere. Maria says that she knows of conflict where personality clashes were the major issue. David and Petrus express similar views. They also feel that people have different needs, and if these are not being met, then conflict develops.

Inadequate Communication

Communication breakdowns are a common cause of intergroup conflict. According to Stoner (1978) the same phrase may have a different meaning to different groups; and undefined use of that phrase may lead to harmful misunderstandings. This study shows that members of different departments or subgroups who have access to different kinds of information from their colleagues in other departments are likely to take a different view of facts of a situation and to entertain different strategies for accomplishing their primary task. These will produce interpersonal and

intergroup conflicts. Nancy told me that she still has a problem that the information does not always go through as it is supposed to. "Because of your own perspective you interpret something the way it was not intended, and that also causes conflict@.

James (1997) said that in hierarchical organisations, it is often difficult to achieve frank and open communication between members across the hierarchy. Some members, especially junior members, often tend to be reluctant to participate in open discussions. They feel threatened by the presence of their superiors, and think that they may be punished if they oppose what the superiors say even when they are told to freely express their opinions. In addition such structures tend to make the flow of information difficult. Besides top-down practices tend to cause uncertainty whether to talk or not as well as unhealthy relationships between subordinates and the managers. Petrus feels that communication at the organisation is a top-down, he says that it is not always for the subordinates to address their problem freely. In addition, Petrus says that A I do not know whether we are allowed to do it@. But immediately there is a tension. Petrus gives an example of a director who feels that he occupies a higher position and tries to separate himself from the subordinate. The point is, there are top-down communication practices that lead to uncertainty and unhealthy relationships between managers and subordinates.

Ineffective Management of Meetings

As Schmuck and Runkel (1994) said, most educational staffs and subgroups use meetings infrequently and ineffectively which inhibits clear communications and wide participation. Indeed, since many educators regard meetings as a dull waste of time or as a burden while more interesting work waits elsewhere, it is not surprising that mismanagement of meetings can arouse distaste and even hatred (p.184). There are many traps that prevent meetings from being effective: holding meeting merely because they are scheduled, blocking members' help in planning the meetings or compiling the agenda, failing to keep a record of things done, attempting to cover too many items on an agenda, allowing a few members to do all the talking, allowing only those with higher status to conduct the meetings, and neglecting to carry the group's decisions into action. All these pitfalls keep meetings from realising their potential. This study has shown that most of staff

meetings are ineffective and a waste of time. According to Nancy staff meetings are not announced in advance so that you can get there well prepared "since we are working in a hectic situation we are wasting our time because it is not well prepared".

Other sources of conflict

Organisations have a number of professional people other than administrators who expect to be involved in decision making. This involvement can enhance decision-making in that it can bring more talent than a single individual. It can also, however, bring conflict and clarity as to who is to decide what. Schmuck and Runkel (1994) believe that people in schools and colleges not only want, but also need to offer critical input and to participate in decision-making. Maier (in Schmuck and Runkel (1994)) provide some of the evidence that shared decision making provides more acceptable decisions of higher quality than those made by individuals alone.

A number of empirically oriented organisational theorists have challenged the traditional notion that participation deters rather than enhances organisational effectiveness. Levin, Coch, French (in Schmuck and Runkel 1994) indicated how participation satisfied social needs. Maslow, Schein, McGregor (in Schmuck and Runkel *ibid*) suggested that participation satisfied growth needs as well. Research carried out in industry and schools alike has demonstrated that the satisfaction of organisation members increases when they can influence decision-making.

This study shows that involvement in decision making is limited and it can cause conflict between supervisors and their subordinates. One of the participants told me that she felt that the issue of empowering the junior staff to make decisions is important. She says that senior management levels are likely to take decisions alone. Petrus shares the same sentiment by saying that conflict between the management cadres and the junior staff is caused by the fact that they (junior staff) are not allowed to make decisions.

Early organisational and management theorists believed that workers were motivated primarily by economic incentives, and that efficient organisations developed rational rules and procedures to keep subordinates under control and protect the organisation from human caprice, and that

participation in decision-making and shared influences were incompatible with organisational effectiveness. Petrus still believes that incentives can motivate workers to be effective. According to him conflicts arise when the company is not able to give incentives to the employees.

Strategies for Managing Conflict

Introduction

Whether a conflict will result in negative or positive consequences, or both, the approach taken to resolve conflict will depend on the causes of conflict, the organisation, and the parties involved. The question for teams is not so much a matter of whether to allow conflict, but how to channel it when it exists. The research on the subject, supported by my own experiences clearly shows that conflict can improve team effectiveness. The problem is that, once aroused, conflict is difficult to control. Themes that surfaced repeatedly in my interviews were understanding different cultures, open communications, collective decision making, building a common understanding, and facilitating change.

According to (Amason 1998) open communications are central to team effectiveness and conflict is a key to maintaining open communication. Again, teams that can manage conflict can keep the lines of communication open. In theory, open communication and "C" type conflict are two sides of the same coin. Each should flourish in the presence of the other. Sanna expresses it clearly that by saying that a flatter management structure ensures that information goes through and communication becomes more effective.

Schmuck and Runkel (1998) similarly argued that for educators to be clear about instructional goals, solve important problems, make effective decisions, and put plans into action, many acts of communication are required. If the educational organisation is to remain responsive to demands of all sorts, an open flow of information from and to the various groups must be maintained. A

college or school with organisational adaptability has open and direct channels of communication within the faculty as well as between the faculty and groups.

The findings of this study show that managers try to have open dialogue and encourage that. Sanna as well as David have an "open door" policy. As managers, they ensure that the communication opportunities are kept alive and that is really functioning well. An "open door" policy according to them is a strategy to communicate continuously to their subordinates, to make sure that communication is up and down.

In addition, open communication prevents a lot of unnecessary conflict (Amason, 1998). As this study has shown to communicate is to create an understanding of what everybody is doing and the problems they are experiencing. As David says "communication helps us to avoid some of the negative conflicts that were experienced." Sanna says that as soon as people start communicating "I suddenly start to see how conflict can be resolved."

Another effective strategy that emerged from this study is to build a common understanding. If people share and understand issues, then it is easier to manage conflict than to avoid it. These views are expressed by Sanna: " We are trying to build a common understanding of different issues...when people have a very different understanding of an issue or situation, then it is difficult to solve the problem or conflict, but if people share an understanding of an issue then it is easier to manage the conflict." Again, effective meetings can be the principal channels for bringing organisation members in collaboration to reach common understandings. Nancy recommended having decisions taken in the meeting and the next meeting to give feedback in order to facilitate effective meetings.

People function effectively when they are involved in the planning of activities (Gurton, 1981). Proper planning, time management and meetings were some organizations of the new strategies emerging from this study which can be utilised to minimise conflict in organisation. Planning meetings and informing people well in advance is important.

Effective decisions begin by seeking the opinions of others. This encourages participation and allows people within the organisation to develop ownership in the decision that affects them (Amason et al, 1998). This study shows that an institution that operates in a democratic way always addresses the issue of collective decision making where junior staffs are allowed to participate in decision making. Nancy recommended that in order to minimise conflict, the junior staff should be allowed to participate in decision making.

Conflict can be minimised by strengthening the relationship between employees and employers. Petrus states that attitude of management level itself should be strengthened. They (the managers) should have an attitude that is open. "If that is not the case, then you will always get a type of dictatorship here."

We believe that sustaining the democratic way of life is the primary challenge for educational administration. This is the challenge for all the citizens of our nation. This study reveals that by applying democratic principles, people can understand all the information, and they will feel that they are part of the process. One of the participants says that by applying democratic principles everybody has the opportunity to talk.

New findings

The two key sources of conflict to emerge were as follows:

1. cultural differences among staff
2. reforms, both educational and political

The uniqueness of these two sources of conflict will be described in the following section

Cultural differences

In this section I will discuss the cultural differences which have contributed to conflict. This study has revealed that within NIED the staffs have different cultures. Analysts of culture have a wide

variety of ways of looking at the concept. Within the context of this study I use the word culture after Beattie (1964) to describe the way people understand their world and make sense of it. The following influence this:

- Ethnicity
- Educational background
- Political philosophy
- Attitude and values

Culture both shapes individual attitudes and in turn, is continued by the actions, beliefs and behaviours of individuals. Individuals can and do act apart from cultural demands, but most people in a culture, most of the time, act in consonance with their culture. People enter organisations as employers or employees with much societal conditioning, many attitudes and beliefs, much prior culture already in place (Adler & Jelinek 1986).

As the organization develops, the people who work at NIED increasingly have to interact, manage, notice and compromise with people from different cultures. Working with people whose values and beliefs, not to mention language and customs, are very different from your own can make for costly misunderstanding which leads to conflict. Sanna, Nancy, Maria and David perceive cultural differences as the major sources of conflict. They feel that there is a huge difference in cultural background, working environment and “if you do not understand the culture or background...this leads to misunderstanding and it causes conflict.”

There are also numerous cases of culture getting in the way of ordinary business practices. Even the ways in which meetings are run, decisions are made, memos written will vary depending on the culture. The way in which different groups of people interpret their environments and organize their activities are based on their specific cultural values and assumptions (Llyd 1990). This study clearly indicated that even people working as colleagues still have different visions depending on their cultural background and on what is acceptable in their own culture.

Cultural beliefs and values include assumptions about what is good or bad, right or wrong. There was no discourse about ethics, about the ultimate nature of right and wrong (Llyd 1990). So members of different cultures may view the world they live in very differently, and it is not just a matter of reaching different conclusions about the world from the same evidence, the very evidence which is given to them as members of different cultures (Beattie 1964).

Both parties involved in a conflict hold certain assumptions about the practices they consider right or moral. These beliefs are based on the particular culture they come from and each through their own beliefs are correct (Hoeklin 1995:11). There are also differences in the way they tend to express themselves and in the importance of the family work, material success and other basic values. This study show that at NIED there are people with different expectations, because of their experiences and context, they understand things according to their context and values. Sanna expresses it clearly that something that is acceptable in our culture is not acceptable in their culture, “those things can create conflict”.

Strategies for managing cultural conflict

I will discuss here forms of conflicts, which may be present with diverse work forces due to language barriers, and cultural clashes.

Members of the organization should recognize the societal culture within which the organization is embedded and see its impact on the organization. By careful attention to societal culture, managers can more effectively act to create an organizational culture in harmony with societal culture or work toward a transcend organisational culture, drawing on multiple cultures, rather than warring with them (Adler &Jelinek 1986).

The use of survey- data -feedback is the most effective tool for avoiding intergroup conflict. Conflict-Resolution training is a second tool for minimizing cultural conflict. Finally, managing and valuing diversity training and the focus group tools are also applicable here.

Conflict caused by reform

The study has shown that the most important factor that has been causing conflict at NIED has been externally driven by the political independence of Namibia in 1990. Soon after independence there was a need for educational reform in Namibia, adaptable to the changing needs of Namibian society, as stipulated in detail in Chapter One.

The momentum for reform was not really a problem as this was almost an inevitable path to take. The key problem however was to mobilize consent amongst key role players for “undoing” the status quo. As discussed in Chapter Four, fear and some kind of resistance are experienced during the change process.

Whatever approaches and processes are to be adapted in a given situation will be influenced by prevailing attitudes, the relationship among the key role players and their way of thinking. Any consideration of organizational change therefore requires giving attention to the context, the process and the content of change, and the interplay between those elements.

Nadler (cited in Uirab 1997:38) stated that:

Changes present unknowns, which cause anxiety. When change is imposed on individuals, it reduces his or her sense of autonomy and self-control.

Those who have power and or financial gains in the current situation may resist change because it threatens that power and the source of financial income. Wiles and Lovel (1983:116) emphasized that some members of the school system are often afraid that they cannot meet new demands, therefore they set up barriers to change.

Most first-wave school change researchers, for example, assume that “resistance to change is proportional to the amount of change required by the receiving system” (Huberman cited in Gitlin and Morgonis 1995:383). However, trying to facilitate change by lowering resistance, in their view, only results in compromising and scaling down the reform effort. Second-wave school

researchers, on the other hand, most commonly recommended the development of collaboration of teachers, making teachers more receptive to and willing to engage with educational reform (Gitlin & Morgonis *ibid*).

People are best prepared for change when they are involved in the planning stage and see a need for the change. Those who will be affected by the change best determine the need for the change.

In summary, conflict is viewed differently by different people. The sources of conflict within any organisation, whether mild or intense, can also be categorised as different culture, experience/background, changes in educational philosophy, reform process, different expectations, inadequate communication, ineffective management of meetings, lack of participation in decision making and lack of incentives.

Whether a conflict will result in negative or positive consequences, or both, will depend in large part on the strategy taken to solve the conflict, and on the nature of the resolution. Understanding different cultures and views, open communication, building common understanding, planning, facilitating change, effective meetings and collective decision making are approaches which seem to be more effective ways of resolving many conflicts.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I will give a summary of the findings of this study. I also, will discuss the limitation of this study. After this I will make some recommendations based on the findings. In the last section of this chapter, I will make concluding remarks on the findings.

Summary

Namibia inherited a system of education from the Germans and later from South Africa which was (and still is) based on racial discrimination. The German colonial administration (1884-1915) did not try to change the pattern of the existing mission education among the African population. The German settlement led to two separate systems of education, one for Whites and one for Africans.

Conflict is a real difference between two or more parties that is characterized by tension, disagreement, and emotionality so as to tend to polarize the differences between the parties. Conflict can start when everyone appears to agree when they really do not. Conflicts should be accepted as inevitable, but definitely also as soluble. Conflict is viewed differently by different people. The traditional view regards conflict as unnecessary and harmful (Stoner 1978, Deiley 1994). The behavioural view of conflict is that conflict can sometimes be functional because it can pinpoint problems and lead to better solutions, however behaviouralists also see conflict mainly as something harmful. The interactions view suggests that conflict is functional, because it makes the organization more effective (Deiley 1994, Amason et al 1998 Eisenhardt 1998).

This study has revealed that conflict arises from various sources such as different culture and experiences, changes in Educational philosophy reform process, different expectations, inadequate communication, ineffective management of meetings, lack of participation in decision making,

gender issue and the perception of democracy. The issue is not whether conflicts exist but rather how to resolve conflict in the most constructive manner when it does arise (Schmuck and Runkel 1994, Eisenhardt 1998, Stoner 1978).

Blake & Mouton (1984) Hipe (1984) Tjosvold (1986) and Forsyth (1990) prefer to emphasize competition, communication difficulties, interpersonal orientation, organizational structures and other social and psychological factors as major sources of conflict.

Whether a conflict will result in negative or positive consequences, or both, will depend to a large part on the strategy taken to solve the conflict, and on the nature of the resolution. Avoidance techniques do not really resolve conflict, but rather, circumvent it. Avoidance methods are typically employed when an individual or group feels somewhat powerless, apathetic, or disillusioned about the likelihood of bringing about change in the other party.

The problem-solving approach seems to be the most effective strategy of resolving many conflicts. This include accommodating, open communication, negotiation, compromise, representation and third-party intervention. Filley (1975) indicates that the problem-solving method is based on the assumption that the parties to the conflict are people of worthy motives and good will, that agreement is possible, that each party has something valuable to contribute to the process of resolving the conflict, and that the final resolution need not ignore the basic interests of all sides.

Limitation of this study

There are number of limitations to this study. First, this is a single case study using qualitative methods. Kvale (1996) pointed out some limitations to the using of a case study. He said that some researchers argued that case study methods and interview techniques produce data that are based on subjective perceptions of both the inquirer and the participants. That is, the inquirer directly interacts with the participants. As a result, the behaviour of the inquirer affects the way the participants will respond to interviews and vice versa.

This is a single case study. Comparable data will have to come via further research when there are more cases.

Ultimately, as Judd et al (cited in Smith 1995) pointed out, the generalisability of the study will be furthered by cooperative studies in various settings (p. 8). In addition, a study such as the current one may be aimed at the development of propositions for further study that can be expanded and improved in other settings. I would like to acknowledge the limitation of this study in this respect. The findings of the study may not be applicable to other organizations.

Second, Hofstede (1997) suggested that to understand the circumstances of an organization, a researcher needs to investigate the members' perceptions of their organization's daily practices.

Nevertheless, as Geertz (cited in Smith 1995:9) observed, "it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something." In addition, the findings of this study are based on interviews only.

Third, the task of reviewing the literature involves an interpretive act by attending to some details and omitting others.

My research was influenced by Borg and Gall (1983) who argued that:

Through qualitative research, the researcher seems to be subjective; there is still an objective reality. It does not follow that because a mountain appears to take on different shapes from different angles of vision, it has objectively no shape at all. It has a shape!

Finally I have tried to follow Madsen's (cited in Smith 1995) advice not to "be tempted to ignore data that seems at odds with a foregone conclusion, or minimize them or shape them to suit [my] own purposes."

Recommendations

This is a case study; therefore other studies are needed involving aspects not included in this research. Some recommendations for further studies are as follows:

1. This study has revealed multicultural differences as major sources of conflict. A study should be conducted to determine cultural differences as a source of conflict in organizations. I suggest that future study should focus on finding out how cultural difference affect the organization's productivity.
2. The literature review of this study, though not exhaustive, noted the absence of African literature on conflict management. I, therefore, believe that there is a pressing need to investigate conflict in an African context.
3. This study shows that some men are still dominating women at work places. This might cause conflict among staff; therefore the issues of conflict and gender need to be explored to determine the possible existence of conflict between gender.
4. Another area that emerges is the issue of democracy. The perceptions of democracy after Independence in Namibia and South Africa need to be explored.
5. The process of Reform has emerged in this study. This Reform is designed to make NIED more responsive to the need of the "new" Namibian nation. It is thus unlikely that, in the future, an identical circumstance will arise in which Namibia is decolonized, and after which various institutions will be required to change. It may be of benefit of NIED to commission a study on how other institutions in other Southern African countries managed their reform processes.

Conclusion

The presence of conflict is in itself neither good nor bad, it simply exists and should be expected. People react differently to conflict. People not only react differently to conflict but react differently from case to case and from time to time. Thus, the most effective strategies for dealing with conflicts must vary according to the conflict, the organization, and the parties involved. That is, an appropriate conflict management strategy will depend on the type of conflict, the intensity of the disagreement, the persons participating in the conflict, the seriousness of the issue for them, the authority, resources, and knowledge they possess (Schmuck & Runkel 1994: 327).

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