

**UNDERSTANDING EDUCATOR-MEDIATED CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN A
PRESCHOOL ENVIRONMENT. THE EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS OF
PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS.**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the experiences and feelings of preschool educators when resolving situations of conflict between preschool children. Data was collected by means of semi-structured individual interviews with preschool educators and a video recorder recording conflict situations among preschool children focusing on educator resolution strategies. Grounded theory was used as a data analysis technique to analyse the data collected. The analysis revealed that the preschool educators under study do not use mediation as a conflict resolution strategy but use various strategies that include, prevention, directive approach, arbitration, myths and threats and rules. Data analysis also revealed that these preschool educators encounter experiences and feelings before, while and after intervening in the conflict situations of children. These findings imply that preschool educators lack the professional skill of conflict resolution. This suggests an urgent need of restructuring of the preschool educator's training to include conflict resolution training as one of their important component. Educators and parents also need to be consulted or involved in the process of restructuring the training.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

In his speech at the launch of Unicef's State of the World's Children in Orlando West of Soweto on 12 December 2000, Professor Kader Asmal mentioned that "the Government of National Unity has acknowledged the importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a fundamental pillar of the foundations for later or lifelong learning by incorporating ECD as an intrinsic component of the White Paper Policy Framework for Education and Training in a democratic South Africa" (Asmal, 2001, p.1). He further suggested that children are the future, which can be taken to mean that they should receive chief preference in education related matters from adults. To achieve this, children should always be given the greatest care in nurturing their basic needs. If these needs are not met in their early years of development, our children will be badly equipped to develop into healthy, proficient and well-adjusted grown-ups. Surprisingly, little or nothing is added about the educators who play a vital role in building the future of these children.

Given that educators are perceived as a source of identification, support and a sense of personal security, preschool educators are important figures for young children. They are the foremost educational forces and are responsible for coping with a wide spectrum of complex situations such as conflict. It is worth remembering that the preschool educator's reactions will influence children's emotions and affect their well-being. Therefore, it is indeed crucial to acknowledge experiences and feelings of educators.

The reviewed studies in the field of the experiences and feelings of preschool educators with regard to conflict resolution between preschool children have been conducted primarily in overseas contexts. The lack of South African studies reported in the literature indicates a gap in the research of the topic. The cultural contrasts, as well as different approaches to conflict resolution, suggest the need for studies that are sensitive to the context. Verbeek, Hartup and Collins (2000) agree with the above point by affirming that the long-standing public interest in educator mediation of children's conflicts has not been adequately coordinated by research. There is a paucity of well-designed studies on this topic and more research needs to be conducted in this field.

This study focuses on experiences and feelings of preschool educators when resolving conflict between preschool children. As the concepts of "experience" and "feelings" are

broad and tend to be understood and used in highly divergent ways, it is necessary, for the purposes of this study, to provide a user-specific meaning to these concepts. Experience will refer to “the practical contact with and observation of facts or events” (Kovanangh, 2002 p. 406) which places particular importance on the actions that accompany exposure to the experiences. Experiences include sources of conflict and strategies used by the educators to resolve conflict between preschool children. Feelings refer to the emotions evoked by educator’s experiences. Such emotions can be negative or positive. These emotions include anger, frustration, helplessness, pride, worthiness, happiness and many more.

1.1. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The initial aim of this research was to understand the experiences and feelings of preschool educators when mediating conflict between children in a preschool environment. Unfortunately, the findings did not uncover mediation as a strategy of conflict resolution used by the preschool educators under review. Consequently, the focus of the study shifted from conflict mediation to broad conflict resolution strategies used by these preschool educators. The study also identifies the sources of conflict among preschool children.

The fact that educators deal with enormous numbers of children in each classroom, combined with the lengthy process that conflict resolution entails, indicates that educators have unequivocal experiences and feelings that must be acknowledged. In this study, I found it necessary to focus my research on educators owing to the fact that there is a vast body of research on and/or with children, but very little on and/or with educators. Educators should be among the initial people to be prioritised in the sense that if they are not happy or satisfied, the education of children in this country will be handicapped. Children solely depend on the educators for their development in school. If the educators are not well-equipped with skills that will help children’s development, early childhood development will be negatively impacted. The need for research in this field is thus vital.

1.2. ORIGINS AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This research was conducted in an era in which early childhood education is receiving increased attention in South Africa. In fact, early childhood development (ECD) is one of the areas identified as a priority within the Department of Education (Asmal, 2001). The officials in the Department of Education are quite aware of the feelings of preschool educators stemming from irregularities in the area of ECD. This is verified in Professor Asmal's speech where he identifies consequences of the insufficient funding of ECD services for Black communities. The consequences include a lack of financial resources for salaries for preschool educators and for equipment for the children. ECD staff loses motivation resulting in a high turnover of informally trained preschool educators. There is chronic low self-esteem amongst ECD educators because of the lack of recognition of their informal qualifications. Physical structures for ECD services are unavailable. Complexities arise from unrealistic regulations relating to norms and standards such as physical requirements for facilities and state-recognised qualifications for educators, thereby making financial support of community efforts very difficult. Over and above these difficulties, there are those experiences and feelings precipitated by academic and social duties such as finishing the syllabus and dealing with conflict resolution among children. Accordingly, the Department of Education has pressured preschool educators to obtain training in early childhood education but with no financial support made available to help the preschool educators who are not getting formal remuneration.

This research is part of a larger project evaluating a preschool programme which included conflict resolution as one of the skills to be evaluated. The larger project was conducted for the Khululeka Community Education Development Centre (KCEDC) in Queenstown. This centre serves as a training, support and resource provider for effective early childhood development programmes and promotes active community involvement in the care and education of young children. The objective of the KCEDC study aimed at comparing two early childhood development learning approaches in order to develop an understanding of how the two approaches function in practice. It also evaluated these two programme's respective successes in transferring their principles to the educators and children. The research sample made use of educators who were trained using the resources from KCEDC.

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter Two explores the notion of conflict and conflict resolution, and reviews some literature on the feelings of the preschool educators with regard to conflict resolution. Chapter Three is the methodology chapter. It focuses on data collection, sampling and data analysis techniques. It also justifies the use of these techniques. Chapter Four presents the results from the interviews and video-recorded material. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings. Chapter Six, the last chapter, presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

“Everywhere we turn inside and outside of school, conflict is a fact of life. As long as there is more than one of us in any given place, there will be conflict” (Reagin & Dilbeck, 1998, p.1).

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Given that it is difficult to understand conflict resolution without a clear understanding of what conflict entails, this chapter will focus first on various aspects of conflict. In order to be able to resolve conflict, one must understand the origins of conflict itself. Various strategies of conflict resolution will be discussed, specifically emphasising conflict mediation, the primary focus of this study. Thereafter, the support educators receive from other parties will be examined. The main focus of this study, namely, the experiences and feelings of preschool educators, will be analysed. It is imperative to include conflict and conflict resolution in the literature review because the study investigates experiences and feelings evoked by the outbreak of conflict and the process of resolution.

The early years of learning are not only important to a child’s academic development. They are also very important to a child’s emotional and social development. This is why preschool years are an ideal time to begin building good foundations for learning conflict resolution strategies (Cole and Cole, 1993). It has been noted that conflicts frequently occur among children in preschool environments. One observational study reports that the average rate of conflict is one per child every five minutes (Ausubel, Sullivan and Ives, 1980). Mohar (2001) also confirms this view by pinpointing that it is possible that toddlers in a group have up to nine conflicts an hour. Moreover, it is very likely to see conflict settled with physical aggression or tears, although signs of helpfulness or humanity are also likely to be visible (Bee, 1995).

Conflict is a prominent issue in the ever-changing society of South African rural areas that are influenced by modernisation and multiculturalism. Children grow up and live in such societies, and as a result, violence and aggression due to conflict are pressing issues in schools and education because children are trying to negotiate these changes. Early childhood educators are faced with mitigating this conflict before the children reach formal learning/schooling. To accomplish this goal, one should create a peaceful and non-violent

environment and educate children in cordial conflict resolution skills (Broadbear, 2000). Ultimately, there should be resolution and (Broadbear, 2000) further posits, usually an adult mediates these conflict situations. Schaut (1997) suggests that young children need help when it comes to conflict resolution because they lack self-control to abstain from fighting and the capacity to settle disputes on their own. To help children, educators and parents need to learn to understand children's earliest peer conflicts so that they can be in a better position to help young children deal with the current prevalence of violence. Therefore, learning about conflict, and developing conflict resolution skills, are valuable objectives for everyone involved in the education of young children. This means that those involved in the education of young children need to understand what conflict is.

2.2. DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

Conflict is a complex phenomenon and there are many definitions of conflict. For the purposes of this study, conflict will be defined as it fits the age group of the children the study is dealing with. Conflict is defined as differences, whether real or perceptions that arise from specific educational circumstances that stimulate negative emotion as a consequence (Deutsch, 1973). The literature has tended to concentrate on the process of conflict resolution not the conflict itself. Human beings are unique individuals, differences will always prevail and sometimes they are real but sometimes they can be perceptions.

Deutsch (1973) is of the view that most conflicts are the same. Whether large or small, interpersonal or international, between children or between adults, the pattern followed is similar. He suggests that conflict develops when people interrelate and perceive incompatible differences. Conflict also grows out of fear that resources, needs or values might be in jeopardy. Conflict occurs when people behave in response to this interaction. Depending on the response, the conflict escalates or de-escalates. Nicholson (1970) defines conflict as existing when two people wish to carry out acts that are mutually contradictory. For example, they may want to do the same thing at the same time, such as play (in the case of children) with the same toy at the same time. Or, children may want to perform different things when they are mutually incompatible, such as when both want to stay together but one wants to sleep and the other wants to play a game for two.

Broadbear (2000) defines conflict as an "inevitable part of all human associations" (p. 1). This means conflict cannot be avoided. On the other hand, in his broad definition of

interpersonal conflict, (Killen, 1996) adds that interpersonal conflicts are disagreements or resistance interactions between individual children or groups of children. The oppositional interaction emerges when one child's effort to influence another results in refusal (Shantz, 1987; Laursen and Hartup, 1989). For example, a child declining a proposal by others to play a particular game results in a conflictual interaction.

Although the term conflict is often associated with negative connotations, many positive outcomes can be achieved through conflict (Broadbear, 2000). These outcomes include the point that conflict can increase attainment of positive features such as: motivation to learn, advanced reasoning, long-term retention, healthy social and cognitive development, and the enjoyment children have at school. It can help to strengthen relationships, clarify personal identity, increase ego strength, promote resilience in the face of adversity and clarify how one needs to change (Johnson and Johnson, 1996).

Killen and Turiel (1991) provide a useful framework for the description of peer conflict in terms of three specific features: issues, strategies and outcomes.

Issues refer to conflict origination. Issues comprise control of the physical or social environment (such as control of objects or physical space), issues of morality (such as physical harm and individual rights) and issues of social order (such as rules for activities).

Strategies refer to conflict being built up of events and reactions. Conflict strategies include physical and verbal tactics. Physical tactics include beating each other and taking a toy or entering a play space. Children may use superiority of size, age, physical ability or knowledge to establish control. Verbal strategies may also be used including verbal opposition over complex reasoning and negotiation. Furthermore, children may use teasing and swearing to accomplish control. These tactics can be both aggressive and non-aggressive.

Outcomes imply that conflict is either resolved or unresolved. Outcomes of a conflict may vary. The situation may be unresolved, for instance when a child simply drops the issue without a satisfactory outcome. It is also possible that one child might surrender to another, or the conflict might be resolved with both parties being satisfied. The solution may be imposed by an adult and/or a mutually agreed-upon solution might be achieved through bargaining, compromising, or resorting to alternate activities (Ausubel *et al.*, 1980).

A manual for conflict resolution training in classroom for elementary schools produced by (The Community Board Program, 1987) suggests that conflicts occur because everyone differs in his or her perspective on matters. This contributes to the humanity of human beings. All the definitions above concur that conflict is a healthy and a normal fact of life and it is indeed imperative for people who are dealing with conflict to understand the various types of conflict to broaden their understanding of conflict.

2.3. TYPES OF CONFLICTS

There are various types of conflicts that need different resolution strategies. As a result, it is imperative for educators to comprehend the conflict types in order to deploy the appropriate solution. Palmer (2001) refers to three types of conflict: conflict over resources, conflict of needs—which Deutsch (1973) refers to as personal preferences—and conflict of values.

Conflict over resources occurs when there is a paucity of resources. An example of this is children arguing on the playground over the only ball available.

According to Shaw (1992), conflict over needs originates where there are opposing psychological demands for power, friendship, belonging to a group, self-esteem and achievement. For example, a young child with a large body might take advantage of his big body and bully other children, while older children taking advantage of their age might want to fight or tease back.

Conflicts over values break out over divergent beliefs related to family, goals, politics or religion. To illustrate this, it is suggested that children are from different family backgrounds, and attending preschool is their first experience of moving away from their family beliefs or religion. It becomes difficult for children to understand or incorporate one another's family values and religion, or school values and religious ethos that are different from their families. The frequent result is conflict. Conflicts over values are said to be the most difficult to solve because they centre on the values that are intrinsic to one's core belief system.

Furthermore, unavoidably, conflicts arise when learners are from different cultures. Within the Xhosa culture there are variations, for example there are Xhosa people who have adopted

Western culture which is different from the original Xhosa culture. In some instances there is modernisation of Xhosa culture, which is the consolidation of Xhosa with Western culture. And indeed there is the original culture of AmaXhosa. But all these variations are referred to as Xhosa culture, so at school children might not understand these variations and conflict over which is the correct one or which one to follow might occur.

Killen (1996) differentiates between aggressive and non-aggressive conflicts. He defines a non-aggressive conflict as one child doing something to which a second child objects where such words as “refusing”, “objecting”, and “disagreeing” are often used to characterise such interactions. Aggressive conflicts are defined as one child aiming to hurt another child or his or her possessions, or attempting to derogate another child verbally. Hence it is important to understand the sources of conflicts.

2.4. CAUSES OF CONFLICT

A wide range of issues may give rise to conflict. Weeks (1992) identifies seven basic factors that cause most conflicts. These elements include diversity and differences, needs, perceptions, power, values and principles, feelings and emotions and internal conflicts. There is a theory as well where causes of conflicts can be based. This theory is called Attribution theory. All these elements and the theory will be discussed one by one below in terms of how they can cause conflict.

2.4.1. Diversity and differences

There are a variety of dimensions on which diversity is based; however, this study focuses on human diversity. Considering the fact that people are fundamentally different and raised under different circumstances such as socio-economic status, environment, different backgrounds and so forth, it is expected that certain things will be perceived differently. There are differences in perceptions, needs, values, power, desires, goals and opinions. These mechanisms of human interaction reflecting human diversity often lead to conflict and can be used positively in dealing with conflict. They can elucidate the disputants’ understanding of each other and their relationship, causing them to consider ideas and possibilities they may not have considered, and to see if there are aspects of the relationship on which they can build effectively to enhance their relationship. Mentioning relationships, friendship might be identified as a point of diversity in the sense that, children who grew up in day care centers or preschools where there are other children to relate to while young, may have a much better

chance of functioning effectively in the diverse world once they become adults (Weeks, 1992).

2.4.2. Needs

In order for individuals to survive and develop well, their needs should be met. The problem is when the needs of the other or individual needs or even the needs of the relationship become ignored. This is when conflict arises. When the other individual's need is disregarded, the relationship is harmed and the perception of not being treated as a valuable person is engendered. Some people become so concerned with appearing unselfish to others that they ignore their own needs. Such people deny their own needs in relationships in what Weeks (1992, p. 37) refers to as "selfless syndrome". Relationships also have needs that have to be fulfilled. It is possible that the needs of the relationship outweigh some of the individual needs that one or both of the parties perceive they have.

It is suggested that when needs are hindered either by another person, by the manner in which the relationship is structured, or by the systems and dominant patterns of a family or society, conflict can develop. Sometimes children do not intend to block the meeting of needs, in the sense that their awareness about such issues is not fully developed due to their immaturity. Nevertheless, it is harmful to the person deprived of her or his needs.

Palmer (2001) mentions the fact that conflict can result when one person's needs interfere with the needs of another. He furthers his argument by quoting Kriedler (1984) who notes that learners have needs for power, friendship, or association with certain groups. In a classroom, one learner's need for attention or recognition can lead to jealousy and cause conflict among classmates.

2.4.3. Perceptions

Weeks (1992) identified influences of perceptions which include people's experiences, their knowledge and expectations. He differentiates between four types of perceptions: self-perception, perceptions of the other, perceptions of the situation and perceptions of threats. He suggests that if people base their self-perception on the expectations others have of them or on the way others treat them, conflict is possible. Also conflict can arise when there is a lack of clarity in a person's perception of his own values, or when his behaviour is contradicting with his values.

Weeks (1992) further, identifies the importance of how individuals perceive other people and groups with whom they have relationships in terms of conflict. Firstly, he mentions the necessity to look at the way a person or group perceives conflict in itself. An enemy is created if people view differences existing between them as a battle between opponents. Following this is a great temptation to focus on the negative aspect of the other individual, often excluding his or her positive trait. This pattern often results in potentially damaging conflicts instead of healthy differences.

Secondly, it is imperative to differentiate between rumours and fact. Verifying rumours is important because they can have a damaging impact in a relationship. Sometimes individuals accept rumours as facts. This can possibly bring a degree of anger and frustration because of what is interpreted to be an unfair judgement, making conflict resolution extremely difficult.

Third, conflict stems from intentional distortions of how the other party is perceived. Some people create false perceptions of others with the intention to make one's own personal life appear more valuable, and in an attempt to make the other person appear of lesser value. In essence, negative misperceptions of others often stem from the insecurity of the one creating the misperceptions. When people perceive situations differently, or situations remain unclear, conflict can result.

2.4.4. Power

Weeks (1992) defines power as the capacity to act effectively and the ability to influence. The way power is defined and used plays a role in almost every conflict. However, many people misuse the term by representing it as the capacity to bully others by making them behave in a particular way, to exercise control, or to gain advantage over someone. If power is used this way, damaging conflicts are inevitable, primarily because one of the persons in the relationship is, in effect, being disempowered and made dependant on the other person's agenda for the relationship. When power is used as a tool to control or to gain advantage over others, damaging conflicts are often the result. Dealing with conflicts using the authoritarian pattern proves ineffective and usually exacerbates the conflict.

2.4.5. Feelings and emotions

It is argued that in several cases people allow feelings and emotions to become the main determiners in dealing with a conflict. In other cases, parties in conflict do the opposite,

trying to ignore feelings and emotions, usually because they fear that if they express them, they may seem out of control or may obscure what the conflict is really about. In yet other cases, people acknowledge that feelings and emotions are involved, yet try to intellectualise them to the point that the other party never realises the intense feelings a particular conflict is causing (Weeks, 1992).

2.4.6. Values and principles

A value can involve a belief, a principle or even a pattern of behaviour which is generally perceived as extremely worthwhile. There is a tendency to confuse values or principles with preferences. Values and principles often involve ethical and even moral beliefs, which take on more importance in a person's life than do preferences. People tend to exaggerate the importance of preferences to such a degree that they become perceived as values and principles. Value conflict also arises when individuals hold seemingly incompatible values. Conflict can emerge when one or both of the parties is unclear about his or her values (Weeks, 1992).

2.4.7. Intragroup factors

Ausubel *et al.*, (1980) established other influences of peer conflict which include situational and intra-group factors. Play settings such as crowded play areas, the presence of permissive adults, hunger, fatigue and physical indisposition are situational factors that influence conflicts between children. The more peer interactions there are in a classroom, the more opportunities there are for conflict.

Intra-group factors pertain to the degree of temperamental self-assertiveness. Children who are hyperactive, full of energy, and affable tend to be involved in more disputes than calm and socially unresponsive children. It is very likely therefore, that close friends quarrel more with each other than with other children (Ausubel *et al.*, 1980). It is further suggested that another mediating factor in peer conflict involves familiarity between children before the conflict. These children disagree more often over play decisions and toy distribution than children who did not play together prior to a dispute. Prior interaction and friendship motivate children to resolve disputes on their own. Research also indicates that disputes are more likely to occur in closed play areas with a single entrance, hinting that poor accessibility to play space may contribute to conflicts.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, attribution theory contributes a lot in explaining the causes of a particular behaviour. In this context it is an explanation of the causes of conflict.

2.4.8. ATTRIBUTION THEORY

2.4.8.1. Definition

According to Miller, Brickman, and Bolen (1975) attribution theory refers to how people understand the causes of behaviour. It is also concerned with our constant search for the causes of our successes and failures (Hunter and Barker, 1987). Allred (2000) points out that the occurrence of conflict is often dependant upon the reasons and motives an individual attributes to another as well as how they explain the other's action. He further posits that the process of attribution includes the way people make attribution as well as how they respond in light of actions attributed to them.

Miller, Brickman, and Bolen (1975) mention three theories of attribution. First, Heider's theory of the "naïve analysis of action," that is based on the untrained observer or naïve psychologist trying to understand the actions of others. Second, there is Jones and Davis theory of correspondent inferences which is an attempt to formalise how individuals make inferences about a person's intentions and, in turn, dispositions. Finally, Kelley's theories of "co-variation and configuration," that is not limited to interpersonal perception. His theory concerns the subjective experience of attributional validity. He begins with the question of what information is used to arrive at a causal attribution and goes on to ask about the ways in which it is used. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on Heider's theory. This refers to the educators (study participants) who are not trained in conflict resolution.

2.4.8.2. Heider's theory of the "naïve analysis of action"

As mentioned before this theory is based on the untrained observer trying to understand the actions of others. In the context of this study, we are referring to the preschool educators who are not fully trained in conflict resolution making sense of the actions of preschool children. Initially Heider examined perceptions of the movement of geometric figures; however, he also introduced notions of "unit formation" and human beings as an example of origins. Unit formation refers to the process whereby cause and effect, actor and act cannot be separated but are seen as the parts of a causal unit. It is mentioned that Heider was particularly interested in the varying degrees of similarity between the two parts of unit. Factors such as

similarity and proximity were seen as determining the centre of attribution. If two events were similar to each other, or proximate, then the one was likely to be seen as the cause of the other (Miller, Brickman, and Bolen, 1975).

Allred (2000) further mentions that there is a link between an actor and an act. Since human beings are seen as the model of origins, it is common to have a person attribution than a situational attribute. There are functions served by this tendency. These functions include the fact that people can be punished and hence some control over the cause can be effected. Sometimes people want to protect their ego by attributing one's failures to others. This is a behaviour that begins at an early age in the lifespan of a human being.

How observable behaviour is linked to unobservable causes is one of the key factors of the naïve analysis of action. This leads to the crucial distinction between internal and external causes. Internal causes are factors within the person: for example, effort, ability and intention. Landau (2003) refers to the internal causes as dispositional factors, that is the innate qualities of the observed actor. He further mentions that conflict is not always between two or more people. It is possible that conflict can be within a person as well. If such conflict is not dealt with effectively, it will probably spread out to conflicts within relationships. Weeks (1992) specifies three causes of internal conflicts. Two of these causes deal with doubt and the third one with differences. When people doubt their values or visions of who or what they want to be; when people are not sure what type of relationship they want with another person; and when people have diverse internal voices influencing them to respond in various ways. Deciding which voice to follow then becomes a conflict-producing dilemma.

External causes lie outside the person, for example, the difficulty of the task and luck. Landau (2003) refers to this as situational cause; that is, it arises from factors in the environment, outside the control of the actor. Understanding which set of factors should be used to interpret the behaviour of another person will make the perceiver's world more predictable and give a sense of control.

Allred (2000) explains how people make attributions, how they respond in light of their attributions, and the implications of attribution theory for the understanding of conflict. On the other hand, Thompson and Nadler (2000), discuss the common types of bias in conflict resolution. All these will be discussed below.

2.4.8.3. How people make attributions

Allred (2000) identified two ways in which actions are attributed. He suggests, generally, actions are attributed either to the actor's internal disposition, or to the actor's external circumstances. As mentioned before, people sometimes chose to attribute their behaviours as it suits them considering their self-esteem, or probably an impact a particular attribute will do to themselves. Allred (2000) also identifies attribution errors that people sometimes make. For example, people tend to over-attribute other people's behaviour to dispositions. However, actor-observer bias leads individuals to attribute their own behaviour to circumstance. This means that there is selfishness when it comes to attributing own person's and another person's behaviour.

2.4.8.4. How people respond in light of their attributions

The focus on the responses is on the emotions one display in light of his attribution. There are three circumstances according to which an emotional response can be attached. Emotional responses to an action vary according to whether individuals attribute dispositional or situational cause for the action, the amount of control they attribute to the actor over the cause, and how stable or changeable that cause seems to be. It is common for observers to respond with sympathy when the cause of negative behaviour is beyond the actor's control. On the other hand observers respond with anger when the cause of negative behaviour is within the actor's control. The danger with anger is that it prompts a punishing or retaliatory response (Allred, 2000).

2.4.8.5. Implications of attribution theory for the understanding of conflict.

Angry, retaliatory negotiators are less likely to reach mutually beneficial outcomes, as their focus tends to be on their own interests and emotions and have less regard for the other party's interests. Angry conflicts often rest on attributive biases particularly on accuser/accused biases. These results in escalation of conflict and the accused party may feel harmed by the first party's anger. This can ignite a vicious cycle of angry accusations and counter-accusations. Such patterns of attribution can become deep-rooted, self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating (Thompson and Nadler, 2000).

2.4.8.6. Judgmental biases in conflict resolution and how to overcome them

Thompson and Nadler (2000) identify four common types of bias and their related effects.

First, they identified simplification of the conflict situation. This can lead disputants to rely on stereotypes, and to ignore information that is inconsistent with their initial beliefs. It can also lead to false understandings of cause-and-effect relationships. The second bias is exaggeration of the degree of opposition between the parties. This bias can also lead to lose-lose outcomes, as parties remain caught in their conflict. A third common bias is a tendency to make a false dichotomy between cooperation and competition. There is an assumption between disputants that they must adopt either a purely competitive strategy, or a purely cooperative stance. The danger with this bias is that it can lead to escalation, or to excessive indulgence, and ultimately to less than optimal solutions. A final bias is the tendency to favour one's own interests and self, even when consciously trying to be fair and objective. This results in selfishness and self-centeredness of an individual.

There is also a need to understand how valuable conflict is in order to resolve it successfully. Traditionally, adults attach no value to conflict, to them conflict is wrong and unacceptable. The following discussion will analyse the value of conflict.

2.5. THE VALUE OF CONFLICT

Conflict is inevitable. No matter what one tries, whether prevention of conflict or control of children, conflicts arise. Whenever people have goals they care about and are also involved in relationships, conflict will occur. This is extended by the fact that the absence of conflict often signals a dysfunctional situation wherein neither the goals nor the relationship are valued. In conflicts, attention is focused on problems that have to be solved motivating people to solve their problems. The value of conflict can be understood in terms of the following categories: clarifying oneself, clarifying other people, and healing or relief based on clarification (Johnson and Johnson, 1996).

It is suggested that conflicts clarify an individual's values, and through conflict identity is developed. Conflict again clarifies an individual's need of change and highlights dysfunctional behavioural patterns. It also clarifies what one cares about, is committed to and values. Conflict can help one to understand who the other person is and what her or his values are. It clarifies the identity of one's friends and acquaintances; it also keeps the relationship clear of irritations and resentments so that positive feelings can be experienced fully. A good conflict may do a lot to resolve the small tensions of interacting with others (Johnson and Johnson, 1996).

Conflict releases emotions such as anger, anxiety, insecurity and sadness that, if kept inside, can make people mentally ill: hence Johnson and Johnson's (1996) adage, "A conflict a day keeps depression away" (Johnson and Johnson, 1996, p. 2). Conflict also adds fun, enjoyment, excitement and variety to one's life. Being in a conflict reduces boredom, gives one new goals, and motivates action and stimulates interest. Conclusively, life would be incredibly tedious without conflict.

2.6. CHILD DEVELOPMENT

It is noted that studies of young children's conflicts indicate that age makes a difference in conflict resolution (Ausabel *et al.*, 1980). Oesterreich (1995) discusses child development according to children's ages. According to the White Paper on Education (2000) early childhood begins at birth until the age of nine years. But for the purposes of this research, the focus will be on two to six year olds since the preschool educators that were studied deal with children in that age range. Killen (1996) sets up a theoretical framework of conflicts emerging from children's interactions whereby he quotes Piaget who conceptualises children's interpersonal conflict as a force essential for their development. According to Piaget, preschool children's conflicts with their peers allow them to overcome their egocentrism. In a conflictual interaction, the imbalances caused by the difference of opinions lead children to take into account one another's perspectives. As a result, children come to understand that their peers may have different thoughts and feelings about the problem in question (DeVries and Goncu, 1987; Selman, Schorin, Stone and Phelps, 1983).

It is known that two year olds are egocentric. They think that everything belongs to them and do not understand concepts such as sharing and taking turns. To them sharing means they are losing the object. Conflict can easily crop up because older children do not understand the egocentric character of two year olds, and as a result treat them as their equals. They cannot articulate the language and use physical actions to express their feelings. They respond by crying when they are hurt or cannot fight (Oesterreich, 1995).

Mohar (2001) suggests that at the age of three, children have developed better linguistic skills. However, this can lead to verbal aggression because they are able to verbalise what they want and respond to other's demands. They think other people know what is in their mind. In agreement with Mohar (2001), Miller and Church (1999) suggest that children at

this age are quite egocentric, and considering everything in the preschool centre to be theirs. For this reason, it is very difficult for children to share. Although children at this age seem to provoke other children to cry or intentionally hurt them, the truth is that they simply do not understand. However, Proxy (1999) mentions that low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence result in children's feeling of insecurity. And to counteract these feelings of insecurity children spend a large proportion of their lives creating situations in which they become the centre of attention. On the other hand, Oehlberg (2001) points out the benefit of being the centre of attention, which alleviates feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. The relief is temporary as the underlying problem remains unaddressed.

Oesterreich (1995) suggests that the three-year-old is full of wonder and spends a lot of time watching, observing, and imitating. Their days are filled with busy exploration of their world. Three-year-olds are interested in perfecting motor skills, and it is common for them to spend the entire morning going down the slide or riding a favorite tricycle. Three-year-olds have very little memory for past events. They often repeat activities or may do and undo actions such as putting a puzzle together. These sequences are important to later understandings of change and consistency. For older children these sequences are disturbing and boring and can lead to conflict in preschools where children play and work in groups. Mohar (2001) further affirms that younger children tend to stay fixed in an emotional state during conflict and may not be able to imagine or even hear suggestions made by an adult to resolve their conflicts.

Socially and emotionally three-year olds search for the attention and approval of adults. Sometimes they show preference for one parent (often the parent of the opposite sex). They accept suggestions and pursue simple directions. They can make simple choices and enjoy making others laugh and being silly. Three year-olds enjoy parallel play and spend a great deal of time watching and observing. They can play with other children briefly, but still do not cooperate or share well. One of the characteristics of a child of this age is that she or he can provide correct answers and an expression of interest in ethnic identities of self and others if exposed to a multicultural setting (Mohar, 2001).

Mohar (2001) suggests that this is the age where children have developed some problem-solving strategies. To illustrate this they can give peers information and offer skills and even use a few social graces in a discussion. According to Miller and Church (1999), children at

this age are assertive enough to respond in a more positive manner. Their extensive language skills enable them to let their friends know exactly how they feel about a certain situation. They are beginning to be able to see things from another child's point of view. Socially more experienced than three-year-olds, four-year-olds often exhibit mutual behaviours such as compromising, bargaining, sharing or taking turns with desired possessions.

Children at age four are energetic and imaginative and are often impatient and silly, having discovered humour. A four-year old's language may range from silly words to profanity. Loud, boisterous laughter may accompany such language. Imagination suddenly becomes greater than life for the four-year-old, who often confuses reality and fantasy. Wild stories and exaggerations are common. Four-year-olds feel good about the things they can do, show self-confidence, and are willing to explore. They race up and down stairs or around corners, dash on tricycles or scooters, and pull wagons at full tilt. Adults still need to watch them closely as they cannot estimate their own abilities accurately and are capable of trying outlandish and dangerous tricks. As they are involved in all these activities, they disturb other children and conflict occurs. It is believed that four-year-olds often resort to name-calling or insults as a way to feel powerful during a dispute when challenged by conflict, especially now that they are verbally competent (Miller and Church, 1999).

Competition can create further conflict and disagreement. As a solution to these kinds of conflicts, some young children resort to force, while others may walk away. As they exercise their social and language skills, some preschoolers learn to negotiate, share and take turns to help resolve disputes peacefully (Miller and Church, 1999). Socially and emotionally, Oesterreich (1995) describes development of a four-year-olds by referring to children enjoying and playing with other children and taking turns and sharing (most of the time). However, at the same time they may still be rather bossy and seek out adult approval. They understand and obey simple rules (most of the time) and can change the rules of a game as they go along. This age is characterized by a love of talking and elaborate conversations are often carried out.

Four-year-olds are also capable of feeling jealous and enjoy affectation and bragging about possessions. At times they can become quite scared of the unknown. They have a potential to lie sometimes to protect themselves and friends, but do not truly understand the concept of lying. Imagination often gets in the way and these preschoolers may name-call, tattle freely,

and get gratification by shocking others using “forbidden” words. Anger is expressed verbally rather than physically (most of the time) and tantrums are still thrown over minor frustrations. Children of this age love to tell jokes that may not make any sense at all to adults and they can feel intense anger and frustration. They have vivid imaginations and sometimes imaginary playmates and they enjoy dramatic play and role-playing.

Mohar (2001) declares that at five, children can individualise their responses depending upon the other child and the situation. They are more concerned with rules, and can negotiate and find solutions. Miller and Church (1999) say that five and six-year olds are able to grasp abstract concepts about sharing and communication, as long as they are presented in a concrete way. They can apply conflict resolution skills presented by an adult when they are in the midst of a situation. At this stage of development, children are capable of understanding the importance of using their words to discuss their problem. However, they may need an adult negotiator to help them through the situation. Five and six-year olds can understand the principles of cause and effect, but they may need to have these principles pointed out in each situation. They are at the age of developing conflict resolution skills, not necessarily mastering them.

Ausubel *et al.* (1980) notes that with increasing age the incidence of conflict tends to decrease in frequency but lasts longer and has more prolonged repercussions. There is further evidence that as social participation increases in preschool children, the frequency of conflict also increases. He further says that, although substitution of teasing and bullying by more covert and verbal aggression are increasingly utilised with age, there is little difference between physical and verbal aggression during the preschool period. Cognitively, more mature children are better able to cope with difficulties, to appreciate that many hurts are inflicted unintentionally, to disguise their hostility, to avoid misunderstandings, and to use language as both an outlet for aggression and as a means of circumventing conflict. Such concurrent manifestations of personality growth as decreased egocentricity, increased frustration tolerance, and greater ability to accept inevitable delays and restrictions in the gratification of personal needs also serve to reduce tensions leading to conflict.

Younger children are more often involved in concrete issues (such as fighting over toys) and use more physical strategies to resolve conflict, while older children disagree over social issues and use more verbal negotiation and reasoning. One study by Laursen and Hartup

(1989) cited by Wheeler (1994), mentioned the fact that younger children use more conciliatory strategies in non-aggressive conflicts, while older children relied upon insistence. Conflict has to be resolved in order to build peace among the disputants.

Imagine all these different ages in one classroom, this indeed is an indication that there is a need to acknowledge the complex duties preschool educators are faced with.

2.7. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

2.7.1. DEFINITION OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Reagin and Dilbeck (1998) define conflict resolution as a constructive approach to interpersonal and intergroup conflicts that help adversaries join ventures and work as a team to achieve a mutually acceptable solution. Cunningham (1998) further explains conflict resolution as the termination of conflict by means of analytical methods that penetrate to the root of the problem. Hamburg (1995) argues that for conflict resolution to be successful, cooperation, good communication, perception of similarities in beliefs, values among the disputants, acceptance of the other's legitimacy, problem-centred negotiations, mutual trust and confidence and information sharing needs are to be considered. Broadbear (2000) defines conflict resolution as a process utilized by people with opposing views to bring a successful ending to a disagreement.

It is apparent from the definitions above, that conflict resolution is a process that needs cooperation between the disputants and consideration of people's needs in order to reach a successful and mutually acceptable solution.

2.7.2. STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A variety of solutions are available to resolve conflicts and there are different consequences based on which solutions are used. Research proposes that, when it comes to children, there are two different ways to resolve conflict. Conflict can be resolved by the intervention of an adult (educator) or by the children themselves without adult intervention. However, the present study focuses on educator-mediated conflict resolution strategies and is driven by Vygotsky's belief that much of what a child learns comes from the culture around him or her, and much of the child's problem solving is mediated through an adult's help. Such focus does not reveal the processes by which children acquire new skills. Previous research discovered that, traditionally, many adults have considered conflicts between children as detrimental and

they intervene by means of preventing the conflict (Wheeler, 1994). However, Hamburg (1995) suggests that preventing conflict does not resolve the conflict; instead, it deprives children the opportunity to have fun and have an understanding of each other.

Considering the traditional school system, schools have not promoted environments in which the learners play an active role in their own education as well as that of their peers (Hausfather, 1996). Gartrell (1995) believes that traditional discipline “criticizes” children, often publicly, for unacceptable behaviours, whereas guidance teaches children positive alternatives. In the past children who have caused conflict have been seen as “troublemakers” or as “naughty.” However, when taking Piaget and Vygotsky into consideration, conflict or misbehaviour are simply part of being human (Rogoff, 1990). Learning becomes a reciprocal experience for the learners and educator.

Killen (1996) uses Piaget and Vygotsky’s theory to concur with the fact that the responsibility of guiding children in conflict resolution should be placed upon adults. Piaget claims that adults should cooperate with children during conflict resolution in order to enable the children to understand one another’s perspective. Moreover, this helps children overcome their egocentric thought patterns (Arsenio and Cooperman, 1996). For Piaget, cooperation with children means guiding them to regulate their interaction, not by directing them but by encouraging children to discover how they are affected by one another’s actions. This is possible only if the adults share power and build mutual relations with children. As much as Piaget concurs with the idea of adults guiding children in conflict resolution so as to help them become meaningful adults, his theory does not address the communicative process by which the adult assists children in conflict resolution. Killen (1996) draws from Vygotsky and the theory of intersubjectivity in an effort to develop a cultural framework for analysing the communication of conflict resolution.

The present study takes its direction by following mainly Vygotsky’s theory that has been further developed by other theorists. Vygotsky believes that conflict provides a learning experience for children when they have correct modelling or scaffolding (where the adult continually regulate the level of his or her help in response to the child’s level of performance) from adults (Trawick-Smith, 2003). This is a process where children acquire knowledge from the experiences of adults. According to Vygotsky, acquisition of knowledge takes place in the zone of proximal development, where children can function only with the

assistance of adults by virtue of their capability and experienced characters as partners. During their interaction in the zone of proximal development, adults progressively transfer their knowledge to children, and children gradually learn to use adults' teachings to enhance their own existing understandings.

This is supported by Ikuenobe (1998) as well, who says that, in African tradition, morality is integratively learned and taught informally through folklore, myths, parables, platitudes, folk-wisdom, mentoring and the modeling of behaviours by elders. It is communitarian. In other words, the whole community is responsible for guiding the novice to the acceptable behaviour in a given society. Elders, and the community in which moral principles exist, make conscious attempts to educate children informally about the principles within the context of the language. The actions of the elders and the way the community is organized play a major role in practically demonstrating principles for the youth to model.

Rogoff, (1990) following Vygotsky, argues that children learn through apprenticeship in culturally organized activities. The following is the presentation of the different guidance elders have to give children.

2.7.2.1. Guidance in cognitive development

Rogoff and Gardner (1984) suggest that there is a need for children to learn skills in finding or creating similarity across contexts. Guidance involves two parties – an experienced party that acts as guider and the inexperienced party that is guided. In this case an adult is the guide and the child the guided. An important function of adult-child interaction may be to provide guidance in creating links between the context of a new problem and more familiar problem contexts, allowing the application of available skills and information. This means that adults should not ignore the skills and information that are already available to the child. They should tap into these skills.

Children and adults may have different roles to play in this interaction, although adults seem to have more responsibility. Children may seldom be independently responsible for discovering the connections between problems or transforming available knowledge to fit new problems. Adults' responsibility lies in arranging the occurrence of cognitive tasks for children and facilitates the children's learning by scaffolding, providing well-placed pointers, and modelling mature performance. The adult structures and models the appropriate solution

to the problem, engaging the child in this solution. The adult then monitors the child's current level of skill and supports the child's extension of current skills, and knowledge to a higher level of competence (Rogoff, 1990).

Scaffolding is one of the effective strategies to access the zone of proximal development (Hausfather, 1996). The zone of proximal development is explained as the difference that exists between what the child can do independently and what the child can do with the help of a more advanced person. Inherent in instruction is the construction of a context in which the new information is made compatible with the learner's current knowledge and skills. Hausfather (1996) refers to this as "headfitting"; the distance between the child's existing knowledge and the new information he or she must acquire is a critical determinant of how successful training will be.

The same applies to Ikuenobe's (1998) explanation of guidance by adults. The role of the epistemic underpinnings of moral principles can be substantiated by the repository role of the elders of the community. Traditionally there is a way of recognizing an adult who is morally fit to guide children. This way is evidence-based in the sense that elders earn the status to be recognized as an elder by displaying the number of practical life experiences they have, and how they are able to bring the wealth of their knowledge to inform their actions, moral sensitivity, and judgement. This helps children to learn the proper behaviour expected of them. Elders have had more experiences, and their beliefs have been confirmed overtime. They make judgements based on their beliefs and experiences, and their judgements have proven to be effective in those situations where they have brought their wisdom to bear. This gives them moral legitimacy. Ikuenobe (1998) refers to a metaphor used in the African context stating "what a child cannot see while standing on a stool, an elder can see while sitting." To describe the advanced experience adults have, the elder displays his or her knowledge to children by providing not only explanations but evidential foundations for moral principles. These foundations are represented in the form of stories in real life experiences from which children can draw knowledge and learn the probable value of particular actions in given circumstances. As a result of the emphasis on the utility of moral principles regarding human actions, morality in traditional African cultures is naturalistic and humanistic.

2.7.2.2. Instruction as guidance in transfer

One of the most effective instructional strategies to access a zone of proximal development is reciprocal teaching. Reciprocal teaching allows for the creation of a dialogue between learners and educators, and according to (Tappan 1998, p.155), the major significance of Vygotsky's approach of the zone of proximal development is that it recognizes "the fundamentally dialogical nature of all learning." This two-way communication becomes an instructional strategy by encouraging learners to go beyond answering questions and engage in the discourse (Driscoll, 1994; Hausfather, 1996). Moreover, Vygotsky's theory requires the educator and the learners to play untraditional roles as they collaborate with each other. Instead of an educator dictating her or his meaning to learners for future recitation, an educator should collaborate with her or his learners in order to create meaning in ways that learners can make their own (Hausfather, 1996).

2.7.2.3. Participation in the Problem's solution

The best strategy in participation is for the adult to involve the child in the solution of the problem rather than simply solving the problem and reporting the solution to the child. Both parties should be involved in the activity with the educator leading the learner through the process. The zone of proximal development, in the problem's solution often requires the learner to learn information and skills by observing an expert while participating at a comfortable but slightly challenging level. Wertsch and Stone (1979) refer to this process of teaching and learning as "proleptic instruction", whereby a novice carries out simple aspects of the task as directed by the expert. Proleptic instruction encourages the learner's participation in the instructional activity by incorporating both explanation and demonstration in its instruction. The concept of proleptic instruction enhances the form of instruction employed in formal instructional settings, such as school, and informal instructional setting such as home, or apprenticeship training. Formal school instruction has been regarded as relying primarily on explanation, the provision of rules in the verbal mode, informal or out-of- school instruction has been seen as proceeding through demonstration, the provision of examples largely in the non-verbal mode. Informal instruction may often be better characterized as careful guidance and graduated participation in the task rather than as nonverbal demonstration (Shotter, 1989).

2.7.2.4. The transfer of responsibility

According to Rogoff, Malkin and Gilbride (1984) a crucial feature of proleptic instruction is the transfer of responsibility for the management of a joint problem-solving from the expert to the novice. The process can be subtle with the successive attempts by the participants to assess the novice's readiness for greater responsibility and negotiations of the division of labour. One way to provide scaffolding is to make messages sufficiently redundant not for memorization or recitation purposes, but to make sure that if a child finds it challenging to understand an aspect of the activity. Other forms are available to make the meaning clear. As the child develops greater understanding, the adult can gradually reduce the level of redundancy and his or her involvement in the activity. If the child indicates lack of understanding, the adult can quickly and subtly re-erect the scaffolding that has been removed. Subtle cues such as hesitance, direction of gaze and postural changes and errors by the child are indicators of difficulty in understanding.

Initially in the learning of language or other skills, the educator carries the greatest responsibility in the activity, erecting a scaffold for the child's limited skills. As the child's learning and development progress in a given domain, the scaffold gradually diminishes. The roles of learner and teacher become increasingly equal, and the point is finally reached where the child or learner is able to do alone what formerly could be done only in collaboration with the learner. There is a belief that "it is the responsibility of adults to make available to children, during their effort to resolve children's conflicts, culturally valued skills that children can use later without the adult's assistance" (Goncu and Cannella, 1996, p. 60).

Considering the African tradition in this respect, Ikuenobe (1998) postulates that, every adult member of a community has the responsibility of morally educating a child. In African cultures, any child in a community is raised and educated informally about different aspects of life by the community. Thus the African society's belief that it is the whole community's responsibility to raise a moral child that will be the pride of the community one day. The fact that the entire community is responsible for raising and morally educating children does not imply that a child is ward of the community. Parents still have parental rights. However, the help from the community makes parenting an easier task in African cultures.

2.7.2.5. Other tactics used by adults to intervene in children's conflict

One other common tactic adults use when intervening in children's conflicts is beating the children involved in conflict. However, Petrilli (2001) condemns corporal punishment reasoning that beating sets a bad example in that hitting relieves anger. And, above all, beating demonstrates violence and violence is damaging. As much as beating can be habit forming it also perpetuates an unfair double standard that promotes a poor self-image and creates an atmosphere of fear resulting in children not learning well from their mistakes and even becoming afraid of making mistakes. Beating is an impediment for children to learn self-discipline and perpetuates a vicious cycle by indicating to children that it is acceptable to hit and hurt smaller people. Lastly, beating is harmful and adults need to nurture and help children, and not hurt them. Furthermore, adults sometimes make mistakes or are inconsistent or biased in the resolution they impose when they provide solutions (Wheeler, 1994).

There are factors mentioned by William (2000) which educators should consider when resolving conflict with young children. These factors include: the amount of time one has, the amount of learning children will get from the situation, and how important the problem is to the children involved. He also suggests some questions educators should consider in deciding what to do when conflict arises amongst the children. These questions are as follows:

Which children are involved and what is the conflict about?

Is it a problem with a clear, immediate solution or is it more complex?

How upset or angry are they?

What do they need from you and each other to work out the problem?

Is there enough time to devote to the problem?

Can the children deal with the problem right away or do they need some time to calm down?

Is everyone in an appropriate place to hold the discussions?

Should the discussion be private or public?

If problems cannot be addressed right away, it is important for children to hear the reason and to be told that the discussion will take place at a specific time (e.g. after snack, when we get back inside).

Is it a difference over resources or a difference in opinions?

Is the problem one that recurs frequently or is it unique to the children involved? (p.1)

The reason for the consideration of the above questions is that some discussions are best handled with only the disputants, especially when the conflict does not affect the whole class or is related to an immediate situation. Children vary; it might be difficult for some children to discuss a dispute in public. However, some problems, particularly those that involve experiences that are common to most children, provide an opportunity for group problem solving. Some problems can also be handled privately and then discussed at a later date in more general terms (William 2000).

There are various ways of resolving conflict or disputes among children. Zarkin (1999) refers to these procedures as a family of alternative dispute resolutions (ADR). These procedures are termed alternative in the sense that they are not part of the judicial process. The ADR includes: (i) arbitration, the process whereby disputants are given the least control of the negotiation. In this situation, the arbitrator provides a decision for the persons in conflict. William (2000) refers to arbitration as a process that involves a third party who listens to both sides, and then instructs the disputants how they should handle the conflict. This may be done either with some input from the disputants, or by simply telling the disputants what to do. (ii) Facilitation, where there are facilitators who might be educators in the case of preschool children, who are guiding and managing the process. They help people keep their discussion process flowing smoothly. They assist the conflicting partners to reach their desired conclusion, whether it is having an exchange of opinions, developing a set of possibilities, or reaching a definitive consensus decision. (iii) Mediation is said to be the best conflict resolution process, simply described as an assisted negotiation.

William (2000) and Reagin and Dilbeck (1998) also suggest two other styles of handling children's conflicts such as, directing (authority) and judgment. They refer to directing as a non-negotiating approach. Beaty (2000) further states that adult direction stifles children's own problem solving. An authoritarian adult decides what needs to be done and gives the direction that it must be done. Reagin and Dilbeck (1998) further state that when the educator uses authority and settles the disputes, the conflict is theoretically over and everyone abides by the educator's ruling. There are times where the emphasis needs to be not on problem solving, but on determining who is right and who was wrong. Children depend on the adult to act as a judge, to listen and weigh the evidence, and then to pass a fair judgment.

However, the present study concentrates on educator-mediated conflict resolution, although it turned out to be lacking in the schools studied leading the researcher to look at conflict resolution from a broader perspective. Since mediation seems to be the fairest and most rewarding means of resolving conflict for both educators and children, it became necessary to look at it specifically. Below is an illustration of how powerful conflict mediation is.

2.7.3. THE POWER OF MEDIATION

To give a brief definition of mediation one might start by saying that it is a negotiation whereby disputants are assisted in resolving their conflict (William 2000). The mediator is an impartial person or team working with the disputants, mostly together and sometimes separately, to help them reach an agreement to resolve a dispute (Zerkin, 1999). William (2000) further defines mediation as a process where a third party assists children in dispute resolve their conflict by creating an environment conducive to problem solving. He also suggests ways of doing this, such as strictly enforcing ground rules like honesty, non-interruption and non-use of offensive and labeling language.

Moore (1996) defines mediation as the intervention in a negotiation or a conflict of an acceptable third person who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power but who assists the disputants, of their own accord, to reach a mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute. Mitchell and Dewhirst (1995) suggest that mediation is a premeditated negotiation. It is a structured process in which the mediator guides the disputants through a discussion of their mutual tribulations and concerns, organises the disputant's presentations of options for resolving the problem and aids the parties in arriving at a solution of their disputes. Mohar (2001) suggests that young children are still egocentric and immature, so they do not have the ability to take someone else's perspective and understand that it is acceptable to differ in ideas until they reach middle childhood. Until then, adults need to be responsible for helping them develop the necessary skills to resolve the issues they encounter with other children. As mentioned above, in a mediation of conflict the disputants are not alone but there is a third party that mediates the conflict. What follows is an indication of the role played by a mediator.

2.7.4. THE ROLE OF A MEDIATOR

Kovach (1994) simplifies the description of a mediator's role as that of a facilitator and conductor of the negotiation. He further notes that the role of a mediator changes throughout

the process of mediation. It is possible that sometimes the mediator is a supervisor, a parent, a clarifier or a teacher who is assisting the disputants in learning and understanding their dispute and also teaching the process. The mediator's role can be viewed as promoting an accord in all respects, thus achieving competence in settlement. Generally, the role of the mediator includes a responsibility for the process which needs to be safeguarded, maintained and controlled, and the disputants are responsible for the content. Reagin and Dilbeck (1998) also claim that the mediating educator's role is to facilitate the process of negotiation.

Reagin and Dilbeck (1998) mention that the process of negotiation is time-consuming for educators. It requires attention and patience and sometimes learners cannot reach a mutually satisfactory solution. To be effective facilitators, educators must know each learner as well as possible. It is important to know which learners are more powerful physically, socially and emotionally and which are weaker. If two learners are unequally matched, be either physically, verbally (expressing him or herself), or cognitively, the educator should be positioned next to the weaker learner and facing the more powerful learner. This automatically provides added power, confidence and moral support to the less powerful learner.

Eye contact is very helpful when people are communicating. Educators should maintain eye contact with each of the learners involved. This way trust can be built between all involved persons and attention can be focused on the problem. Given that the educator's role is one of a helper not an imposer, the tone of the voice is important in the sense that a loud voice accelerates anger or promotes nervousness. At the same time, very low a voice can result in disputants not hearing what is said. The voice must remain neutral, non-judgmental and respectful. Favouritism is discouraged and educators should control their emotions so that they do not interfere with the conflict resolution process. It is essential for the educator to consistently direct the disputants to each other because there is a tendency with learners to direct their comments to the educator rather than to each other during negotiation. The educator facilitates the process of negotiation in mediation by helping learners identify their problem and encouraging disputing learners to contribute ideas for solving the problem. There is no right or wrong idea, but the educator may suggest ideas if learners get stuck. The educator is also there to reaffirm the learner's ideas in a positive way, help learners to decide on the best idea, assist students to accomplish their solution, and strengthen the process when the problem is solved (Reagin and Dilbeck, 1998).

Both Mitchell and Dewhirst (1995) suggest some don'ts for a mediator. A mediator generally has limited or no authoritative decision-making power. It is not advisable for the mediator to unilaterally mandate or force parties to resolve their differences and enforce the decision. The mediator's responsibility includes the control of the flow of information and encourages a mutual behaviour to the disputants for reaching an effective compromise. At the same time the mediator discourages non-productive behaviors such as defensiveness, rambling, anger, and reluctance to communicate. Reagin and Dilbeck (1998) further suggest that, in the course of facilitating, the educator who acts as a mediator does not place any blame, scold, threaten the disputants or disregard feelings of the disputants.

Mitchell and Dewhirst (1995) mention a seven-stage model to enhance a mediator's conflict mediation abilities. Each of the seven stages is designed for a specific purpose, and they combine to provide a structured process that leads to crisis intervention and dispute resolution.

These stages include introduction, problem determination, summary, issue identification, generation and evaluation of alternatives, selection of appropriate alternatives, and conclusion. In the introduction stage the mediator should establish ground rules. In problem determination the mediator asks each party to relate his or her side of the story. During this stage there is a flow of information from the disputing parties to the mediator and the mediator's function is to facilitate the flow of this information. After each party has completed his or her story, the mediator should summarise. The summary should not deviate from the accurate statement of the real meaning of each disputant's story.

The mediator also helps the disputants to identify the issues that need to be mediated if there is going to be a resolution of the dispute. During the generation and evaluation of alternatives stage, the disputants propose alternatives for resolving the dispute. They continue to discuss these alternatives in an effort to achieve a resolution of the problem. During the stage of selection of appropriate alternatives the disputants agree on which alternatives will resolve the dispute. In the conclusion stage the mediator should conclude with a final restatement and clarification of the terms of the resolution.

Depending on the parties involved in the dispute, forgiveness is part of conflict resolution. Enright, Gassin and Wu (1992), note that morality must encompass not only justice but mercy as well. The moral principle underlying forgiveness is love, in its moral sense. In defining forgiveness, Enright *et al.* describe the process as overcoming negative affect and judgement toward the offender. Forgiveness is not about denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgement; rather it is an endeavour to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love while recognizing that he or she has abandoned the right to them. Certain negative elements such as anger, hatred, resentment, and sadness are slowly given up in the process until forgiveness is accomplished. At the same time certain positive elements such as compassion are added. It is imperative to note that forgiveness is a choice and should not be forced on a person. There is probably great individual variation in how people forgive

The mediator can be any adult: an educator, a colleague, a professional mediator, a parent, or any other member of the society. This means that there should be a co-ordination between the school and the community at large although not in every respect. Because of this, it is imperative for us to look at the help educators might receive from outside parties in resolution of conflict between children.

2.8. SUPPORT FROM OTHER PARTIES

Educators are referred to as the nurturers of children responsible for imparting social and academic knowledge to the children in their care. The amount of work that preschool educators do during school hours is enough but needs endorsement from colleagues, parents and the society as a whole. Delgado-Gaitan (1990) notes that both the family and the school are responsible for the creation and maintenance of the relationship. It is imperative to teach parents how to guide their children in ways that are congruent with the school. This is possible in the sense that successful schools, although in poor areas, made the active involvement of the educators in the community a priority. This helped in establishing contact with parents so that educators could be aware of the attitudes and problems at home (Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry and Osborne 1983).

Blaming between parents and educators about the nurturing of children is common in communities. Pond (2001) comments that most educators believe most parents are ignorant of their children's education. The reason for this belief being that educators do not grant parents freedom of involvement, yet they want them to follow their directions. This results in

decreased parental participation, and educators tend to associate this decreased involvement with a lack of caring. Some of the cultures (that guide educators) existing within most schools are not conducive to parent participation either. For example, the culture of not beating children when misbehaving contrasts with parental belief in beating misbehaving children. Most educators determine parent involvement based on whether or not a parent attend scheduled school events, such as parental meetings and parent-educator workshops, and whether or not parents respond well to their proposals regarding problems with their children. Many parents do not, in fact, attend these scheduled events, and do not or cannot respond to problems the way the educators want them to. This is one of the reasons many educators are convinced parents do not care.

Also, the everchanging system of education exacerbates fears and uncertainties in educators. As a result they become reluctant to involve parents and the community in the children's education. And, in most cases, parents are not aware of the changes in the system. In addition to these factors, many educators fundamentally fear having an outsider in the classroom. This fear comes from a couple of different issues. First, educators occasionally have to deal with an impossible parent, a parent whose focus is challenging the educators rather than resolving a problem. Some parents even go to an extent of screaming at, threatening, confronting and generally complicating things for educators. Although this rarely occurs, it does provoke educators' negative feelings. Second, an educator's work is often extremely challenging. An educator must make decisions based upon the needs of large numbers of children; moreover, their choices do not necessarily make sense when taken out of the context of an entire school day. Some educators are afraid that parents, who usually see only a glance of what is happening in the classroom, will misinterpret or simply not comprehend what is going on (Pond, 2001).

McCaleb (1997) justifies the feelings of the educators. He argues that educators are in a difficult position because they must deal with sensitive issues involving personal viewpoints, disagreements and their own emotions, and the children's parents and the community as a whole. In other words, a single educator has to deal with all the stakeholders of the school at the same time. In addition, McCaleb (1997) mentions that an ongoing state of ambiguity can lead to feelings of insecurity and a tougher stance. McCaleb (1997) suggests that educators must explain to parents the role played by the preschool in teaching children how to relate to different events in life, deal with controversy and conflict, and working current events clearly

and in time. By so doing, educators can interest parents in their children's education and help them to discover that the educator is also interested in them.

Parents do care about their children but there is a multitude of factors ranging from economic stress to overwhelming schedules that militate against the active involvement of parents in their children's education. These include situations such as single parents, parents working and only coming home once a week or a month, parents without transportation, or those who are simply exhausted by the demands of life who often cannot make it to school events or educator meetings. In many cases, schools are so uninviting and inconvenient to parents that committing to school events not only requires scarce time and energy but participation in activities that are non-rewarding or complicated. It is difficult for some parents to visit school after a long working day (Pond, 2001).

Parents also have responsibilities to try and be involved in their children's education. Parents have to engage educators in ways that do not threaten them. Pond (2001) mentions that parents need to see their involvement as collaborative, and not be afraid to visit the classroom since it is their legal right to involve themselves in their children's education. Instead of sharing children's problems, most parents choose to ignore or dismiss their children's odd behaviours. In such cases, where a parent dismisses his/her child's defective behaviour as unimportant, it may be necessary to raise parental anxiety. Of course, parental avoidance may also be an indication of considerable underlying anxiety. It may be that the decision to seek referral will, in itself, come as a shock to the parents, and they will need to be given some time to come to terms with it. If, in spite of careful discussion and preparation, a parent still refuses co-operation, then only in the most serious cases can referral be pursued, with the aim of seeking placement by statutory means for instance. Such decisions are especially difficult to make where behaviour problems are the main area of concern, and in such cases a child guidance team is likely to be called upon.

Fine (1980) suggests that working with parents should be a long-term relationship that encourages confidence and freedom to discuss problems and plans pertaining to the child and the family. Educators should also be aware and expect some disagreements in working with parents. These differences arise because of different values or views on other factors relative to programming. As with any good relationship, compromise is often indispensable. These reasons include the factors that: hitting sets a bad example and it is a form of violence. It can

be a habit forming. Hitting perpetuates an unfair double standard and it promotes a poor self-image. It creates an atmosphere of fear and as a result children do not learn well when they are fearful of being hit for making mistakes. It does not help children to learn self-discipline instead it perpetuates a vicious cycle by indicating to children that it is acceptable to hit and hurt smaller people. Adults need to put themselves into children's shoes and think how would they feel if their superiors hit them to correct them and lastly, people are not for hitting, adults need to be assistants, rather than hurters of children, (Petrilli, 2001).

The main focus of this research study is in the experiences and feelings of preschool educators with regard to conflict resolution. Parent-educator co-operation can positively impact the experiences and feelings of preschool educators by reinforcing that they are not the only primary nurturers of young children. It is important for them to be reminded that parents are also basic, primary nurturers of their preschool children. If educators and parents do not come to terms with their differences and try to compromise on common methods of teaching children, the young generation will be confused. Children are entirely dependant on their primary nurturers for a balanced and well-groomed development.

2.9. EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS

Although studies on preschool educators have been conducted, very few, if any have attempted to identify exactly the experiences and feelings of educators, particularly those based in preschools. This present study attempts to fill that gap. It should be noted that experiences and feelings are deliberately consolidated under one heading due to the fact that experiences evoke feelings.

Krueger (1986) states that in order for children's programmes to reach their potential, caregivers should be taken into consideration. There is a need to address caregivers' emotional conditions so that they can develop and demonstrate their capacities for emotionally receptive care giving (Leavitt, 1994). As much as caregivers should be self-aware, they should also be child-aware and comfortable with their own and the children's emotionality. Caring for others and oneself involves an awareness of oneself as capable of knowing and living with the feelings of others, and affecting and being affected by others. Self-awareness is essential for preschool educators to be able to give the necessary care to the children.

Children misbehave for various reasons and behaviours for each reason produce a certain reaction from the care provider. It is stressful to deal with misbehaving children. In response to the stress, educators tend to feel annoyed when a child wants attention. Feelings of anger or giving in become evident to educators when the child wants to gain or pursue power. When the child wants to get revenge, the adult usually feels hurt and wants to get back at the child. When a child wants to demonstrate inadequacy, the care provider usually feels discouraged and wants to give up on the child (Pace-Nicholas, 1996).

One of the preschool educator's responsibilities is to modify the value patterns that are laid down in the home early in life. Of particular importance are the personal characteristics of educators and the emotional climate in the classroom. But other matters of concern are the ways in which discipline is used, the emphasis on academic versus social achievement, and the extent to which the school seeks to transmit and enforce the value system of the majority culture (Birren, Kinney, Schaie and Woodruff, 1981). It is important to help children solve problems or conflicts in ways that they are comfortable with, keeping in mind their families' customs and their own learning styles and personalities.

Much data has been gathered concerning the effects of educator's personalities on the social development of learners. Competent educators express positive and accepting attitudes and thereby motivate children to conform to the school's expectations. Educators with a positive self-concept, in turn, are reasonable in their expectations and will facilitate opportunities for successful experiences, thus developing favourable self-concepts in their students. On the other hand, educators with emotional problems set up conditions of confrontation and arbitrary interaction, thus providing a model that children may imitate to their disadvantage. Considering that children model educators, such behaviour teaches children to develop feelings of inadequacy and antagonism toward adults in general. Birren *et al.*, (1981), quotes a study by Ryans (1961) suggesting that educators' personal characteristics most likely are implicated in the socialization of young children.

Beaty (2000) states that the first social contacts among children are frequently ones of conflict. Usually, as an educator, you will be drawn into the situation because the children want you to settle the conflict. Dangerous and destructive situations such as uncontrolled anger, destruction of materials, or harm to other children demands the educator's intervention. In a firm but calm manner, the educator must enforce limits of not letting

children hurt one another or harm materials. However, the educator can let the children handle many of their own interpersonal conflicts once they feel they have the educator's support.

According to Killen (1996), educators should be able to know when their assistance in children's conflicts is needed. He suggests that, factors such as daily circumstances, the individual children involved, and the culture of children and educators influence the decisions of the educators. Sometimes an educator may have to intervene even if children resolve their conflict on their own. At other times the educator may have to reject the children's solution even if all the children involved appear contented with their own solution.

This research aims at understanding the experiences and feelings of educators when mediating conflict between children in a preschool environment. The results of the study will be used to formulate guidelines for educators in conflict resolution.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research strategy used in the study. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences and feelings of educators involved in conflict resolution among preschool children.

3.1. RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study is qualitative and exploratory in nature. The reasons underpinning the choice of a qualitative paradigm is due to the strengths of qualitative research proposed by (Maxwell, 1996). According to Maxwell, qualitative research is appropriate when one wants to understand the meaning of the events, situations and actions of participants as well as accounts that they give of their lives and experiences. He further posits that in this type of research one of the things that the researcher is interested in is how the studied participants make sense of the physical events and the behaviour taking place and how their understanding influences their behaviour. It is indeed, the intention of the present researcher to understand the experiences and feelings of the preschool educators when mediating conflict between children. It is to understand the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions. Qualitative research identifies unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generates new grounded theories from the latter. Finally, qualitative research aims at understanding the process by which data is collected. The process is very important in qualitative research because the quality of the outcome depends on the process.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2000), an exploratory approach is appropriate when a researcher examines a new interest, or when the subject of study itself is relatively new. In agreement with Babbie and Mouton (2000), Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), further stipulate that exploratory studies employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research as they attempt to look for new insights into phenomena. In South Africa, especially in the Eastern Cape Province there has been much research done on early childhood education but very little regarding conflict resolution. As a result, this research is exploratory in nature. This study attempts to explore the understanding of conflict resolution by preschool educators.

3.2. SAMPLING

The participants in the study consisted of ten preschool educators from the rural former Transkei area (Tsomo and Cofimvaba) in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher made use of purposive sampling in order to find people who had the characteristics required for the study. Since this was part of a larger project, participants were contacted with the help of their gatekeeper, Khululeka Community Education Development Centre. Eight schools were visited. In five of these schools, educators who had the characteristics appropriate for the study were selected for inclusion in the study. The characteristics are preschool educators that are trained in early childhood education and are presently teaching in preschool. All the selected educators are trained in early childhood education. Each of the five schools had two preschool educators all of whom were included in the study.

The phenomenon studied (educators) were the same across contexts with the exception of two educators who were older than the others (in their mid 40s–50s) and had extensive experience teaching in primary school before they moved to preschool teaching. The studied educators were young, and receiving formal training in early childhood education after many years of operating as preschool educators without any formal qualifications. Following is a table presenting the sample:

School	Setting	Participants
Nontyatyambo preschool	Gqogqorha Loc, Tsomo	2 educators
Masizame preschool	East Bank Loc, Tsomo	2 educators
Ilinge preschool	Tsomo Mission	2 educators
Ilingelabantu preschool	Emahlabini Loc, Cofimvaba	2 educators
Tiny Tots preschool	Cofimvaba town center	2 educators

Figure 1: Representation of the distribution of the sample.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher to provide written text for analysis. Semi-structured interviews are useful if one wants to gain an in-depth insight into specific aspects of the topic, drawing on information provided by a relatively small sample of people. Such interviews are appropriate to investigate emotions, experiences and feelings, rather than more straightforward factual matters (Denscombe, 1998). The present researcher made use of an interview schedule (see Appendix 1) that contained semi-structured interview questions. Addison (1989) believes that interviews alone are enough and acceptable for generating grounded theory. For instance, when using semi-structured interviews, broad research questions that provide flexibility to explore the phenomenon are encouraged (Charmaz, 2000). The aim of this is to get as much information from the participant as possible.

Video recording was used as another means of data collection in order to support the interviews. Videotape affords the researcher the opportunity to reverse time so that actions separated in time are in agreement with the participants' interpretation of their actions can be verified in the videotape and further explored (Craig, 1987).

Data collection was done in four stages over the period March 2002 to August 2002. The four stages were as follows:

- *Stage 1:* Interactions between the educator and the children in disputes were video-recorded from the beginning of the school day until the end. All instances involving conflict, whether the educator intervened or not, were video-recorded as an underpinning for the interviews.
- *Stage 2:* Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the ten educators involved in the conflict resolution in order to assess their experiences and feelings about the conflict resolution situation. These interviews were conducted whilst watching the video-recorded material with each educator and questions were based mostly on instances selected from the video-recorded material.

This was undertaken because the researcher replayed the videotape by rewinding and forwarding it when necessary. For example, some of the educators mentioned that they

become calm when resolving children's disputes whereas in the video most of the time they were shouting "No! Don't do that." And when the researcher rewound the videotape and showed them that instance, the educators were prompted to remember and disclose their feelings at that particular point in time. Each interview commenced with questions aimed at understanding the meaning of the video-recorded material. Next, the educators were asked about their experiences, feelings, and the educator's understanding of the causes of the children's conflicts.

- *Stage 3:* This stage concentrated on gaps that were discovered by the researcher when analysing the first pool of data. This interview included questions seeking clarification about the educator's experiences and feelings with certain situations from the first pool of data analysis using vignettes (see *Appendix 2*). Again all ten educators were interviewed.
- *Stage 4:* The final interview included verification of previous interview material and validation of the interpretation that had been developed by the researcher.

Transcripts of the interviews provided the texts for the analytical process which follows.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

All texts were analysed using a grounded hermeneutical approach to develop a picture of the phenomenon under study. According to Addison (1989), a grounded hermeneutical approach embodies certain assumptions or understandings about the world, the people in it, research activity, and the relationships among these. The researcher made use of coding and constant comparison techniques of grounded theory to bring meaning to human interaction in the context of their everyday settings. According to De Vos and Van Zyl (1998), coding is a process whereby data are broken down, conceptualised, and put back together in new ways. Constant comparison ensures that the coding process maintains its momentum by moving back and forth between the similarities among and differences between emerging categories (Willig, 2001).

Data was coded using three progressive stages of coding in the aspect of grounded theory method. These stages begin with open coding, which is the process of developing preliminary concepts from initial data collection. As data collection proceeds, these concepts are formed into categories. Axial coding involves "making connections between a category and its

subcategories” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 97), and selective coding refers to the selection of the core category and relating it to the other categories. In this research study, data analysis occurred as data were collected. This means educators were interviewed and data were analysed before another interview occurred. In each stage, terms for concepts, categories, and conditions evolved as new data were collected.

Coding was done as follows:

- *Step 1:* The first step used was open coding. Open coding in this study involved reading through interviews line by line, and highlighting (using different colour marking pens) information that indicated respectively the educator’s experiences and feelings of conflict resolution, and the causes of conflict among preschool children. These types of responses formed the categories. Indicators in categories were done per each participant’s response separately and then merged.
- *Step 2:* Potential properties and dimensions were uncovered for each category, using an axial coding paradigm. The researcher identified the causal conditions (events or incidents that lead to the occurrence of a phenomenon), contexts (specific set of properties that relate to a phenomenon), intervening conditions (broad and general conditions that influence the strategies taken), and consequences of actions involved in each category.
- *Step 3:* Finally, selective coding (the third stage of grounded theory procedures), was developed as a means of integrating all of the data by choosing a core category and linking each category developed during axial coding to the core category. The development of the core category and its links to all component categories resulted in the grounded theory, an interpretation of the causes, experiences, and feelings of these educators (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Ultimately, the researcher developed integrative diagrams that include the presentation of the coded categories (see *Figures 2, 3 & 4*) at the end each discussion of the categories viz. Before, while and after. The analytical results of the above process were then used to provide a summary of the educators’ experiences and feelings of educator-intervention conflict resolution between children in a classroom situation. An analysis of the educators’ awareness of the causes of conflict between children, and the means by which they resolve conflict

between children in a classroom is provided. The integrated analytical results are reported in a narrative format.

3.5. VALIDITY

As the researcher has used grounded hermeneutical theory that allows her to immerse and revisit the data, she went back to the participants to verify her findings and interpretation. To address issues of validity and trustworthiness, the researcher collected data by using video recording, and conducted interviews immediately after the process. The researcher asked educators to review the text from two previous interviews and asked them during interviews if this data was accurate representations of what they have told the researcher. Finally, in the last interview, the researcher asked the educators to review the description she had developed to assess whether it was an adequate representation of what they said. In every case, the educators agreed with the researcher's interpretation.

3.6. ETHICS

According to Cieurzo and Keitel (1999), various ethical dilemmas may occur in different aspects of qualitative research, such as recruiting participants, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, protection from harm, deception, dual roles of researcher and therapist, and interpretation and ownership.

Participation in the research should result from the prospective participant's own good will. Prospective participants need to be approached and requested to participate in the research prior to the commencement of the research. According to Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), there are various ways of informing prospective participants. Letter, an informal chat or group discussion with a researcher, can inform them. The researcher used both these methods mentioned above. The researcher used both these methods because some parents were not well educated or illiterate. I, thus, had to explain some of the items contained in the written consent verbally with the help of the educators.

Since the researcher was working with very young children by videotaping the interaction between the educator and the children when the educator was mediating conflict, parental written approval or consent was arranged. Also, preschool educators signed their consent form as an agreement to be video-recorded and interviewed. Two copies of the consent forms are attached in the appendix (See *Appendixes 2A and 2B*). The participants' identity will be

kept anonymous to avoid recognition by the readers. The participants' names will not be mentioned in the written document; only the words of participants and educators will be used by the researcher when reporting. The participants were also given the interpretation of their words confirmation. They changed a few interpretations; otherwise, the rest was accurate.

"In all research the welfare of participants is crucial." (Cieurzo and Keitel, 1999, p.69). Cieurzo and Keitel (1999) further posit that public exposure of private issues and self-exposure are the major areas of potential harm with in-depth interviewing. Since the research topic is not sensitive, I did not encounter any difficulties with participants disclosing their experiences and feelings of mediating conflict, and I did not encounter any problems with deception and dual roles. With the interpretation and ownership of the data, Cieurzo and Keitel (1999) point out researcher bias and the validity of participants' responses as issues related to interpreting the findings obtained through in-depth interviewing. Since the researcher has embarked on grounded theory research, the data is interpreted as stated by the participants, and there are no biases.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the codes and categories that emerged from the data. Some of the codes—such as reporting to the educator, sharing and turn taking, and child handing over a toy to a younger child etc.—are shared by different categories. The categories include: sources of conflict, strategies educators use *before* they intervene in conflict resolution, strategies they use *while* they are intervening, and strategies they use *after* they have intervened. Each category brings out the experiences and feelings (emotions) educators encounter in conflict resolution between children. The first two categories of strategies (“*Before*” and “*While*”) consist of sub-categories such as preliminary measures and prevention. Each category is followed by a description of feelings.

The findings of this study might seem to have deviated from answering the initial research question which is concerned with conflict mediation. In a sense, however, the question is answered in that mediation, as pointed out by Zerk (1999), belongs to a family of procedures called alternative dispute resolution or ADR. This family includes arbitration, which is the same as directing. Directing is one of the strategies of conflict resolution used by the studied preschool educators, in the sense that the disputants have the least control and the arbitrator renders a decision for the disputants. It also consists of negotiation, over which the disputants have complete control. Negotiation is the same as facilitation. And lastly, mediation is the means whereby a mediator remains impartial and helps the disputants decide and reach an agreement to resolve a dispute. All the above procedures are alternative strategies to judging. Moreover, Charmaz (2001) notes that grounded theorists usually start with broad research questions that allow flexibility to explore phenomena, rather than a tightly framed pre-conceived hypothesis. A consequence is that the research question tends to change as the hypothesis develops (Gilgun, Daly and Handel, 1992).

The results obtained from the analytical process of this study are presented in the four integrated diagrams below, labelled figure 1, figure 2, figure 3 and figure 4. Each diagram respectively precedes the presentation of the appropriate results. These diagrams in turn refer to the preschool educators’ conception of sources of conflict in preschool children, strategies educators use to resolve conflict between preschool children, and educators’ feelings and experiences before, during, and after resolving preschool children’s conflicts. It is necessary

to note that the subcategories first present the sources and strategies used by the educators under study, followed by the feelings and experiences after each and every source and strategy. An inclusion of the discussion of the strategies used by the educators became necessary in order to know exactly what strategies the studied preschool educators implemented given that they do not use mediation.

It was decided to present the findings on experiences and feelings concurrently since these two phenomena are interrelated. Experience is driven by feeling and vice versa. Moreover, the educators talked about experiences in association with their feelings. As a result, a certain experience yields a particular feeling. So each category consists of experiences together with the feelings yielded by those experiences. In other words, experience is discussed followed by the feeling it evokes.

Below, Figure 1 illustrates diagrammatically the summary of sources of children's conflicts. It also represents the experiences and feelings preschool educators encounter after discovering the causes of conflict.

Figure 1: Sources of preschool children's conflict

SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Root causes

- Poor community
- Limited funding from Government
- Parents not paying school fees

Socio-economic factors

- Minimal resources
- Variety in resources

Psychological factors

- How children grow up at home
- Individual character
- Sentimental attachments
- Egocentric character
- Possession and jealous
- Grabbing from one another

Home/family based factors

- New-comers who are not prepared for school by parents
- Parents who fight in front of children



FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES

- Feel pity for the children
- Understanding parents' hardship
- Doesn't understand parents' non-helping in equipment making
- Feel angry
- Feel such children are spoilt

4.1.1. SOURCES OF C

The educators noted that it is imperative for an individual to first find out what the causes of the dispute are so that he or she can impose a decision based on the causes. One of the educators also mentioned that it is not fair and indeed negligent not to know the causes first because doing so will yield a biased resolution. Educators mentioned the following causes of conflict among children:

Generally, it was discovered that the educators are quite aware of the sources of conflict between preschool children. A root cause identified by the educators under study was poverty that prevails in the region, and is aggravated by limited funding from the Government, which results in parents being unable to pay school fees. This root cause precipitated the following three categories of sources of conflict: socio-economic factors, psychological factors and home/family based factors.

4.1.1.1. Socio-economic factors

For the purposes of this research socio-economic factors refer to the combination of social class and income level, which are determined by the availability of government. In return socio-economic factors impact the school. Educators identified minimal resources in their schools as a major cause of conflict amongst preschool children. Mostly there is a remarkable shortage of outdoor play equipment such as swings because they are expensive to buy and difficult to improvise due to the lack of material. In addition, the lack of variety in the material children are using in the classrooms also exacerbates conflict between children. They fight over certain colours of objects. Sometimes there are enough objects, but lack variety in colours. Feelings of pity and compassion for the children with parents who are not working were apparent in the educators. They inferred that when it comes to economic resources, it was difficult for the parents because a majority of them are not working. At the same time, educators feel upset by parents who do not take an initiative in helping them to collect waste material and improvise equipment for their children. Some of the educators revealed that they sometimes feel demotivated by this. Some of these views were captured in the participants' responses:

"We try as hard as we can to improvise material for the children but it's never enough because it's not easy to get the waste material."

"Parents are not helpful at all when it comes to collection of waste and improvisation."

Educators also mentioned that members of the community steal some of the equipment, such as tyres used to build swings. This angers educators, because the community is supposed to assist, not hinder, their efforts. Educators also reported feeling exhausted from making equipment because it is an ongoing process that does not stop.

4.1.1.2. Psychological factors

These factors refer to the emotions and qualities that are concerned with a child's odd behaviour, actions and thoughts. Naughty children who like to provoke others out of the blue are one cause of conflict amongst preschool children as identified by the preschool educators. When they are writing, one child will scribble on another's paper just to provoke him or her. Grabbing from one another is also mentioned as another cause of conflict. Copying another's work also provokes conflict in the sense that children in those preschools are taught to produce their original work, so copying annoys some of the children. Lack of understanding each other's developmental level amongst children is another cause of conflict mentioned by the educators. For example, there are older children (4, 5 & 6 year olds) who do not understand the egocentric character of the younger children (2 & 3 year olds). The sense of possession or jealousy with some of the children is also one of the causes of conflict. Some of the children have sentimental attachments to certain objects. So they want to play with a particular object all the time, depriving others the chance of playing with that object. This is apparent in the following quotation from a study participant:

"Lots of children are jealous, they think these objects are theirs, especially if they are aware that their parents donated them."

There are exceptional cases such as attention seekers. These children like to provoke others for no reason. Usually such behaviour can be traced to the atmosphere in the home. Such children would want everything for themselves. For example, one of the educators said:

"One of the children is the only child at his home, so every toy that is there at home is for him. So he became used to that and thinks it's the same thing at school. That's individual character."

This attention-seeking behaviour leads to children being naughty. The participants in the following statement indicated this view:

“There is one boy in my classroom, I’m sure you’ve already noticed him when you were video-recording, he likes provoking other children either by pinching them with a pencil, or tweak them or do anything that would disturb other children. As a result of that, most of the children in my classroom avoid a group with him or sitting next to him.”

This is where the some educators revealed that they sometimes wish they did not have such children in class. Some educators even confessed that they beat such children sometimes although they know that it’s unacceptable and feel guilty afterward. Educators also revealed feelings of pity or compassion for such children, because they are still vulnerable. Moreover, there are no psychological services available in the area. A further result of this unavailability is the lack of understanding of such services among educators and parents. The situation is even worse with parents. To them, once a child displays psychological problems, that child is regarded as spoilt or silly.

4.1.1.3. Home/family-based factors

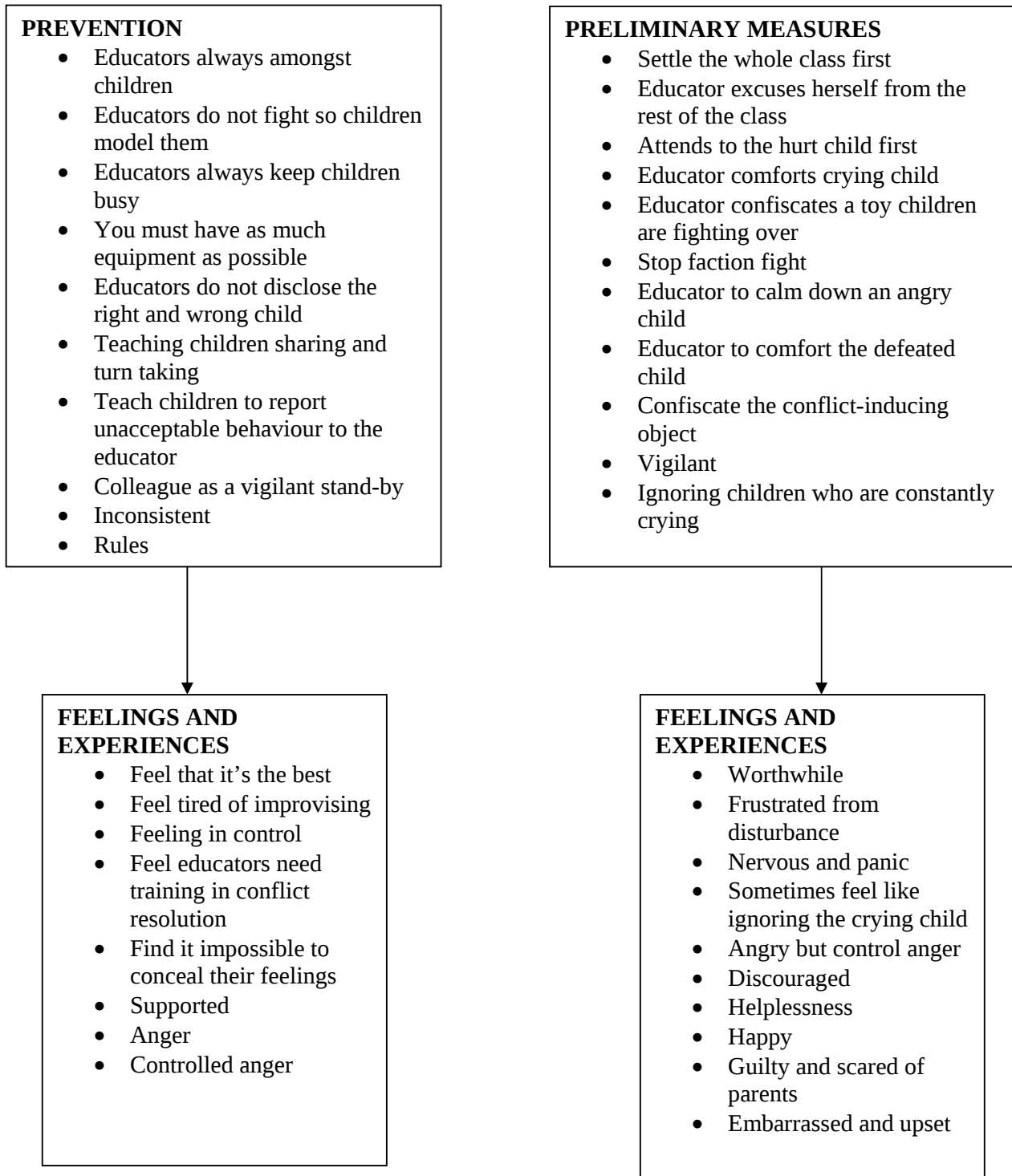
Home/family-based factors refer to the outside influences that are learned and copied from home or family members and practiced at school. Newcomers who are not yet familiar with the school rules often fight. Anger and frustration at separation from parents, or the home environment can cause resentment in the child, which she or he takes out on others. Also, parents who fight in front of their children model inappropriate behaviour to their children. Children from such families learn at home that beating, fighting, swearing, etc. is the right thing to do because parents do it at home. Children from such families were acknowledged to be arrogant and prone to fighting at school. Children also learn bullying at home, another cause of conflict between children. In outdoor play, older children like to bully the younger ones. For example, they cheat them when playing swing by swinging many more times than the young ones. These causes were acknowledged to have negative psychological effects on children as well as the class as a whole because even those who are from good families learn such behaviour from their peers. All these causes were identified by the educators as useful knowledge to have before passing a resolution on children’s disputes. Educators revealed feelings of pity or compassion for these children, because they are vulnerable to the actions and behaviours of older people. The following quotations support this:

“Parents who fight at home give us problems because that is exactly what the children do here at school.”

“Some of the parents just send children to school without even telling them that they’ll be beginning school that year. As a result of that children cry during their first day at school.”

After understanding the causes, the educators try out different strategies to resolve conflict between preschool children. Below, Figure 2 shows diagrammatically the strategies preschool educators use before intervening in children’s conflicts. It also represents the experiences and feelings preschool educators encounter before engaging in conflict resolution.

Figure 2: Strategies used by preschool educators before intervening in children's conflicts



4.2. STRATEGIES USED BY EDUCATORS BEFORE INTERVENTION

It is important for the researcher to highlight the fact that the preschool educators struggled with the conceptualisation of mediation. Only two of the educators attempted to give a definition of this term, but they also gave a definition for arbitration. In the words of one of the participants, this was said:

“Conflict mediation is when a teacher resolves conflict between children in such a way that both disputants end up content. The educator may ask both disputants what happened and then give a solution that is fair to both of them.”

Otherwise, the rest of the educators verbally said they did not know about mediation. Responses such as the following were received from the participants:

“I do not know what that is.”

“I have no idea of that.”

4.2.1. PREVENTION OF CONFLICT

Educators commended prevention as a technique that has helped them to reduce the amount of conflict they encounter. They mentioned some strategies they use to prevent conflict from happening. Such strategies include frequent interaction with children no matter what they are working on, which prompts children to concentrate on their work and question the educator when encountering a problem. Educators keep children busy all the time. In order for them to succeed in preventing conflict, they improvise as many toys and as much educational equipment as possible so that all the children are busy at the same time and not have to wait. They reported that they teach children to share and take turns, although the emphasis on sharing is by and large put on the older children due to the egocentricity of younger children. They also teach children to report unacceptable behaviour that the educator cannot see. Educators reported feeling uncomfortable with their inconsistency due to the fact that according to the system of education, children should be treated equally. Educators do not fight, so children model that. Since there are two educators in each school, if one educator is telling a story to the whole class, the other acts as a standby watching or looking after those children who are disturbing the educator and fellow classmates or who are not listening. To prevent further conflict, the educators reported that they do not confirm in front of the children who was right or who was wrong.

One traditional effective strategy of preventing conflict in many schools is by implementing ground rules for the children in general. Rules are always a preferred way of preventing conflict in many schools, the same happens with the preschool educators under study. They use rules as one of their conflict prevention measures. The rules mentioned by the educators under study include reporting to the educator when another child is doing something wrong. Fighting, swearing, calling each other names is prohibited. If one child is beating you, do not fight back; report him or her to the educator. The educators reported being vigilant and intervening promptly when contraventions against the rules occurred. Children are reprimanded and punished when they contravene the rules and their contraventions are used to teach children the rules. Educators mentioned that they become angry when older children break the rules because older children know the rules. Anger is controlled when dealing with new and younger children because they are not used to the rules.

4.2.2. PRELIMINARY MEASURES

Before intervening in a conflict situation, educators mentioned some responsibilities they have to take care of. These responsibilities include the need to settle the whole class first and then make the children aware of the fact that there will be a pause in the class activities briefly in order to resolve the conflict. Such responsibilities bring mixed feelings to the educators. Feelings of frustration from delay and interruption are encountered by the educators in the sense that, they waste time settling the children and dealing with the dispute in the classroom which forces them to delay the programme for the day. At the same time they mentioned that this strategy of making children aware of the pause by settling them down helps, in that all the children learn from the dispute resolution. This brings a feeling of happiness to the educator because at least children are also learning in the process. By observing children can learn ways of resolving disputes. One of the things that children will learn is what unacceptable behaviour entails. One of the educators interviewed mentioned that:

“Before intervening I first have to settle the class because I’ve got to attend to the conflict. So I usually tell them that we will pause a little bit and I don’t expect them to make noise. By so doing I am giving the rest of the class a chance to listen and also learn from that although it is taking a lot of time and in a way delaying the day’s programme.”

The educators reported special situations that need attention before intervening in children's conflicts. These situations include children who are involved in physical fighting. The educators reported that they would first stop the fight by either getting in-between the children who are fighting to separate them or by removing one of them and putting her/him on the other side of the room. Some of the educators reported that they identify who was winning or loosing in the fight, and comfort the defeated one. Once there is an accident involved, educators reported that they become nervous and panicky. Others said they become angry because children know the school rules that include the rule prohibiting fighting. For some, especially those with children who are always fighting, feelings of helplessness and discouragement are apparent.

Crying children are comforted until they calm down. But there are children who are always crying, and such children perpetuate a sense of helplessness in the educators. But, because they care and have compassion, they do not just leave children crying without taking care of them. In cases of children fighting over a toy, the educator will confiscate the toy first. They reported that they feel good in the sense that the children involved in the dispute will immediately stop and seek something else to play with.

If there is a child who is hurt, the educator will have to first attend to that. For example, if a child has been bruised or is swollen or bleeding, the educator has to apply first aid, and if the injury is serious she will have to take the child to the clinic. Although educators do not have a problem with this, if the clinic is too far from they school, some mentioned that they call the parents to take their child to the clinic. Sometimes their first aid kits do not have full equipment because they depend on the local clinics that sometimes run out of stock for long periods of time. Educators mentioned that they feel guilty and sometimes scared once a dispute escalates to the extent of causing serious injuries. Those who feel guilty said they see themselves as not taking care enough of children. Those who feel scared fear that parents will accuse them of negligence and uncaring. Resulting from this is a strategy of vigilance where educators reported that they watch children very closely.

If there is a child who is angry, the educator has to calm him or her down. This is done by letting the angry child sit alone for a while or begging her or him to calm down. Educators reported feeling embarrassed and upset when angry children use acrimonious language even

when talking to the educator. After taking care of all these instances, the educator then intervenes and resolves the dispute by finding out the causes of the conflict first.

The following is a diagrammatic representation of the results illustrating the strategies preschool educators use while intervening in children's conflicts. Following subsequently, is a representation of the experiences and feelings of educators while they intervene in conflict situations between preschool children.

Figure 3: Strategies used by preschool educators while intervening in children's conflicts

PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS' STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION		
Directive/Top down Approach	Things not to do	Children's role
Tell	No shouting	Listen to the educators
Ask	No beating of children	Help each other
Teach	No disclosure of right/wrong	Apologise
Stand-by educator	Inconsistency	Older ones to be lenient
Train	Things to do	Must accept apology
Talk	Vigilant	Older children to be kind to younger ones
Beg	Speak softly	Act as witnesses
Explain	Consistency	Parents as impediments
Arbitration	Listen	Confront educators
Children tell their sides of what happened	Support from colleagues	Do not respond to calls
Educator decides the solution	Stand-by educator	Encourage educators to beat their children
Myths as scare tactics	Vigilant	Complain about how conflict is solved by educators
Joke "Kill you/beat you"		Conceal their children's problems
Call the police/beast		
Rude language as old peoples' names		
Vulgar language to make the mouths dirty		



FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES	
Feel angry with parents who conceal their children's behaviours.	Bad.
Feel confused.	Sense of control.
Scared of parents.	Anger to child contravening the rules.
Feelings of doubt sometimes.	Supported & secure.
Demotivated.	Challenged.
Unfair	Guilty, and uncomfortable.
Calm if child not naughty.	Anger controlled with new.
Anger with lying & naughty children.	Did not have such children.

4.3. STRATEGIES USED BY EDUCATORS WHILE INTERVENING

Responses from the interviews indicated a number of dynamics that contribute to the experiences of educators while resolving conflict between preschool children. These dynamics include experiences resulting from internal circumstances, and those that are due to external circumstances. Internal circumstances refer to situations in the classroom and with the children, while external situations refer to situations that involve parents and the community at large. Internal circumstances include: directing, arbitration, the use of myths and scare tactics, things educators should do, and things not to do, children's role and support from fellow colleagues. External circumstances include parents as impediments.

The exclusion of mediation in these strategies used by educators raises an interesting concern. Educators mentioned that they do not use mediation to resolve conflict amongst children because their training does not include conflict mediation, instead, it included conflict prevention-so they use their own alternative ways (as mentioned above) when resolving conflict. It is through the use of those strategies that the educators encounter problems that bring negative and positive experiences as well as feelings to them.

4.3.2. DIRECTIVE (TOP-DOWN) APPROACH

Educators gave an account of various approaches to reflect what they actually do or say when directing the children. The educators used words such as telling, asking, teaching, begging, training, talking to, and explaining to describe how they direct children. Such findings indicate the difference in the use of this approach. Some of the codes are shared by the sub-categories and are therefore discussed together. The following results will be presented according to the above semantics.

4.3.2.1. Tell:

Educators said they tell students that children do not fight at school; instead, they share objects. When children are fighting over musical instruments, they tell them that those who did not get a turn will have an opportunity on the following day. On the other hand, some of the educators said they teach the children to take turns and share. This is illustrated by the following quotations from the interviews:

"I usually ask them to take turns, because we don't sing only one song but many, so during each song there's a group perhaps about ten children who use instruments and then change

after each and every song. But you must make sure that all of them have been given a chance to use the instrument because when they're back home they report to their parents that 'the teacher only gave so and so a chance to use musical instruments, she didn't give me,' whereas that wasn't your intention. When they are too many that day and couldn't get a chance all of them, you tell them that tomorrow the same time we'll be having music, so those who didn't get a chance to use the instruments, it will be their turn."

"We teach them to share if those particular objects are not enough."

They also mentioned that they are forced to tell the older children not to bully other children, but to take turns. Educators also indicated that they tell children that they must ask for a toy from another, and not grab it forcefully. They also tell them that what they are doing (when they are fighting) is not compatible with the school rules and discipline. This is how they say it:

"We tell them not to grab the toy from the other child, because this is not allowed at school. These toys are not yours or from your home/parents. They are for everyone at school. We make or buy the toys so that everyone can have a right and a chance to play with them. Be polite and talk nicely when you want to use it."

They also tell the reporting child not to call out the vulgar words that were used by the children she or he is reporting. Instead the child who is reporting the incident is taught to just say she or he swore. The disadvantages of fighting are discussed and reasons are given why they are not supposed to fight. These include such reasons as they are brothers and sisters here (at school), and they will sustain sore bruises and scratches from fighting. Moreover, they tell the children that if another child apologises, the apology must be accepted. On the other hand some of the educators reported that they teach the children to apologise to each other when they have disturbed, inflicted pain or have done anything unacceptable to one another. The following are examples:

"I sit down with that child and tell her or him that if one child is apologising, that means you must accept that apology and you should also listen to what we are teaching you because here we are one, we are a family, we are your parents, you are brothers and sisters."

“One of the things that we teach our children here at school is to apologise and accept the apology from another child. That’s one of the good moral values we share with our children.”

4.3.2.2. Ask, Talk to and Beg:

One other way of directing used by the educators is to ask the child who is not crying:

“What have you done to the other child (the one who is crying).”

Some mentioned that they first find out what has happened from one of them, the one who is not crying, and ask him or her to play with another object. If the children are fighting over a certain object most of the educators reported that they ask one of them to play, or use another object. Some educators mentioned that they beg the child who is not crying to hand over the object they are fighting about to the crying one, and then take turns thereafter. This is how the educators said this:

“Or plead the child who’s not crying to give the crying one the object first, and then take turns afterwards.”

The same applies in a situation where children in a dispute are of different age group. For example, in cases where the children in dispute are of different ages, (a situation that was confirmed by the educators as frequent), the educators said they usually ask the older one to play with another object. Some educators reported that in the case of different ages, they ask the older one to hand over the toy to the younger one to play with it until she or he is tired and then have it back thereafter. The educators reported that they cannot ask the younger children, because they do not have an understanding of sharing, and are still egocentric. Some of the educators said they talk to the older child and ask him or her to hand over the toy to the young one and take the older child to another toy/play activity letting the young one with the toy. At the same time educators reported that they must offer the older child an alternative object to play with for the time being. The educators said:

“What I usually do I would talk to the older child to hand over the object to the younger child and give him something else to play with.”

“I always ask the older child to hand over the toy to the young child, by the way older children know that they have to take care of their younger fellows and be lenient when dealing with them.”

Educators noted that they ask both children to hand the object they are fighting over to the educator first, which means the educator confiscates the conflict-inducing object first, and finds out from one of them what happened. Where there are enough objects, one of the children is asked to take another one. They sometimes ask the disputants to explain what happened.

4.3.2.3. Teach:

Teaching children in the process of conflict resolution is one of the apparent strategies used by the educators to explain the directive approach they use while intervening in children's conflicts. They teach the children to report to the educator when there is conflict that the educator is not aware of. Other educators said that they train the children to report every unacceptable behaviour/incident that the educator did not notice. For example:

“I teach my children to tell the teacher everything that is happening in the classroom, actually anywhere around the school yard.” When the researcher asked her what she meant by “everything”, the educator said *“Everything that is funny or not acceptable at school, incidents such as fighting, biting, swearing etc.”*

“When a child commences preschool, I train her or him to report every thing that she or he does not like to me, because the older children bully the young ones. By training I mean that I always make them remember that.”

4.3.2.4. Explain:

Explicit explanation of any action taken by the educator is necessary to enable the children to understand the reason behind the action. For example, the educators reported that when they have removed a child from one place to sit next to the educator or in front because he or she was involved in a fight, they were protecting the child from the unacceptable actions of the child nearby. There was no explanation of what happens with the aggressor.

Regarding the feelings of the educators due to the top-down (from the educator to the child) means of communication, positive and negative feelings are apparent in the data. Educators revealed that they feel a sense of control when children abide by the educators' declaration and the opposite when not. One educator said:

"We need to be in control of the children. If I tell them to stop tugging, they have to listen and stop that immediately. And then that way, I can feel I'm in control. Otherwise if they don't do what you tell them to do, you're failing in controlling them, and if you fail your class will be chaotic"

They also mentioned that they feel they need training in conflict resolution to help them in the event that they find many naughty children in a future class. Otherwise, for the children in their care at the moment, intensive training in conflict resolution is not necessary. To support this, educators reason that, at the moment, the strategies in place are sufficient. One of these strategies is arbitration.

4.3.3. ARBITRATION

The educators reported that they ask both disputants to tell their side of story. Depending on the outcome of the stories given, the resolution will be strictly given by the educator and children are expected to accept it.

In the process of resolving the conflict, the educators said they sometimes use myths or scare tactics to stop the child from what she or he is doing, especially if they do not have enough time.

4.3.4. MYTHS AS SCARE TACTICS

Nowadays myths are perceived to be full of lies and exaggeration, a strategy used to get rid of a problem without spending time. This is also the reason the educators under study use this strategy. For example, educators reported that they jokingly say to the children, "I'll kill you," when they want them to stop an unacceptable behaviour. When children are swearing, or using vulgar language, educators usually say to them that rude words are old people's names (in Xhosa culture children don't call elders by their names). The rude words will soil the mouth, so they should go and wash the mouth, or it will remain dirty. Educators also mentioned the use of scare tactics such as calling police to incarcerate a child who is fighting

or calling a beast to gobble someone who is fighting. In addition, educators scare children by threatening to beat them, even when they know that they will not.

Feelings of doubt sometimes prevail in the educators when it comes to myths because older children ask many questions concerning their authenticity, and it becomes difficult sometimes for the educators to explain the relevance and meaning. For example, the children usually ask for an example of an old person who is named by a rude name, and really there is not a single one. It works with young children because they do not ask a lot of questions. Even the scare tactic of beating them is soon going to be outdated, because children are made aware that beating is against the law, so the use of it arouses feelings of guilt to the educators.

4.3.5. THINGS NOT TO DO

The educators are absolutely aware of some of the things they are not allowed to do because they will damage the prospects of a successful resolution. The educators reported that they do not shout or talk too loudly with the children when resolving conflict, because this behaviour exacerbates children's loudness and also scares them. They also do not beat the children; however, two educators did confess that they do beat some exceptionally problematic children in their classes although they are aware that the law prohibits corporal punishment. Even if they can see who's wrong and who's right, they do not disclose it to the disputants when solving the conflict. As adults, they sometimes figure out who of the two disputants is lying. But they do not voice this observation in order to avoid more conflict in the classroom or after school when the children are on their way home. Educators feel challenged sometimes by some of the things they are required not to do when solving children's conflicts. Some of the situations need an individual to be harsh and loud for children to listen and respond positively and instantly. But having to control loudness and harshness is not easy, and is a particular challenge for educators.

4.3.6. THINGS TO DO

Educators reported that it is necessary to be consistent in what they say and do so that children that they are all the same and treated equally. Moreover, educators have to listen to the children. When children who are sitting next to each other are involved in a conflict, the educators said they remove one of the disputants to sit in front or next to the educator. One has to be calm and talk softly with the disputants. Educators experience the same feelings as above.

4.3.7. CHILDREN'S ROLE

Children are expected to participate in helping educators to achieve conflict resolution. The educators mentioned that the children have to listen to what educators tell them to do. They also enlisted older children to help fellow classmates who are fighting either by reporting them or by serving as assistants. The older children are also asked to help the newcomers with school rules, reminding them of the rules when they are fighting or quarrelling. Older children should be lenient to the younger children and take care of them in the absence of the educator. Perpetrators have to apologise and victims must accept the apology. The disputants have to tell their side of what happened to the educator. Maybe there were other children around those who were fighting, so they are asked by the educators to act as witnesses.

With regard to feelings created by children's behaviour educators insinuated the following: If the child is always naughty in class the educator becomes angry, but because they know they are dealing with children they control their anger. If the child is not naughty, or is new at school, the educators revealed that they keep calm because they know that the behaviour is out of lack of knowledge. Some said they feel that if the naughty child was not in the class she would have a peaceful class. The educators also reported feeling bad when children refuse to do what they tell them to do.

4.3.8. SUPPORT FROM THE FELLOW COLLEAGUE

When one educator is telling a story to the whole class, the other one remains vigilant, looking for children who are disturbing and not concentrating. The educators said they feel secure and supported, not anxious about disturbances and delays.

4.3.9. IMPEDIMENTS: PARENTS

Educators regard parents as impediments when it comes to conflict resolution between children. Educators inferred that as educators, they know their children. They are thus able to identify who is naughty and who is quiet in their classes. If a child is always naughty in class, then the educator is forced to consult the relevant parents so that the child's background can be obtained, because a possibility is that something disturbing has happened at home. Most of the parents do not respond to such calls. Some parents encourage educators to beat their children when they report them. Some are soft hearted when it comes to their children, which means they become too protective of their children. This occurs to the extent that parents

confront educators regarding their means of resolving children's conflicts especially if it does not favour his or her child. Some parents become impossible, complaining about the way an educator has handled their child's dispute with another child. For example, one parent confronted the educator because she had asked her child to share food with another child who didn't have food for lunch. Another parent reportedly shouted at the educator because her child sat on a cushion whereas she bought her a chair.

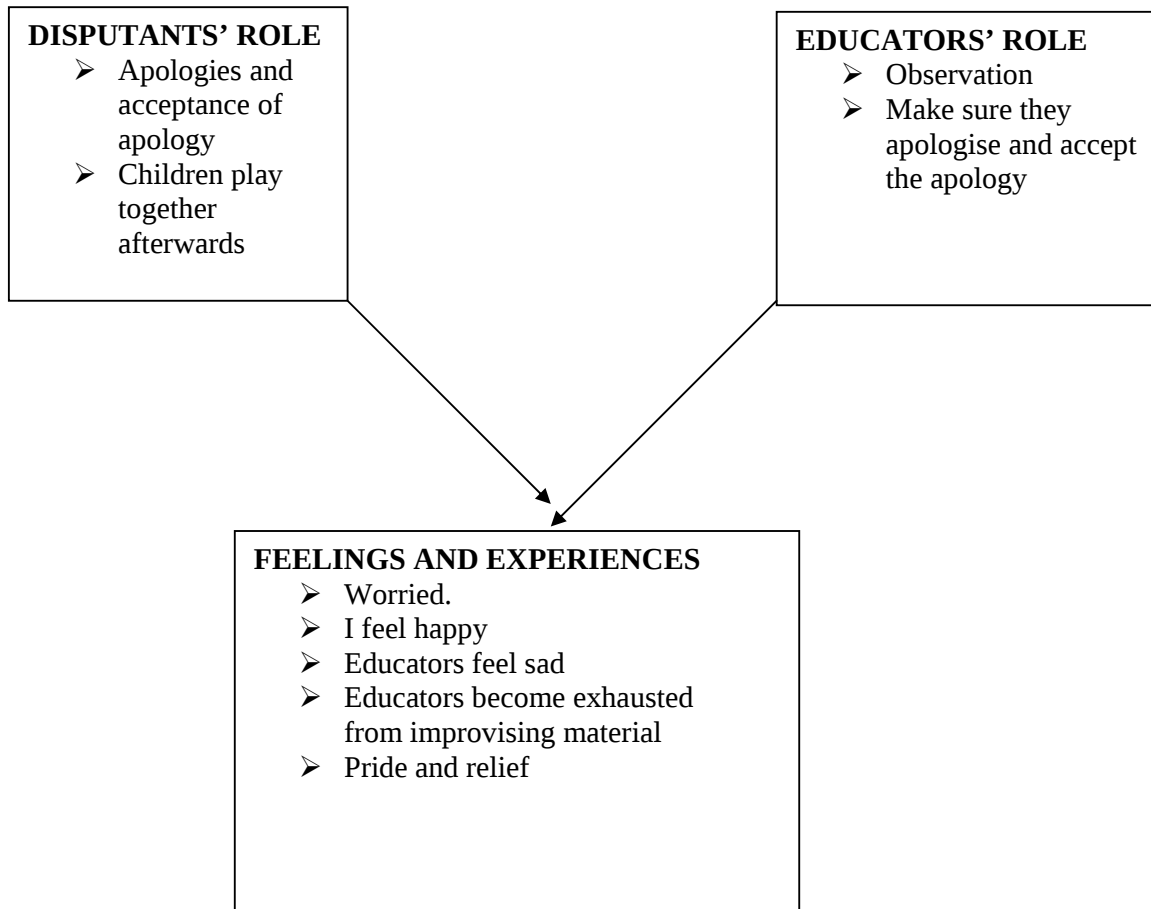
This creates a sense of trepidation (fearing parents) in educators and leads to inconsistency when solving conflicts. Educators end up being soft to certain children especially those with harsh parents because they are scared of them. Some parents even come to school to confront the educator. This leads to feelings of discomfort due to the inconsistency.

Parents do not open up about their children's troublesome behaviours. Some of the parents resort to running taverns as a source of income at the expense of their children because they will be affected by the behaviours of intoxicated customers who sit and drink at the tavern.

Feelings of educators about the negligence displayed by parents has many negative implications. Educators feel demotivated sometimes by the way parents do things. They try their best, but parents seem not to be satisfied. They acknowledge the fact that a majority of parents in their area are fairly uneducated and unemployed but they do not seem to be interested in their children's education. There is also a feeling of confusion regarding parents in the sense that their strategies of conflict resolution clash with the educators'. Such strategies include beating the children, which puts educators in a difficult situation because children get used to this and do not respond to strategies that do not involve beating. Some educators feel resentment towards the parents' responses to their ways of solving conflict between their children.

Below, Figure 4 illustrates diagrammatically the strategies preschool educators use after intervening in children's conflicts. It also represents the experiences and feelings preschool educators encounter after engaging in conflict resolution.

Figure 4: Strategies used by preschool educators after intervening in children's conflicts



4.4. AFTER INTERVENTION

Educators and children have different roles to play after the resolution of conflict.

4.4.1. The educator's role

The educators mentioned that after using all the above strategies of conflict resolution, they have to make sure that both disputants are content with the settlement. They accomplish this by asking the perpetrator to apologise and the victim to accept the apology. Thereafter, the educator has to observe whether those children play together in order to be sure that they have forgotten about the conflict. The educators reported that they have to bring back the whole class's concentration to what they were doing before the pause. They disclosed that it is not easy to regain children's concentration because children have a limited attention span. To regain children's attention, the educators said they use strategies such as asking the children questions about what they were doing before or just starting all over again. After solving the conflict, educators feel sad or worried if children do not listen to them or refuse to do what they are asked to do, but that is very unusual.

Educators become exhausted from improvising material and their anger is exacerbated when children throw, grab or destroy these materials. There are also positive feelings that are attained after solving the conflict. A feeling of happiness becomes evident because children apologise and accept the apology. To the educators this means the educator has succeeded in resolving the conflict, which brings a further sense of pride and relief to the educators.

4.4.2. Disputants' role

The educators reported that the perpetrator has to apologise and the victim has to accept the apology. To show that they have accepted the apology the disputants play together thereafter.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

It is conceptually significant to note that the studied preschool educators do not have comprehension of conflict mediation, and therefore do not use it as a conflict resolution strategy. This is congruent with Zerkín's (1999) view that mediation is still greatly underutilised in the sense that many people either do not know what mediation is, have never used it, or do not believe that they need this skill.

The findings reveal that the preschool educators under study do not know anything about mediation. Only a few of them attempted defining mediation but unfortunately gave a definition for arbitration. Otherwise, a number of educators conceded that they do not have an understanding of mediation and they do not use it as a conflict resolution strategy. When asked which strategies they use to resolve conflict between children, they mentioned the various conflict resolution strategies discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, the discussion will concentrate on the experiences and feelings of the educators evoked by those strategies mentioned in the previous chapter rather than mediation, which is not used by all the studied preschool educators. Because of the lack of professional help in conflict resolution, educators use alternative means to handle conflict among children.

In order to be in sequence with the results, the researcher presents the discussion according to the following framework: sources of conflict among preschool children; strategies educators use to resolve conflict among preschool children; experience and emotions of educators prior to, during, and after intervention and resolution. Although not the main focus of the study, it was impossible to ignore the effect that conflict resolution strategies had on the children. Therefore, in the following discussion, the effects will be looked at. Rewarding and problematic experiences are evident in the data, as are negative and positive feelings.

5.2. SOURCES OF CONFLICT AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Findings from the current study suggest that conflict in preschool children is caused by poverty prevailing in the area of study and limited funding from the government. According to Allred (2000), these root causes are attributed to the actor's external circumstances or situational causes. The similarity between the root causes and the immediate causes of conflict in preschool children under study confirms Heider's theory of the "naïve analysis of

action.” This theory introduces notions of unit formation referring to the process whereby origin (cause) and effect, actor and act are seen as parts of a causal unit. If two events are similar to each other, or proximate, then the one was likely to be seen as the cause of the other. For example, poverty prevailing in the community together with limited funding from the government resulted in all the other factors such as home-based, psychological and socio-economic causes that will be discussed below.

From the interpretations drawn from the interviews, it is clear that concern about the causal effect of the conflict outweighs the indispensable process of resolving children’s conflicts in the educators that were studied. Educators find it necessary to identify the source of conflict before they actually intervene. Comprehending the source provides the educators with the necessary understanding of the behaviour or feelings of the disputants. Also, knowing the causes of the conflict needing to be resolved is imperative for comprehending the dynamics of a conflict, as well as for coordinating the effort of resolution (Oehlberg, 2001). He further suggests that it is imperative for educators and caregivers to identify and address the root causes of a child’s negative behaviour, in order to find long term and sustainable solutions.

Preschool educators under study were quite clear about the factors that cause conflict between preschool children. These factors include socio-economic, psychological, and, lastly, family or home-based factors. However, Oehlberg (2001) argues that it is not always clear what the causes behind a sudden display of inappropriate behaviour are.

According to Heider’s theory of naïve analysis of action (Miller, Brickman, and Bolen, 1975), the connection between an actor and an act makes it easy to believe that a person attribution is more likely than a situation one as persons are seen as the origination of an act. However, in this instance, situation attribution is evident in the sense that the preschool educators studied mentioned a problem of parents who cannot afford to pay school fees due to poverty prevailing in the area. Limited funding from the government was also highlighted as a root cause of all the following factors.

Minimal resources in the schools characterise socio-economic factors that cause conflict among preschool children. It is likely for a school in rural poor areas to encounter shortage of resources because parents are hardly ever working, or aware of the needs of their children at

school because of their own illiteracy, or aware that it is their responsibility to collect and improvise material for their children.

Variety in the material used by children, which is lacking in the schools under review, is needed to lure children's attention, concentration and interest. Once children become bored with the same material, they take that boredom out on other children which inevitably results in conflict. Educators end up feeling demotivated because they have to do much a great deal of improvisation although it's never enough. On the other hand, they feel upset by the parents who do not help with waste collection and improvisation even if they are asked to do so. A feeling of pity or compassion for the children with parents who are not working is also apparent in the educators, because those with working parents have got the material at home.

Professor Kader Asmal, who was the Minister of Education in South Africa in the period this study was conducted, lamented the prevalence of poverty in this country's communities. In his speech at the launch of Unicef's 2000 *State of the World's Children Report*, which was held in Orlando West, Soweto, he acknowledged that the developmental phase of early childhood is particularly crucial in the current context of South African reconstruction and economic growth. But this process is hindered by the poverty that impedes families from meeting the developmental needs of their children without assistance. He also acknowledged that many young children are at risk because their health, nurture, and education cannot be provided for adequately from resources available within the community. He backed up his observations with the statistic that the families of more than half of this country's infants and children are extremely poor (Asmal, 2001).

Educators mentioned the fact that the material is never enough in the sense that the existing material breaks, gets lost or gets old. In rural areas where they mostly depend on improvisation for the material (that is used by children either to play or to learn) due to poverty, it takes time to collect waste and improvise again because it means travelling to a nearby town to collect the waste. Thus, the shortage of material will always be a problem in rural schools until they receive an adequate amount of funding to buy the material or someone provides it. There is hope that this problem might be resolved given Professor Kaider Asmal's speech which I believe is the first step to giving early childhood development the attention that it deserves. The fact that he has acknowledged the difficulties and unfair treatment preschool educators are getting raises hopes. Educators need collaboration with

parents, to establish sustainable income generating activities as soon as possible (Le Roux, 2002).

Educators also identified the community as playing a role in the shortage of the material, in the sense that educators work hard collecting the waste material for improvisation, only to have it stolen. It is the very same community that is supposed to help with the collection of waste and improvisation of material for their children, but they do the opposite. The educators mentioned that the tyres they collected to make swings were stolen during festive celebrations and burned on the streets. It is easy for such problems to occur in rural areas, because the schoolyards are not secure. I would attribute such behaviour to the less-involvement of the community in the school system which results in them not understanding the value of the material they are stealing. The options to get them interested in developing the schools rather than competing with them would be to try and find ways of explaining to parents and the community at large the role played by the preschool in teaching children not only academic work but social factors such as conflict resolution and different events in life which parents can help in. That way parents could be interested once they realize that the school value and acknowledges the community's input (McCaleb, 1997).

There are those causes of conflict that are characterised by psychological factors. Since the preschool population consists of young children, it is difficult for the older children (5 & 6 year olds) to understand the egocentric character of the younger ones (3, 4 & 5 year olds) because they are indeed all children. Considering Leavitt's (1994) observation that educators seem to find it uneasy to consider developmental explanations for the children's behaviour, it is then fair to say that preschool educators need training that includes child development. This can help in conflict resolution given that educators under study deal with two to three different age groups in one classroom. It would serve a purpose to emphasize the value of understanding child development when dealing with conflict and young children as Ausabel et al., (1980) suggest that age makes a difference in conflict resolution. Educators under study expect a level of understanding that is beyond that of the older children because they want them to understand the egocentric character of younger children. They try to teach children about their developmental stages, which is very difficult for children to understand.

Parents sometimes do the right thing such as donating material to the schools. However, sometimes this evokes possession and jealousy in preschool children. For example, one of the

educators revealed that one of the parents donated plates for the school, her child was so jealous of the plates in the sense that he did not want other children to use them, or would always remind them that his mother brought the plates and their mothers did not. This burdens educators with the necessity of explaining to the children that all the material at school is for everyone. It is a donation for the school not for certain individuals. In some cases, children become jealous only because they like the object, or it is the same as an object at his home or it is just out of sentimental attachments. Educators say they feel that such children are just spoilt. This reflects the lack of understanding of child developmental level by the educators because it is normal for a preschool child to be jealous of his or her parents' possessions. Children need to be taught frankly and clearly about such issues and it should not be taken for granted that they know those things. This goes back to an all-inclusive training syllabus. Educators need to be pro-active as well. Educators could have quarterly meetings where they discuss challenges in the classroom and forward such notes to the training programme makers so as to enhance their programme.

Attention-seeking behaviour such as provoking others for no reason by scribbling on another's paper, grabbing from one another, copying work, and bullying young children are common behaviours among young children. So it is evident that this behaviour is normal amongst young children. But the educators under study tend to refer to normal child behaviours as severe behaviours that they cannot help. For example, the educators refer to normal challenging behaviour displayed by children as attention-seeking behaviour that is severe and there is nothing they can do about it. Whereas challenging behaviour is any form of normal behaviour that interferes with children's learning or normal development. As such, Oehlberg (2001) admits that educators are not counsellors or therapists but he recommends classroom activities that use role-playing, art, literature and music to assist children who have problems. The feelings such as feeling regret that they have such children in their classes, or feelings that a child is spoilt indicate that educators lack knowledge about the basic psychological development of children. In other words, they frequently share the broader community's misconceptions about childhood developmental stages. Preschool educator's training should be able to familiarize educators with all the stages of child development and how crucial it is in conflict resolution and the holistic development of the child.

Home-based factors are characterised by parents' responsibilities and actions. Parents have a responsibility of preparing their children for the foreign environment of school, a transition

that is difficult for many children. The separation from parents or home, an environment they grew up in, to a new environment, tends to scare, frustrate and bring anxiety to the children. Most children arrive at school not ready for the new environment. Moving from the known to the unknown is never easy. There is a tendency with parents not to assist children through this transition, and, as a result, new children frequently fight and are often rough to other children. This was also acknowledged by the former Minister of Education in South Africa in his speech, which mentioned that many poor parents have had very little, or no schooling and experience difficulty in preparing their own children for formal learning (Asmal, 2001).

Brookes *et al.*, (2000) further mention that in early childhood, parents play the central role in their child's life, and have the greatest impact on the course of normative development. However, it is important to involve parents in everything that is done in the preschool particularly at a time of crisis or when decisions are made that spark emotional disputes. But parents in rural areas regard the school as a distant place, only for educators and children, not for them. Parents should be given space and an enabling and inviting environment to participate in the school activities (Pond, 2001). This involves notifying parents prior to an event of their expected participation. Secondly, give them clear indication of the school's expectations. Lastly, offering assistance where necessary and leave the school's doors open for any queries. After the execution of the duty, a letter of appreciation can be sent to the parent to show that his contribution was invaluable and if possible would be requested again. That way the parent would attach value to the time he spent at school and realize how much input he has contributed in the school for the benefit of the children.

Secondly, young children are usually representation of their family relationships. They model what elders do either at home, at school or in the society at large. Parents who fight, swear or shout in front of the children relay an idea that what they are doing is normal or acceptable. Children will try that out with their peers at school. Such behaviour leads to bullying as one of the causes of conflict. The onus is on the educators to educate such children about the dangers of their behaviours. It does not end there. The parents too need to be educated about such issues as well. As McCaleb (1997) suggests, the educator must explain to parents the role played by the preschool in teaching children to relate to different events in life, to deal with controversy and conflict, and to inform them of the principles that guide them when working on current events. But parents do not respond when invited by the educators to workshops. Resulting from this is a feeling of pity for the children on the part of the

educators. They see the child as still vulnerable, thinking everything done by an adult is correct. This suggests a collaboration of parents and the educators (Pond, 2001) in building the future of their children concerning conflict resolution. Both parents and educators have a responsibility to create and maintain the relationship between them (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). Both Ikuenobe (1998) and Tawick-Smith (2003), (following Vygotsky) mentioned modelling by adults as one way of teaching children an appropriate behaviour. There should not be a problem in teaching and modelling appropriate behaviour to children between educators who are guided by professional and formal teaching principles, and parents who are guided by traditional and informal ways of teaching because both are guided by the same principle of adults as models of appropriate behaviour to children.

5.3. STRATEGIES EDUCATORS USE TO RESOLVE CONFLICT AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN BEFORE THEY INTERVENE

Information from the data confirmed that intervening in the children's conflicts starts long before actual intervention. The process commences with prevention of conflict, which is regarded by educators as the best strategy since it inhibits conflict from happening. At the same time they admit that, no matter how hard they try to prevent conflict, it happens. Nevertheless, they believe that preventative measures do reduce conflict. Although educators refer to prevention as a strategy to resolve conflict, it is in fact a strategy to stop conflict from occurring. What follows is the discussion of the strategies of conflict prevention that are used by the educators under study followed by their feelings.

The above statement confirms Wheeler's (1994) perspective that, traditionally, many adults consider conflicts between children to be detrimental so they intervene as a means of preventing the conflict. Conversely, Hamburg (1995), suggests that preventing conflict does not resolve the conflict, instead it deprives children the opportunity to have fun and have an understanding of each other. The prevention strategy is further opposed by Hausfather (1996), who argues that schools have not promoted environments in which the learners play an active role in their own education. And Gartrell (1995) condemns traditional discipline because he believes that it "criticises" children, often publicly, for unacceptable behaviours. Thus, the educators under study are still following the past, when children who cause conflict were seen as "troublemakers" or as "naughty." However, when taking Vygotsky and other theorists such as Piaget into consideration, conflict or misbehaviour is simply part of being human. Learning becomes a reciprocal experience for the learners and the educator.

Preschool educators need a mind shift where they move away from the traditional belief that conflict is harmful and should not happen and understand that conflict is a healthy exercise that needs to be given attention and taught effectively to the children. This is not to blame educators because they are using their own alternative ways in dealing with conflict because the training they received does not include conflict, they just use what they know and what they learned from their parents when they were raising them.

The following is a presentation and extensive discussion of the various ways educators use to prevent conflict together with the advantages and disadvantages of these strategies.

(i) Prevention strategies consume a lot of effort in the sense that educators need to ensure that they are always among the children in whatever they do. This benefits the educators because the children respect them. If the educator is always among them, the children want to portray the best of their behaviour to impress the educator. This strategy is, however, disadvantageous to the children in the sense that they learn to depend on elders constantly. When the educator is constantly present among children, their usual interaction patterns, which are important for their development, are altered. To the educators, this strategy evokes a feeling of a possible need for training in conflict resolution in future, in case they have an intake of children who are prone to causing or eliciting conflict. Moreover, Hamburg (1995), suggests that preventative measures do not stop conflict from occurring.

(ii) They also use a strategy of keeping children busy continually. In order for the children to be busy, the educator has to improvise sufficient material so that children do not have to wait for each other. This strategy also prohibits children from interacting with one another, thus depriving them the chance to learn about each other's feelings. Educators reported feeling tired of improvising material because in order for children to be busy the material must be abundant. Improvising material involves a lot of hard work, and educator exhaustion is also connected to the community and parents especially if there is a lack of help. Given that, educators should try and establish activities that will generate sustainable income (Le Roux, 2002), by applying for funds from willing donors and raise money through organizing activities in the school so that they do not solely depend on the funding from the Government. With collaboration with the community, raising funds has a potential to succeed in the sense that the burden would be shared amongst everyone (educators and community members) therefore relieving educators from the burden. Considering educator's feelings of becoming

exhausted from improvising material, they can implement Vygotsky's division of labour theory and Rogoff's (1990) guided participation. In this instance, educators can involve children in the process of improvisation by explaining, demonstrating and involving them in the whole process until they are experts. Thereafter, they can divide the workload by allowing children to improvise some of the materials themselves. Educators will have to implement a strategy of proleptic instruction (Wertsch and Stone, 1979), where they assess the children's readiness for the responsibility.

(iii) Sharing and taking turns is reported as one of the good ways of preventing conflict among children by the educators. Educators teach children to take turns and share when the material is not enough. It is inferred that it is difficult to teach younger children sharing because to them sharing means they are losing the object (Oesterreich, 1995). Lally (2000) suggested that the way educators act towards children is related to the child's developmental level. The educators are doing the right thing in emphasising sharing with the older children because they can understand what sharing means. Educators under study are following Vygotsky, in the sense that in his description of zone of proximal development he posits that children are under adult guidance or in collaboration with "more capable peers". This means that older children are, by virtue of being older and experienced, more capable than the young ones, so they can act as guides. Conversely, educators reported feeling uncomfortable with their own inconsistent behaviour of emphasizing sharing with the older children and not with the younger ones. This shows a stark contradiction between the experience (understanding that younger children do not understand sharing) and this feeling (uncomfortable with inconsistency). Therefore, there is an element of uncertainty with the educators, which suggests a need to emphasize child development in their training.

(iv) Educators also teach children to report unacceptable behaviour to the educator and not to solve it themselves. Educators find it difficult to apply this strategy without causing distractions because sometimes children report wrongdoing at inappropriate times. Again, children learn dependence by the use of this strategy. These experiences evoke a feeling of being in control to the educators. This explicitly demonstrates child management and the exercise of power by the educators over the children as (Leavitt, 1994) has argued. Also the traditional and cultural values (of elders managing children) that bind the educators play a role in this instance because educators teach children to report everything to them at the same

time they prefer certain times and children cannot cope with the selection of appropriate timing. Training educators in sharing power with the learners can address this ambivalence.

(v) Since children imitate elder's actions and behaviours, educators have to always keep up good morals and good behaviour because children model what the educators are doing. Even if there is a need for the educators to display their emotions and feelings, if those emotions and feelings will have a negative impact on the children, they have to conceal such emotions or delay them until children are away. As Shanel (2000) suggested, self-control is one of the main characteristics to being a good educator. But at the same time, in order for individuals to understand conflict resolution, they first have to acknowledge the fact that conflict is healthy and has to happen. By concealing their feelings when in front of children educators teach them that conflict is unacceptable and does not have to happen. Although educators are aware that they should control their anger, sometimes they find it difficult to do so and realize it later. It is important to acknowledge that it can be difficult for an educator to keep control over his or her own emotions when dealing with misbehaving children just like anybody else. This means that controlling anger when dealing with children is one of the skills educators should be trained in. Educators who control their anger are supported by (Allred, 2000) who argues that angry, retaliatory negotiators are less likely to reach mutually beneficial outcomes, because they have less regard for the other party's interests.

(vi) Given that there are two educators in each preschool, the educators have to take turns during big group time (story telling, music ring, etc.), so that they can take part in the activity and simultaneously watch the children who are disruptive. This generates a sense of support to the educators. They feel supported by fellow colleagues. However, this reveals a sense of dependence between educators because their colleagues will not be there every time. So educators must learn to be independent. Educators can train children to do the same job done by a colleague. This is possible only if the adult shares power and builds mutual relations with children and allows more capable peers to be guiders of the young ones (Killen, 1996).

(vii) When intervening in conflict between children, the educator has to keep in mind that, even if she knows who is right and wrong, she must not disclose this information to the disputants in order to avoid further conflict. Educators revealed that although they are aware of this point, it is not easy to conceal who is right or wrong between the disputants since disclosure makes things easier when resolving the conflict. As a result, they sometimes feel

like disclosing their judgement. However, because educators are aware of the consequences of the disclosure, they keep silent. If children are participating in problem solving, there is no need to hide anything. Following Rogoff (1990), the adult must involve the child in the solution of the problem rather than simply solving the problem and reporting the solution to the child. That way, who is right or wrong will be clear without even mentioning it. The process of resolution that involves children will reveal that. This also clearly indicates that sometimes the educators under study find it challenging to transfer theoretical instruction into action. The fact that they are aware of what to do in certain instances but finds it difficult to implement proves that.

viii) The educators use rules as one of their preventative measures but children take time to internalise them. Because of this, educators find themselves in a situation where they have to remind children time and again about rules. It is also difficult to explain rules to younger children who depend on demonstration and action for understanding. Rules and regulations are good to keep and maintain the school's discipline and its smooth running. Feeling angry with children who contravene the rules is common in educators. According to Rogoff (1990), rules serve as scaffolding for the learner. The educators in the present study need to apply rules following proleptic teaching that involves guiding the child through the task, and involving the child in action. Proleptic instruction integrates explanation and demonstration with an emphasis on the learner's participation in the instructional activity. Educators are advised not to rely on explanation and the provision of rules in the verbal mode only. Or they better use informal instruction that may show rules as something not formal and something to be scared of, but as careful guidance and graduated participation in the task (Shotter, 1989).

Since it was already stated that it is impossible to prevent conflict completely, the educators mentioned that they must take preliminary measures before intervening in children's conflicts. In this case in point, educators have a responsibility to settle children down first and sensitise them to the possible break so as to attend to the dispute. This is in line with Williams' (2001) suggestion that educators have to help students learn from the conflicts that surround them. When children are sensitised about the break and the reason for it, they will concentrate and have a chance to listen to the process of conflict resolution, and to learn the skill. Indeed, attending to conflict between children is a time-consuming process of which children need to be aware. So what the educators are doing is correct and benefits the children, although they complained of time wasted and the delay and interruption of the

school programme during this process, because it mostly happens when they are busy in the classroom. This is one way of involving children in the conflict resolution. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is apparent here in the sense that the educator pauses the whole class so that they can have an opportunity to listen and participate where necessary. The suggestion would be to emphasise in training of preschool educators that social issues such as conflict resolution should be given almost the same level of importance as the academic lessons.

This experience evokes positive and negative feelings. The negative feelings that result from the above experience contradict with educators' experience. The data suggests that educators' feelings about conflict resolution vary according to different situations. Educators feel frustrated because they are wasting time, and the school programme is being delayed and interrupted. This means that educators do not understand that conflict resolution should be an integral part of the preschool programme, because it is one of the social skills children need to learn as from the preschool level. Educators should accept that conflict would emerge, given that it is an inevitable fact of life (Broadbear, 2000; Reagin and Dilbeck, 2001). The experience of interruption also exacerbates educators' anger when intervening in the children's conflicts. That alone clearly indicates the lack of knowledge educators have about conflict and indeed conflict resolution. This reveals that these educators felt that conflict resolution is a skill that has to be acquired by educators alone and not by children. At the same time some educators revealed that they feel happy because children will learn from the pause. According to Vygotsky, adults should transfer the knowledge they have to the novice. Pausing when resolving conflict among learners gives educators an opportunity to transfer the process of conflict resolution to the learners.

The results provide further information concerning the awareness educators have of what to do in different situations before intervening in children's conflicts. Situations such as when a child is physically fighting, hurt, crying, or angry are identified by the educators as important to recognise before intervening in children's conflicts. If a child involved in physical fighting is hurt, the educator has a responsibility to find help for that particular child. However, due to minimal resources they do not often manage to provide satisfactory help. Consequently educators end up feeling guilty and scared when a conflict leads to accidents. An accident is something an individual cannot prevent, and beyond one's control, but once it happens people tend to forget that and hold themselves culpable. That is the case with the educators who

blame themselves for such incidents. On the other hand, parents exacerbate the educators' panic in the sense that educators become afraid that parents will accuse them of negligence. This leads to educators to engage in a strategy of vigilance, where they are watchful of the children's actions. In turn, children become uncomfortable and do not feel free to explore the world. Educators become helpless and discouraged by children who are always fighting, which shows lack of understanding of the psychological and developmental aspect of children by the educators.

There is a sense of partiality when it comes to the privilege given the crying and defeated disputants who are comforted in a fight situation. The educator gives the crying and the defeated children all the attention, and neglects the children who are not crying but winning in a fight. However, what matters is the fact that both children are in conflict and for the time being, the educator is still unaware of what has happened so in a way she or he is already taking a position by giving attention to the crying and defeated disputants. This forces educators to give attention to the crying and defeated disputants over the non-crying and winning ones. As a result, the educators develop a tendency to ignore children who are always crying. Following Rogoff and Vygotsky's division of labour, children themselves could help here either by comforting the crying child or proceed with the conflict resolution. Feelings of nervousness, panic and anger are evident in this instance (ignoring children who are always crying).

Ignoring children who are always crying is unacceptable in the sense that, such a reaction (always crying) can mean that there are underlying reasons for the child to be involved in the conflict or crying all the time in the first place. The feelings of helplessness and discouragement on the part of the educator are understandable, considering the fact that the educators under study are from a culture where children who are always crying are interpreted as being attention-seeking. Feelings of nervousness and panic when there is an accident are normal, but educators have to learn to be aware of appropriate reaction and relevant assistance in such cases. At the same time educators feel nervous when a child is left alone and crying in case a parent who does not know what happened initially arrives. Feelings of anger towards older children who are fully aware of the school rules is quite odd because children have many ways of expressing anger (one of them being fighting physically), but the educators have to teach children the acceptable ways of expressing anger and why there are some not acceptable. If the child is frequently involved in conflicts, or is

always naughty in class, is involved in a conflict, most of the educators revealed that they become angry and realise belatedly that it is possible that such children have a psychological problem. This anger usually results in educators shouting at the children, a response that is not allowed when dealing with children's conflicts.

The findings also indicate that educators sometimes develop a tendency to ignore children who are fighting, especially if they are always fighting. They ignore the children because to them, such children are attention seekers. So in order for the children to stop such behaviour, the educators reason that they need to be deprived of the attention they are seeking. Once they are given the attention they are seeking, behaviour will be reinforced. For some educators, especially those with children who are always fighting, feelings of helplessness and discouragement become evident and results in educators resorting to corporal punishment which they are aware is unacceptable, and a crime. Feelings of discouragement and helplessness demonstrate that these educators need an extensive training in conflict and conflict resolution. They need to learn and understand that conflict is healthy and has both positive and negative impacts. The duty of educators is to emphasize the positive impact of conflict with the children.

Confiscation of the conflict-inducing object is one of the strategies used before intervening in conflict resolution by the educators. This is one of the traditional strategies discovered not to work if the intention is to give children a chance to learn conflict resolution skills. The feeling of worthwhileness that is provoked by this experience reflects the enjoyment of power and authority by the educators, and also the effortless and rapid way of resolving conflict between children. To some degree, it is apparent that some educators are just too indolent to talk to children. However, the possibility is that the educators are under trained meaning that they refer to conflict resolution as something that does not need one to spend time on.

There is also a feeling of anger in educators before they intervene and that anger is controlled when ascertaining that the disputants are novices or are rarely involved in disputes. A feeling of anger is normal for all human beings. This is consistent with Asha's (1999) view that anger is a feeling that exists in everybody living a normal life, and that everyone needs to learn to manage strong emotions. Educators seem to understand this in the sense that they give angry disputants a chance to calm down. The feeling of embarrassment and being upset when children show their anger is normal with authoritative educators, in the sense that they always

expect respect from their inferiors. But relatively, verbalising one's anger is acceptable especially when compared to physically displaying it. Verbalising anger allows the opponent to learn authenticity of the angry person.

5.4 STRATEGIES EDUCATORS USE TO RESOLVE CONFLICT AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WHILE THEY ENGAGE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION BETWEEN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

The various strategies of conflict resolution between children that are used by the educators while intervening in children's conflicts seem to be traditional and outdated. Directing is one of the strategies. According to Reagin and Dilbeck (2001), directing is stepping in as an authority figure to tell children what to do. The result is that the conflict tentatively terminates and everyone abides by the educator's ruling. The educators use various discourses to explain how they direct the conflict resolution between their children. These discourses include: telling, teaching, asking, begging, training, talking to and explaining to the children. This is in agreement with William (2000), who says that directing does not need to be unkind or authoritarian, children can be told modestly, but clearly, what they need to do.

From the participants' responses it was evident that when telling (although some educators said they teach) children, educators expect children to listen and do as they say. Children have to listen to what the educators tell them to do, and do it. This is contrary to Vygotsky's scaffolding and reciprocal teaching which are effective teaching strategies to access zone of proximal development. Reciprocal teaching allows for the creation of a dialogue between learners and educators. According to Tappan (1998, p.155), the major significance of Vygotsky's approach of zone of proximal development is that it recognizes "the fundamentally dialogic nature of all learning." Dialogue, "is morally valuable" because it gives rise to care, concern, and compassion, for both oneself and others. This is two-way communication that encourages learners to go beyond answering questions and engage in the discourse (Driscoll, 1994; Hausfather, 1996). Moreover, Vygotsky's theory requires the educator and the learners to collaborate with each other. Instead of an educator dictating her or his meaning to learners for future recitation, an educator should collaborate with her or his learners in order to create meaning in ways that learners can make their own (Hausfather, 1996). There is a feeling of power while intervening, because the educators tell the children what to do after finding out what happened. They do not allow the children to negotiate what

to do. Even if they beg children when solving their disputes, they direct them. Educators also mentioned that they feel bad for children who become cheeky, and do not comply with the educators' orders.

During the interviews, educators provided supporting evidence for their aversion to conflict in the sense that they choose to tell children about the disadvantages of conflict which leads to fighting, bruises, accidents, etc. and not about the advantages. Thus, the educators have a completely opposite understanding of the advantages of conflict that are mentioned by (Johnson and Johnson, 1995) and cited in (Broadbear, 2000). Such advantages include increased achievement, motivation to learn, higher-level reasoning, long-term retention, healthy social and cognitive development, and fun for the learners. The educators are concerned with the negative side of conflict rather than the positive side.

Educators reported that children find it very easy to accept an apology from the perpetrator when they have been told that they must accept it. One of the educators even said, "*They always accept the apology, these are angels.*" However, it is possible for children to say they accept an apology from another child to please the educator, or as a way of abiding by the educator's ruling, not necessarily because they really accept it. Educators teach, although others said they train children to be dependent during conflict resolution, in the sense that children have to report to the educator when there is conflict between them. Reporting to the educator deprives children of the opportunity to be independent and solve their conflicts independently of an adult. They also mentioned that they feel good when children listen to them when they tell them what to do. By listening to them, educators mean that children should do what they are told, or expected by the educator to do. For example, if the educator tells them to apologise, they must do so. This perpetuates feelings of being in control with the educators.

This reflects the unconscious resistance to change in the way of doing things currently by educators. Educators need to be sensitised that the traditional days of children who do not question adults' views and commands are phasing out because of the rapid change and the multi-cultural South African society.

It appears that another strategy used by the educators while intervening in conflicts between children is arbitration. Educators ask disputants to tell their side of the story. But when it

comes to bringing in a solution, the educator takes power and uses her authoritarian advantage by telling children what to do. This corresponds with Zerkín's (1999) depiction of arbitration as a process of conflict resolution over which disputants have the least control in the sense that the arbitrator renders a decision for the disputants. The educators' focus is on hearing what happened and deciding the solution for the children, asking the perpetrator to apologise and the victim to accept the apology, and getting children to play together after the conflict is solved. It is therefore significant that the educators lack the understanding and value of the process involved in conflict resolution. This all goes back to the fact that educators need to be sensitised to the theory of transfer of responsibility, sharing of power, division of labour (Rogoff, Malkin and Gilbride, 1984) that can help them overcome their negative feelings.

Because of the absence of training in conflict resolution, educators end up using myths and threats to teach children moral lessons. The intention of scaring children benefits the educators in the sense that this strategy stops the behaviour immediately, and the children never do it again. Educators use this strategy when a particular child repeats the same behaviour time and time again. Those scare tactics include threats of calling police, and calling a beast to eat them, and the myths of dirty mouth, and old people's names. However, educators find this old fashioned and not working sometimes with the older children who will ask a lot of questions, such as "where the beast is." One of the educators even said, "*Children these days are clever.*" It is possible for myths and superstitions not to work because most of them are vague and entail lies or impossibilities. Consequently educators end up feeling guilty from threatening children of beating them. Ikuenobe (1998) supports the use of myths by stating that, in traditional African cultures morality is learned and taught informally through folklore, myths, parables, platitudes, folk-wisdom, mentoring and the modelling of behaviours by elders. This usually occurs in a way that the elder transfers his or her knowledge to children. What is important is that it should be done in a way whereby it is providing an explanation and evidence of the myths and folklore for moral principles. All these are represented in the form of stories in real life experiences, from which children can draw knowledge and learn the probable value of particular actions in given circumstances. However, due to the rapid, ever-changing (politically, socially and otherwise) society we are living in, some of the African traditional beliefs were changed and spoiled, and some are lost.

Educators also noted that they do not have to shout or talk too loud with children when solving their conflicts because that aggravates children's noise and anger too. This is in agreement with the suggestion by Oehlberg (2001) that when an educator is resolving children's conflict he or she should remain calm and exhibit positive conflict management skills with regard to body language, tone of voice and breathing patterns. With this approach a learner is more likely to respond in a non-aggressive manner. Sometimes this is not easy in the sense that, when an educator has a large number of children, the noise sometimes overwhelms the educator and talking softly does not work. So to overcome this, educators use a sound such as clapping hands or banging on top of the desk, or beating a drum to attract the children's attention. This also brings chaos and havoc in the classroom making the educator more nervous. Oehlberg's (2001) suggestion is a good suggestion, but needs a very firm backup by the parents at home where preschool children spend most of their time. Coming from a culture where elders shout at children who are naughty, educators feel challenged because they are used to shouting and children too are used to that at home. Still the customary habits of strict, harsh, scruples about not spoiling children overwhelm the educators.

There are things mentioned by the educators, which they have to do when resolving conflict between children. Educators emphasised that they should be consistent when dealing with children's conflicts but they also accept that consistency is difficult when solving children's disputes. Parents contribute in the sense that there are difficult parents who are hardly satisfied with the ways educators use when resolving children's conflicts. Strong parents sometimes even come to school to confront educators.

The educators frequently see parents as impediments when it comes to conflict resolution. According to the early childhood care training the educators under study have received, educators are not supposed to beat children and are trying very hard not to practice this because they realized that corporal punishment is counterproductive to the progress of the children.

A lot has changed with the influence of other cultures, but the culture of beating children is still regarded very positively by parents and they encourage educators to do likewise. This gives the educators an indication that the main method of solving children's conflicts by the parents is to beat them. This demonstrates confusion to the children because they think it is

only when you are beaten that you have done something wrong or unacceptable. This results to the additional difficulty of verbal reprimand and reasoning. This brings hard work to the educators in the sense that children spend more time at home with parents. This means that children are used to being beaten, so when at school they don't comply with the verbal strategies used by educators. At this stage educators incur a feeling of confusion in the sense that parents' traditional views clash with the education system. Education programmes should take cultural values into consideration. Rogoff (1990) emphasizes Vygotsky's belief that guidance of children by elders should be through the provision of culturally developed tools and practices. In African culture this will refer to folklore, myths, and so forth as mentioned by Ikuenobe (1998). It is understandable that educators get confused in the sense that they themselves are part of the community that believes in beating children as a means of discipline.

Children are used to the type of conflict resolution whereby parents use a win or lose strategy. This strategy is called judging (William, 2000), and clearly stipulates who is right and who is wrong. Children always expect a win-lose result; they don't feel satisfied if there is no clear indication of who is right and who is wrong. And this makes educators feel they have not resolved conflict satisfactorily.

Responses and reactions from parents on the ways educators resolve conflict between children contributes to the inconsistency when resolving those conflicts. Educators reported that parents do not work hand-in-hand with them concerning their children's behaviours at home. Even if an educator arranges a meeting with a parent due to the child's behaviour, parents do not often fulfil such appointments. This increases the difficulty for the educators, because they need all the necessary information they can have about a child who behaves exceptionally at school.

Coming from a culture whereby parents' dignity is also judged by the behaviour of their children, some parents come to meetings but still conceal some of the conditions at home or about the child's background. For example, one of the educators inferred that one of child in her class who behaved well all the time suddenly changed to an aggressive behaviour. The educator managed to meet with his parent to enquire about the child's changed character. The parent didn't show any awareness of the child's changed behaviour and promised to have a look at it, but that was the end. The educator only found out when she talked to a primary

school educator who happens to be teaching this child's siblings, that the mother was running a business that is not suitable for an appropriate upbringing of children. An ongoing state of ambiguity can lead to feelings of insecurity and a tougher stance. This feeling is in line with McCaleb (1997), who believes that it is not easy for the educator to deal with sensitive issues. As a result, in such cases, educators sometimes feel they are being unfair to some of the children when solving their disputes, especially those with modest parents. What usually happens is that if one of the children involved in conflict has parents who are harsh and strong they tend to solve the conflict to his or her favour because they are scared of the parents. This leads to inconsistency. They also feel demotivated by parents who do not report their children's odd behaviours to the educators. Fine (1980), suggests that working with parents should be a long-term relationship that encourages confidence and freedom to discuss problems and plans pertaining to the child and the family. On the other hand, educators should also be aware and expect some disagreements when working with parents. These differences arise because of different values or different views on other factors relative to programming. As with any good relationship, compromise is often a solution.

The contradictions between the experiences and feelings of educators when intervening in conflict resolution between preschool children are an indication of inner conflict as they negotiate between the various strategies, both successful and unsuccessful, of conflict resolution.

5.5. STRATEGIES EDUCATORS USE TO RESOLVE CONFLICT AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AFTER THEY INTERVENED IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION BETWEEN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

There is not much happening after conflict resolution. There are clearly stipulated children's roles and educator's roles. Educators noted that they have to make sure that both disputants are content after the resolution. It is possible that the disputant verbally says she or he accepts the apology just to abide by the educator's request, but does not mean it. This also teaches children that acceptance of apology is a must and they would not understand the meaning of that concept which goes with the feelings.

They have to bring back the whole class' attention and young children's attention is easily disturbed and difficult to recall. These situations bring feelings such as worry, exhaustion, happiness, pride and relief to the educators. Consequences such as children playing together

after the dispute is resolved arouse happiness and pride to the educators. It makes them feel they have succeeded in resolving the conflict. They feel worried if disputants do not play together afterward. Educator exhaustion is precipitated by this constant shifting between the academic and social learning of children.

Children's roles include apology by the perpetrator and acceptance of apology by the victim, and then playing together thereafter. Educators actually tell children to do this and children abide by the educator's ruling. It is not clear whether they want to do it or not.

The experiences and feelings educators have while resolving conflict between children indicate that the preschool educators under study are still encompassed by the traditional authoritarian stance of an educator. They seem to enjoy the possession of power. The educators under study deal with forgiveness differently from the belief of (Enright *et al.* 1992) that forgiveness is a choice and should not be forced on a person, and that there is great individual variation in how people forgive.

Considering that educators measure their success in conflict resolution when children apologise when asked to do so and play together thereafter, it is generally clear that the educators think they are competent in resolving conflict between children. It is my argument, however, that they are not. It would be fair enough if educators could teach children to apologise and accept apology driven by their own good will, and not only when instructed. They should teach children to listen to their feelings, which would be possible if conflict mediation is used as a strategy of resolving conflict.

The aim of this study was to understand the experiences and feelings of preschool educators when mediating conflict between children in a preschool environment. Although the findings of the study discovered that mediation is not a strategy used by the preschool educators interviewed, it ultimately became clear that mediation of conflict seems to be the best strategy for resolving conflicts between preschool children, despite the fact that it consumes a lot of time. But considering the benefits children and educators can accumulate by the use of this strategy, it is worth utilizing it.

6. CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study focused on the experiences and feelings of the preschool educators with regard to their intervention in children's conflict resolution. It highlighted the fact that these educators use all the various strategies of conflict resolution family called ADR mentioned by (Zerkin, 1999) with the exception of mediation. Moreover, they do not have an understanding of conflict mediation. It is apparent in the data that the preschool educators under study were only trained in conflict prevention and use alternative ways of solving preschool children's conflicts once conflict occurs. As a result, educators use various strategies of conflict resolution. There is no uniform framework, or strategy for their intervention when resolving children's conflicts. As discussed before, educators used directive, arbitration, scare tactics, myths and superstitions to resolve children's conflicts, but still the emphasis remains on conflict prevention rather than resolution.

6.1. FINDINGS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

The following findings seem to emerge from the study: Educators seem to have both problematic and rewarding experiences. Problematic experiences include parents as impediments and difficult people to work with when it comes to conflict resolution. Parents are the ones who are supposed to work hand-in-hand with educators to mould their children, but they do not. Educators try their best to involve parents, but few respond and some respond negatively. The study emphasises the urgent need for home-school collaboration in social perspectives such as conflict resolution.

Parents should be involved more as co-educators of their children so that they can experience the hard work educators have to endure when resolving children's conflicts. The training itself should involve parents so that they practice lessons, and in doing so decrease the confusion experienced by educators when approached by parents and the rules of the school programme.

Lack of training in conflict resolution leads to inconsistency in conflict resolution; educators think they are doing the right thing, or that they can resolve children's conflicts when in actual fact they cannot. Instead, children obey the educator's rules as an authority but do not

learn anything. Thus, the authoritarian practices of the educators under study mislead them into thinking that they are succeeding in resolving conflict between their children.

Rewarding experiences are rewarding only to the educator, not to the children. All the strategies they use to resolve conflict between children are quick and do not involve much effort, in that they are all authoritative and children just abide by the educator's ruling. The reason for conflict mediation is for the children to learn from what the educator is doing. Educators get rid of the dispute in a short period of time. They are saved from the stress and headache of explaining and describing what the children will be saying to one another as the process of conflict resolution ensues. The preschool educators studied lack an understanding of the link between child development and learning in the sense that they seem to expect miracles, forgetting that they are dealing with young children who are still immature and inexperienced.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

These findings suggest a need for educators to be trained in conflict resolution and especially mediation. The studied educators have a negative connotation of conflict. To them, conflict is an unacceptable behaviour. It is better to prevent it from happening and if it happens, the educator must be involved in resolving it. These educators need an intensive training in conflict resolution at a broader level. They need an understanding that conflict is an inevitable part of all human kind, and that it is imperative and healthy for children to be involved in conflict. It is indeed necessary for the educators to be given the same training so as to maintain consistency. At the moment they are using various strategies of conflict resolution that yield inconsistency. Mediation seems to be the best conflict resolution strategy since it benefits both the educator and the children.

Preschool educators' experiences and feelings should also be considered when planning the training programmes for educators. It is apparent in the discussion that feelings educators have due to the experiences they encounter when resolving conflict between children have a significant impact on their interaction with children. Above all, it is imperative to acknowledge that the cultural and traditional views of both parents and educators should be taken into consideration when planning the various programmes of conflict resolution because they have a profound impact on the appropriation of the strategies educators are

trained in. This is understood in the sense that, this is how one grew up and it is not easy to shift from one fundamental point of view to another. Educators have an understanding of what they are supposed to do, but find it difficult to implement.

6.3. LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUE OF THE STUDY

Since the study is qualitative and exploratory in nature, a small sample was used to obtain information. Generalisation cannot be guaranteed, but the results of the study can be used as a starting point to further research in this field.

6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEORY AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Given the lack of theory in understanding conflict and conflict resolution in young African children, this study tried to inform the theoretical understanding of conflict in the population studied. However, theory needs to be expanded by incorporating traditional African views of child rearing, and intersect these views with Western-based school views. Vygotsky supports the above point by saying that because children learn much through interaction, curricula should be designed to emphasise interaction between learners and learning tasks. The present researcher furthers this statement and includes that this will help children in learning more about positive and negative interactions such as conflict and how to resolve it successfully.

Further research that will be specifically geared to adults involved in child rearing such as educators and parents at home is needed. The research should concentrate on issues about parents' and educators' set of minds because of the ever changing ways of doing things in an ever changing country such as South Africa that affect the development of children. This means that it is important for the education policy-makers at government level to understand how the policy is received and implemented by educators and parents. Also, research on the impact change has on culture is needed.

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Appendix 1:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

What is conflict?

What is conflict mediation?

How do you resolve conflict between your children?

What are the challenges of the strategy you use to resolve conflict?

What are the causes of conflict?

How often does conflict occur between your children?

How were you trained to resolve conflict between children?

Appendix 2A:

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I (parent/gaurdian's name) ----- give permission for (child's name) ----- to participate in the research project of (researcher's name) ----- on experiences and feelings of teachers when mediating conflict between children in a preschool setting.

I understand that:

The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Masters in Psychology degree at Rhodes University.

The researcher is interested in the experiences and feelings of teachers when mediating conflict between children in a preschool setting.

My child's participation will involve video-taping.

I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my child's participation in the study and to have these addressed to my child's satisfaction.

I am free to withdraw my child from the study at any time, however I commit my child to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my child's participation, which I did not originally anticipate.

The report on the project may contain information about my child's personal experiences, feelings, behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that my child will not be able to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date) ----- (Researcher) -----

(Witness) ----- (Participant's parent) -----

Appendix 2B:

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT

BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I (educator's name) ----- agree to participate in the research project of
(researcher's name) ----- on experiences and feelings of teachers when
mediating conflict between children in a preschool setting.

I understand that:

The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Masters
in Research Psychology degree at Rhodes University.

The researcher is interested in the experiences and feelings of teachers when mediating
conflict between children in a preschool setting.

My participation will involve video-taping and my responding to an interview which will take
about 45minutes to one hour.

I will be asked to answer questions of a personal nature but I can choose not to answer any
questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.

I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study
and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.

I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full
participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my
participation, which I did not originally anticipate.

The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, feelings,
behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that I will not be able to be
identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date) ----- (Researcher) -----

(Witness) ----- (Participant's parent) -----

Appendix 3: Vignettes

Vignettes	Responses	Feel
i) While acting out roles in their fantasy play area, Sizwe a four year old runs over to Bongani, a three year old and forcefully grabs the toy stethoscope off his ears. Sizwe begins to rub his eyes and cry. How would you intervene and solve that conflict as an educator? ii) You are all on your own this day at school with the two classes of children depending on you. It's story time and you are narrating a story to the children just before home time. Two children at the back fight over a space: "You're sitting on my leg." "There's not enough space, can't you see? What must I do? The children end up teasing each other. How do you intervene in such a situation?	I'll confiscate the binoculars and give both of them other objects to play with. I'll ask the Sizwe to hand it over to the Bongani because Bongani is young so he should get the preference. It will depend which of them is usually naughty. I'll take the naughty child to sit in front or next to me. It's useless to remove the one that is not naughty because the naughty child will find another child to provoke.	I a a t l I r I a
iii) It's free-play time and children are playing outdoors whilst you're taking care of the group playing indoors. You hear some of them crying out there and when you go out to check, one of the children is bleeding. What do you do in such a situation?	First I'll attend to the bleeding child. Oh! It becomes a problem you know because the clinic is far away in another village, we don't have our own clinic in this village. But if it is bad I usually call the child's parent so that she takes the child herself to the clinic.	I r h g h a a a b

Appendix 4:

CODING

BEFORE INTERVENTION

PRELIMINARY MEASURES

Settle the whole class first

The educator has to excuse herself from the rest of the class

If there is a child who is hurt, the educator will have to first attend to that first.

If there is a child who is crying, the educator will have to comfort her or him until she stops crying.

In cases of children tugging with a toy, the educator will have to confiscate the toy first.

If children are involved in physical fighting, the educator should first stop the fight by either getting inbetween the children who are fighting to separate them, or remove one of them and put her/him on the other side.

If the child is angry, the educator has to let her calm down first.

The educator identifies who was winning/loosing in the fight and comfort the defeated one.

Feeling disturbed

Feeling nervous

Sometimes feel like ignoring the crying child especially if s/he always cries

Feels angry but controls her anger because children know the rules

Feel discouraged and helplessness

PREVENTION

Teachers are always among the children in whatever they do.

Also the teachers don't fight so children model this.

Teachers always keep children busy all the time.

You must have as much equipment as possible to prevent conflict.

When solving children's disputes, children must not know who is right and who is wrong to prevent further conflict.

Teaching children sharing and taking turns.

Teach children to report unacceptable behaviour to the educator.

We're two educators in this preschool, so if one is busy, for example telling a story to the children, the other educator stands there watching for those children who are not listening.

Feel that it's the best

Feel tired of improvising

Feel good as role models

WHILE INTERVENING

SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Socio-economic factors

Shortage in outdoor play equipments, e.g, one swing they like the most, but the educator doesn't know why they like that particular one.

They fight when equipment is not enough.

Fight over colours of objects, "I want the red one. Me too, I want the red one."

One of the causes of conflict is not having enough equipment for the children.

Few equipment for outdoor play.

Feel pity/compassion for the children

Understanding parents' hardship

Doesn't understand parent's non-helping in equipment making

Psychological factors

It's how they grew up at home.

Individual character.

Some children become attached to certain objects and would want to play with them forever, whereas some want to change to it.

Other children usually come with the unacceptable behaviour from home, how she or he grew up at home.

They fight over toys though they're enough, because they want everything for themselves.

Grabbing from one another

Copying one's work

In outdoor play older children like to bully the younger ones. For example, they cheat them when playing swing by swinging many times than the young ones.

Feel angry

Feel such children are spoilt

Home/family based factors

New-comers who were not prepared for school by parents always fight.

Anger and frustration of separation from parents or home environment brings up resentment to the child

Parents who fight in front of their children teach their children an arrogant character.

Children from such families learn from home that beating, fighting, swearing etc. is the right thing to do

Feeling of helplessness

(DIRECTIVE/TOP-DOWN)

Tell them that:

We don't fight at school.

At school we share objects.

We tell children that if a child is apologising, you must accept the apology.

You tell them the disadvantages of fighting, and that they're not suppose to fight and why?

Because we are brothers and sisters.

They must ask for a toy from one another and not grab it forcefully.

The child who is reporting children who are swearing not to call out the vulgar words that were used by the perpetrators.

Tomorrow the same time we will have music, so those who did not get a chance of using the instruments, it will be their turn.

Forced to tell the older children not to bully other children but to take turns.

What they are doing is not compatible with the school rules and discipline.

"No! don't do this, don't grab the toy from the other child, that is not allowed at school.

These toys are not yours or from your home/parents. They are for everyone at school. We made/buy them so that everyone can have a right and a chance to play with them. Share please."

Ask :

The older child to hand over the toy to the young one.

After hearing the story from both sides, I ask the perpetrator to apologise and ask the victim if she accepts the apology.

One of them to play/use another object.

What's happening?

The older one to play with another object.

Then call the opponent and ask both of them what happened. You ask each of them to apologise, and ask them one by one if they have accepted the apology.

After hearing the story I would ask the perpetrator to apologise to the victim and comfort him/her.

Them to take turns.

The older one to hand over the toy to the younger one to play with it until she or he is tired and then have it after. At the same time you must have something else to give the older child to play with for the time being.

Them to hand over the doll they are over to me (teacher), and ask from one of them what happened?

One of them to take another toy when they are enough.

Them to take turns and share and not push one another.

The perpetrator if s/he has apologized.

Teach:

Them to take turns and share.

To report to the teacher when there is conflict that the teacher is not aware of.

Them to apologise to one another when they have disturbed, inflicted pain or has done anything unacceptable to one another.

Beg:

The child who's not crying to hand the object they're fighting about over to the crying child and then take turns or give him/her something else to play with.

The child not to beat other children.

Train:

Them to report each an every unacceptable behaviour/incident to the teacher.

Talk:

To the older child and ask him or her to hand over the toy to the young one and take the older child to another toy/play activity letting the young with the toy.

Explain:

That if another child apologises, that means you must accept that apology, and you must also listen to what teachers teach you at school because here we are one, we are a family, we are your parents and you are brothers and sisters.

When you have (teacher) removed a child from one place to another perhaps to sit next to you (teacher), or in front because they are fighting, the teacher must explain that she doesn't want her/him to be pushed, kicked by the child next to her/him.

Encourage:

We encourage them to report unacceptable behaviour that the teacher is not aware of or didn't notice.

If the child is always naughty in class the teacher becomes angry, but because they know they are dealing with children they control their anger.

If the child is not naughty or is new at school, I become calm because I know that the behaviour is out of lack of knowledge.

Feel that if the naughty child was not in the class she would have a peaceful class

I feel like having training in conflict resolution just in case in future they get very naughty children, otherwise there's nothing pushing me. Only one educator said she doesn't need it at all.

Children's role:

"They always say yes, these are angels and they really mean it because they play together again after that."

Listen to what teachers tell them to do.

Help other children who are fighting either by reporting to the teacher or the teacher asks them to help.

Help new-comers with the school rules as in reminding them or telling them the rules when they are fighting or quarrelling.

Apologise and must accept the apology.

Older children to be kind and take care of younger children.

The disputants to tell their sides of what happened to the teacher.

Maybe there were other children around those who were fighting, so you also listen from them what happened.

Myths (scare tactics):

Joke by the teacher!! I'll kill you if you fight.

When children are swearing, or using vulgar language, teachers usually tell them that the rude words are old people's names (in Xhosa culture children don't call elders by their names to show respect).

The rude words you've used makes your mouth to be dirty or filthy, go and wash it or it will remain dirty.

By saying "I'll hit you or give you a hading" but ultimately not do it.

Rules:

Remind him/her about the rule that says they're not supposed to fight at school.

Reporting to the teacher when there is one of the children doing something wrong.

No fighting, swearing, calling each other names, if one child is beating you, don't fight back, report to the teacher.

ARBITRATION

Ask both disputants to tell their sides of what happened

THINGS NOT TO DO:

Just listen as a teacher and you'll see who's wrong, but don't voice it out.

Children mustn't know who's right and who's wrong.

Can't ask the young one because she doesn't have an understanding of sharing

Don't talk too loud or shout when talking to the children.

As an adult you sometimes figure out who is lying from the two disputants, but you don't follow that, if you do you will be causing the conflict to escalate and now when children are going home after school the fight will start again.

Do not beat children.

THINGS TO DO:

Just listen as a teacher and you'll see who's wrong

Try that they consent to each other

Sit down with both disputants and talk to them.

Keep your voice down and be calm.

First comfort the crying child

Be sure to stop the fight first.

Find out what happened.

As an adult you will figure out who's lying.

You identify who was winning and losing and comfort the defeated one.

You sit down with the whole class so that even those who were not fighting can learn from this.

Resolve conflict until they both reach contentment.

Remove one of the disputants to sit in front or next to you.

Confiscate the toy and give both of them some other things to play with.

SUPPORT FROM THE COLLEAGUE

"We're two educators in this preschool, so if one is busy, for example telling a story to the children, the other educator stands there watching for those children who are not listening."

Feel secure and comfortable

PARENTS AS IMPEDIMENTS

As a teacher you know your children. So I know who is naughty and who is quiet in my class.

If a child is always naughty in class, then you're forced as an educator to consult his or her parents so that you can have the child's background, because perhaps it's because of something that has happened at home. Most of the parents do not respond to such calls.

Some of the parents usually encourage us to beat their children when we report them.

Some are soft-hearted when it comes to their children. When you're resolving some of the children's disputes you have to be very careful, some parents become a pain in your neck,

complaining about the way you handled her child's dispute with another child. That causes inconsistency when solving children's conflicts. You end up being soft to others especially those with harsh parents because you're scared of them.

Some parents even come to school to confront the teacher.

One parent confronted me because I asked her child to share food with another child who didn't have food for lunch.

One parent shouted at me because her child sat on a cushion whereas she bought her a chair.

Parents don't open up about their child's changed behaviours, with one child I discovered that her mother is running a tavern at her house.

When a child is always crying I sometimes feel like ignoring her/him but what if the parent could just come in with the child crying and ignored.

Feel angry with parents who conceal their children's behaviours

Feel confused

Scared of parents

Feelings of doubts sometimes

Demotivated

AFTER INTERVENTION

Apologies and acceptance

Observation

If there is one disputant who is not satisfied, I become worried.

I feel happy after solving the conflict especially when the victim is satisfied after the perpetrator has apologised.

I feel good, happy after solving the problem, especially if the children play together

Afterwards because to me that shows contentment to both of them.

Educators feel sad or worried if children did not listen to them, refused to do what they were asked by the teacher to do, but that is very unusual to occur.

Educators become exhausted from improvising material

And that exacerbates their anger when children are fighting using the material as in tossing or throwing, grabbing or destroying it.

A feeling of happiness becomes evident because children would apologise and accept the apology, which means that the educator has succeeded in resolving the conflict.

That further brings a sense of pride and relief to the educators.