

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF SCHOOL HEADS IN SOME
SELECTED SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS AT KWABRE EAST MUNICIPALITY IN
ASHANTI REGION

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MARY TIWAA DANSO

**A Project Report in the Department of Educational Leadership, Faculty of
Education and Communication Sciences, submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies, University of Education, Winneba, in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for award of the Master of Arts (Educational Leadership) degree**

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, MARY TIWAADANSO, declare that this project report, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of project report as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

SUPERVISOR: DR. LYDIA OSEI-AMANKWAH

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

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DEDICATION

To my husband, children and family members.



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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to examine conflict management strategies of senior high school heads in the Kwabre East Municipality. Four research questions were raised to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Mixed-method approach was employed. The study involved head teachers and teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select head teachers. Teachers were selected through simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using questionnaire and interview schedule. Cronbach Alpha was used to analyze the pilot test and it achieved reliability coefficient. Frequency and percentages were used to analyze the data. The major findings of the study were that generally; conflicts were less effectively managed by heads. It was revealed by the study that overload of work, inadequate training and lack of cooperation of teachers and students were identified as major challenges associated with conflict management strategies in the senior high schools. It was recommended that Ghana Education Service should organize workshop on conflict management strategies every academic year to equip heads with conflict skills they need to manage conflict.

The heads should make available copies of school rules and a regulation to every student during first year to enable them familiarize themselves with the rules. Heads should be fair in resolving conflict in the schools.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

An organization consists of several people. The attitudes, feelings, needs and perceptions differ from person to person. Individual differences may cause misunderstanding and conflict between individual and groups. Interpersonal and intergroup conflict therefore affect the organization either negatively or positively. Thus, conflict management is necessary to resolve conflicts and maintain order, otherwise employee morale and organizational performance may suffer (Dessler, 2008). Conflict based on scarcity of power, resources and social position and differing value systems occurs when individuals or groups feel that other individuals or groups have discouraged their plans, goals, beliefs, or activities (Dana, 2001).

Organization conflict occurs as a result of the struggle between incompatible or opposing needs, wishes, ideas, interest or people (Okumbe, 2001). Conflict in organizations occurs at the following four levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, inter-group and inter-organization (Robbins & Coulter, 2004). Conflict may have either a positive or a negative effect on organizational performance, depending on the nature of the conflict and how it is managed (Armstrong, 2009). For every organization, an optimal level of conflict exists which is considered highly functional as it helps to generate good performance. When the conflict level is too high that is dysfunctional, performance suffers. Consequently, innovation and change are difficult, and the organization may have difficulty in adopting to change in its environment. Also, the organization's very performance is threatened if the conflict is too low. On the other hand, if the conflict levels

become too high and too low, the result is chaotic in an organization and also threaten its survival (Beardwell & Claydon, 2007).

Organizations in their own right have leaders or managers who are charged with the responsibility of maintaining their stability in order to achieve organizational performance (Okumbe, 2001). In performing both managerial and operational functions, managers encounter more delicate and non-violent types of opposition such as arguments, criticisms and disagreements. Unresolved conflicts lead to high absenteeism, prolonged disruption of activities and a marked lack of support by stakeholders (Nzure, 2007).

Conflict management is a crucial issue in school administration because no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in a conflict ridden environment. Considering the fact that where two or more people are together there is bound to be disagreement which when left unattended result to conflict. Some school administrators view conflict as a negative situation which must be avoided at all cost but in reality conflict necessitates management because it creates opportunity for personal growth especially when proper strategy is advanced for solving the conflict. Heads of Senior High Schools are faced with conflicts in the bid to influence and co-ordinate school resources for goal attainment (Benson 2011). Benson (2011) noted that school heads are faced with conflicts emanating from their administrative style, policy implementation, supervision of instruction, examination malpractices, illegal levies, staff posting and transfer, Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and other school based committees as well as school related issues. It is therefore necessary that school managers or administrators should be knowledgeable in the conflict management strategies. Conflict according to Ulo (2011), is a controversy or divergence of opinion between two or more people in an organization

about something that was not done or to be done in a work environment in which opposing views are strongly held. Chaturvedi (2006) described conflict as an opposition or competition between two or more forces arising either from the pursuit of incompatible goals or a class of rival opinions. In his contribution Omoike (2014) defined conflict as that which could happen between two or more people or groups with incompatible goals in an organization.

Headmasters of Senior High Schools have a big responsibility as they give direction to their staff. They are responsible for all matters pertaining to the smooth running of the school. However, some headmasters lack skills in human resource management such as conflict resolution. Failure to resolve these conflict greatly affect school performance and results in poor working relationship amongst teachers, students, parents and the board members (Newstorm & Davis, 2002). Ability to manage conflict is probably one of the most important skills school heads can possess. Effective headmasters vary their methods of handling conflict to fit a special situation. Although in service training is organized for headmasters and their deputies on managerial skills before they assume office, they cannot cope with the demand due to inadequate human and financial resources to undertake this task effectively (Botchwey, 2006 & Afful-Broni, 2007). At times there is crisis appointment due to abrupt need for replacement and therefore some headmasters assume office before the induction course, consequently, most of them fail to handle conflict constructively causing adverse effects on the smooth running of the institution as well as in staff morale.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Conflict management is one of the management tools that ensures effectiveness in administration. Unfortunately, this important tool does not seem to be used effectively by heads of senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality. It appears most of the schools in the municipality are not enjoying the climate of the school due to conflict that exists among the inmates of the school.

Research indicated that conflict in public senior high schools increased from 15% to 35% from 2008 to 2014 (Adomako, 2014). Conflict emerged between the headmaster and staff members on alleged exorbitant fees collected from students in Ashanti region (Ghanaweb, 2016).

In spite of these persistent conflict, the heads ought to manage the schools as expected. The questions that arise are that how do heads manage conflict in senior high schools at Kwabre East municipality? What conflict management challenges confront heads in senior high schools at Kwabre East Municipality? There is the need to answer these and other questions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives to:

- 1 find out causes of conflict in senior high schools in Kwabre East Municipality.
- 2 assess conflict management strategies employ by heads of senior high schools in Kwabre East Municipality.
- 3 investigate challenges associated with conflict management in senior high schools in Kwabre East Municipality.

- 4 suggest ways of improving conflict management in senior high schools in Kwabre East Municipality.

1.4 Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to direct the study:

1. What are the causes of conflict in senior high schools?
2. What conflict management strategies are used by senior high school heads in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality?
3. What challenges are associated with conflict management strategies of heads of senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality?
4. How can conflict management be improved in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study will be significant in a number of ways. The findings may be useful to education researchers, educational planners and other scholars of educational administration as it will increase their awareness of the value of conflict as well as conflict management methods, which are constructive and benefit the school. The findings will help headmasters of public Senior High Schools to adopt measures to minimize conflict. The results of the study will help policy makers of education to provide policy that will enhance performance in management and administration of public Senior High Schools.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

The study was carried out in the public senior high schools at Kwabre East Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The research was restricted to conflict practices in senior high schools,

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Some challenges were encountered in this study especially in the data collection stage. There was the difficulty in obtaining data for the research work. This is due to the fact that most of the respondents feared they would be exposed. The respondents were reluctant in responding to the questions posed to them during the interviews. These might have affected the validity of the research findings.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Conflict: Misunderstanding between two or more people.

Conflict Management: The ability to identify and handle conflict fairly. Strategy: a tool for resolving issue in schools.

Avoidance approach: A method of conflict management which results in a deadlock as people involved withdraw from discussing issues.

Competitive approach: Managing conflict by persuading or coercing others into submission.

Challenges: It refers to problems or difficulties encountered by school heads while managing conflict which can impact negatively on quality of education.

Inter-Group Conflict: when dysfunctional conflict occurs between different groups and teams and has predictable effects within each group in an organization.

Intra-Personal Conflict: dispute that occurs within individuals which is related to social roles in organization.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study consist of five chapters, chapter one presents background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms as well as limitations of the study. Chapter two provides a review of literature related to conflict management. It discusses issues on conflict in general, causes of conflict and conflict management strategies.

Chapter three covers the research methodology. It describes the research design, population, sampling techniques, sample size, instrumentation, data collection procedures, pilot testing and data analysis plan. Chapter four deals with presentation of results and discussions of findings. Chapter five provides the summary, findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the recent years, a great deal of management attention has been directed towards the development of an effective ways of managing conflict in senior high schools. This is all intended to empower school heads to perform and produce results which are essential for the survival of any organization. The literature review for this study include meaning of conflict, types of conflict, sources of conflict, conflict management practices of school heads and effects of conflict on teaching and learning and how conflict management can be improved in senior high schools.

2.2 Concept of Conflict

The concept of conflict is considered by several scholars in the field of conflict resolution as multidimensional and multifaceted. It is a complex concept which is used by different authors in different disciplines among others is psychology, political science, sociology and education. Several authors in the field of conflict resolution and peace have written a plethora of literature about the nature of conflict that occur in social organizations including schools (Trudel, 2011; Turner, 2013; Coleman and Deutsch, 2001; Bickmore, 2010). In all these, there is a clear manifestation that conflict are hallmark, ubiquitous, normal and unavoidable in social organizations. In other wards conflict is perceived as inherent feature of human existence and it may be difficult to conceive a situation of human life which is free of conflict (Longaretti & Wilson, 2012; Johnson & Johnson, 2014).

According to Brown (2013) and Darling and Walker (2011), conflict is disagreement within an individual, between individuals, between an individual and a group, or between groups. To Webster (2009), the term conflict originally meant a battle or struggle or physical confrontation between parties, but its meaning has grown to include incompatible behaviour between parties. Conflict arises as a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power, status and beliefs (Bisno, 2015) and whenever interests collide (Morgan, 2008). Burns (2007) noted that conflict permeates all human relations and its potential can be a source of health and growth as well as destruction. Thus, whether participants in an organization like it or not, conflict is inevitable and understanding its inevitability helps managers improve the organizational climate (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001).

Owens (1987) believes that conflict is a contest of opposing forces or powers; a struggle to resist or overcome; it is present whenever incompatible activities occur. Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman (1992) are in agreement with Owens (1987) when they state that conflict refers to the situation in which there are incompatible goals, thoughts or emotions within or between individuals or groups which lead to bitterness and opposition. Conflict connotes a stressful, unhappy, distressing, depressing, annoying and frustrating state of affairs (Sagimo, 2002). From these definitions, conflict can be seen as a contest of opposing forces or power, a struggle to resist or overcome. It is also seen that conflict exists whenever incompatible perceptions or activities occur. Conflict can also be a situation in which there are incompatible goals, thought or emotions within or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001).

2.3 Types of Conflict

Several types of conflict are identified in literature, including intra-personal, intra-group, inter-personal, inter-groups among others. According to DeCenzo (2007), organizational conflict can take the following forms: horizontal conflict, vertical conflict and role conflict.

Larson and Mildred (2000) indicated that intra-personal conflict occurs within a person and one can experience intra-personal conflict with respect to the amount of resources one has by hearing internal voices that disagree. In agreement with this assertion, Orlich and Callaham (2001) explain that in intra-personal conflict, the individual tries to reconcile conflict within his or her own value structure. Similarly, Hart (2001) observes that conflict may not only take a toll on one's physical body but it often occupies one's thoughts and causes a great deal of emotions.

Meek, Heit and Page (2005) stated that inter-personal conflict occurs between two or more persons. Larson and Mildred (2000) refer to inter-personal conflict as clashes that involve two or more individuals who perceive each other as being in opposition to preferred goals or attitudes, values or behaviour. Similarly, Nelson-Jone (2009) indicates that inter-personal conflict is a situation in which one or both individuals in a relationship are experiencing difficulty in working or living with each other. He stated that inter-personal conflict usually occurs when differences or incompatibilities, needs, goals or styles clash.

Intra-Group conflict emerges between people who identify themselves as belonging to the same group. Larson and Mildred (2000) explain that intra-group conflict is a clash among some or all of a group's members which often affects the group's progress and effectiveness. In a classroom situation, intra-group conflict may occur within members of

a class where students sit in close proximity and interact with each other. Such conflict can also occur among the staff of school that has different views on the kind of measures appropriate for punishing students.

Inter-Group Conflict emerges between two or more groups of people. While Larson and Mildred (2000) define inter-group conflict as opposition and clashes that arise between two or more groups, Wilmet and Hocker (2008) indicate that such conflict are highly intense and costly to the group involved. Inter-group conflict can therefore occur between two or more schools, ethnic or racial groups, departments or levels of decision making in the same organization as well as between a union and management. Inter-group conflict is especially tense and prone to escalation and intractability when group identities are threatened. The cost of inter-group conflict can be extremely high for the society in both economic and social terms.

2.4 Sources of Conflict in Schools

Several factors account for conflict in any given organization, the school is no exception. Some conflict situations among the school personnel are a result of the head's leadership style. A study by Dick and Thodlans (2013) in Zimbabwe revealed that much of the school management practices were characterized mainly by dictatorial tendencies reinforced by top-down chain of command with inflexible administrative mandates from higher levels of authority enforced with harsh consequences for any form of dissent. Often times there is underlying tension between school heads and teachers because most people do not like being told what to do as is usually the case with an overly strict and autocratic school head who is frequently in conflict with the teachers (Johdi & Apitree, 2012).

Yee and Cuba (2010) found out that some school heads were unable to adopt and respond to complexities in their institutions that fast. Rono (2012) shares the views of Yee and Cuba (2010) and indicates that some school heads display poor leadership qualities that created conflict in school. Gordon (2001) indicates that inexperienced school heads sometimes ran into serious problems when they fail to use their scarce resources properly. Meager resources available in the school may be used on trivial projects while major ones were untouched.

Schofield (2009) argued that causes of conflict in schools between heads of school, teachers and students involve, lack of proper communication with teachers, imposition of strict deadlines for various activities, differences in perception on management of certain issues in the school, dictatorial tendencies on the part of school heads, poor physical working conditions, lack of administrative support on provision of learning aids as well as psycho-social support when they are in need. Maliyamkono (2014) has also observed that inability to perform task assigned, unauthorized absenteeism, setting unrealistic targets for teachers, setting goals that are not specific, engaging teachers in crash programs where they have to cover wide sections of syllabuses in a fraction time, careless in implementation of school policies, unreasonable demands by school administration and carelessness among teachers are the major sources of conflict in schools.

The school head is the most important and influential individual in the school pertaining to management and conflict management (Lemmer & Squelch, (2010). Therefore, the nature of a leader, and the position, role and power of the leader differ between schools and between systems in which the school heads handle conflict in their school (Preedy, 2009). Therefore, where there is an organization, a need for a leader arises,

if activities of the organization are to be successfully implemented. This is the same with Senior High Schools, unlike other organizations, they require leaders if they are to be successful (Birgen, 2014). Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, (2009) noted school leadership suggests that school heads who are effective instructional leaders positively affect the school climate and student achievement.

Sergiovanni, McCarthy and Kelleher, (2004) argue that school head's job are to coordinate, direct and support the work of others by defining objectives, evaluating performance, providing organizational resources, building a supportive psychological climate, running interference with parents, planning scheduling, bookkeeping, resolving teacher conflict, handling student problems and otherwise helping to make things go. Achoka (2013) points out that the school heads must accept the fact that conflict is part and parcel of all social organizations. Heads of schools are mandated with the responsibility and duty to bring together and coordinate all the resources within the school for the achievement of desired educational goals. They play an important role in raising their schools' teaching and learning standards to ensure high achievement for all students (Mpokosa, 2012).

2.5 Indiscipline on the Part of Teachers

Survey studies carried out in the University College of Cape Town by Wyllie (2009) indicate that over working cause conflict in educational administration with teachers who are unmotivated in their work. Some teachers join the teaching profession as last resort when other alternatives are absent. These teachers will never settle in their jobs as professionals. They work to earn salary with the hope that they will soon leave the

profession. Foster (2010) affirm this view and indicates that unmotivated teachers will not produce good results. Complaint, laxity, grumbling and fighting the school head characterizes their work. The school head will always be in the centre of blame. He or she will not get anything done without running into trouble with the teachers. Kingala (2000) concurs with the above authors and indicates that teachers who have no calling to teaching vocation take up the training as teachers but have no interest in looking after the students. These teachers find themselves inside the classroom doing a job they do not like but because they need money, they stay. He also indicates that due to lack of interest in teaching, the teachers become increasingly vent their anger on the students. Such teachers also become patronized to the politicians and receive protection. A teacher in this category causes trouble to the headmaster because he/she is sure of protection from the politician who will use the teacher to tilt scales in the political battlefield.

Some administrators perceive causes of conflict in their school as due to lack of commitment to work in their schools. There are things that school heads do in their schools that posed a serious challenge to school management. Some of these include absenteeism, perennial lateness, dishonesty, inaccessibility and being autocratic or dictatorial according to Katumanga (2000). He further reveals that some school heads are forced to deal with conflict in their schools which are due to their own making. Some school heads fail to perform well in educational administration because of frequent absenteeism in their schools. Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) concur with these views and indicate that situations sometimes arose where the conflict developed serious personal differences between the stakeholders were transferred into school environment. Cases arose sometimes when the

school head was engaged in conflict with a board of governor member due to differences traced way back in their neighbour hood at home.

2.6 Favoritism by School Heads

Favoritism is another cause of conflict in schools. Favoritism means to prefer someone or group of people to others just because management likes him/her or them. Due to favouritism, conflict arises in organizations because the workers are not selected according to agreed criteria (Omboko & Kipyego, 2013). Omboko & Kipyego (2013) contend that school heads sometimes favor other teachers at the expense of others. This kind of treatment resultto discontentment among other teachers Smith (2013) posits that favoritism in the workplace means giving preferential treatment to one or more employees. This unfair treatment to favor certain people in an organization such as a school disturbs employees and affects job satisfaction among them. Preferential treatment can be intentional, for example, an employer could assign the choicest responsibilities to the most veteran worker. Preferential treatment can also be subconscious, for example employees might notice that an older male supervisor seems to treat young female workers with friendly smiles and encouragement while benignly ignoring male worker in the hallways resulting in conflict (Smith, 2013). In favoritism, decision makers consciously favour their friends at the expense of others who are more deserving. By not treating everyone equally, a manager is fostering a sense of resentment and separation that can de-motivate employees and damage team unity. Resentment, anger and hatred are the consequences of discrimination which eventually lead to rumors, jealousy and conflict at the workplace. Jealousy leads to vicious rumors which in turn lead to back stabbing. Under such an

environment, members are filled with distrust towards the head of institution and disputes are not easily resolved. Favoritism is a natural phenomenon and as such it is bound to affect any organization, including schools (Smith, 2013).

School heads sometimes find themselves in problems with the perceptions of the stakeholders that sometimes the head favours the other stakeholders and other students. A case of such favoritism was reported by Amoako (2010) where a headmaster was accused of allocating bungalows to his close associates without due consideration to seniority and commitment by dedicated teachers. In some cases, some board members are allowed to express authority to supply goods to schools at inflated prices. This special treatment results in discontentment among the stakeholders.

2.7 Punishments and Discipline

According to Smith and Laslett (2006), many conflict begin in the classroom with what a teacher may say, the way he or she may walk, stride towards a student, glare at a student or point at him or her. Leonard, Eccles and Gaborro (2013) also explain that conflict normally occurs in a class when a student feels that he or she has been punished unfairly, feels that reprimands, criticisms and punishment were not deserved and legitimate. Ivancevich and Matteson (2011) explain that punishments and disciplinary measures are used to eliminate undesirable behaviors and poor performance in organizations. Citing examples of such undesirable behavior as absenteeism, tardiness, leaving the school or the workplace before closing time, fighting, violating rules and regulations, and the use of abusive language, Ivancevich and Matteson (2011) assert that such behaviors if not eradicated as early as possible can impede the growth of the organization. As Cameron and

Thorsborne (2014) state, it is generally seen that punishment in most cases brings conflict in organizations such as schools. They explain that punishment produces conflict when the intensity or severity and the moral behind its use are not legitimate. In their view, some people's resistance to the use of punishment is based on moral grounds; the moral position being that pain is bad and should always be avoided. Ivancevich and Matteson (2011) further stress that punishment achieves a greater effectiveness when the aversive stimulus is relatively intense and the implication of this condition to be effective, punishment should get the immediate attention of the person being punished.

Bennet and Gabriel (2001) indicates that discipline of students have greatly contributed to a lot of instability in management of schools. They indicated further that whenever a case of indiscipline arises in schools, the head will always be blamed for being insensitive to the student's welfare. In such cases, the head can be transferred as a remedial measure because students demand for removal of such headmaster. In some cases, the students receive support of board of governors and teachers in the indiscipline pursuit.

2.8 Communication Barriers

Another common cause of conflict is poor communication, which can lead to misunderstandings and allow barriers to be erected (Johdi & Apitree, 2012 & Shahmohammadi, 2014). Johdi and Apitree (2012) contend that both too little and too much communication can lead to conflict. They argue that when there is too little communication, teachers and departments do not know enough about each other's intentions, goals and plans and coordination can become difficult and misunderstandings are more likely to occur which can result in conflict. Johdi and Apitree (2012) too much

communication on the other hand can result in misunderstandings that cause conflict too. Johdi and Apitree (2012) and Shahmohammadi (2014) contend that perhaps the easiest way to prevent conflict is to ensure good communication. The school head therefore needs to constantly meet with all sectors of the institution to speak out and set the record straight to avoid distortions that may lead to conflict (Madziyire, 2010). In a school set up the head should periodically hold scheduled meetings with heads of departments, all teachers, support staff, student representatives and Parents Teacher Association in additions to emergency meetings.

Poor communication, communication overload, total absence of information or feedback mechanism, poor perception pernicious, ambiguity in communication and ignorance can degenerate into either conflict or crises (Kalian, 2012). Communication conflict usually arises from misunderstanding in the communication process, transmission of message and meaning from one person to another. This is usually due to lack of well-defined communication network. Inadequate systems of communication on educational institution policies, changes in working practices and the introduction of new policies affecting the lives of staff lead to disputes, feelings of insecurity, confusion and resentment among staff. Boateng and Oduro (2012) identified communication gap between school heads and teachers as the leading cause of conflict in Senior High Schools in Ghana. Also, Adegun (2013) identified communication lapses as a problem to administrative effectiveness in Nigerian institutions of learning. This suggests that communication gap between school heads and staff might cause conflict and adversely affect administrative effectiveness in schools (Mukoro, 2013).

2.9 Sharing of Resources

Provision and sharing of scarce resources is a common cause of conflict in schools. Schools have limited resources that must be shared equitably among teachers and learners of which some might get less than what they desire. According to Johdi and Apitree (2012) and Shahmohammadi (2014) in many schools teachers are obliged to share the scarce resources and the scarcer the resources are, the greater is the potential for conflict. Dick and Thodlana (2013) argue that in schools it is not feasible for all departments to get a budgetary allocation of funds that enables the departments to purchase the needed materials and equipment. Hence some are likely to get more and others less. This inequitable distribution of scarce resources creates conflict between departments, teachers and between departments and school management (Dick and Thodlana, 2013); Kipkemboi and Kipruto, 2013). Similarly, lack of adequate physical and financial resources was also noted as one of the major factor that influenced management conflict (Kipkemboi and Kipruto, 2013). Kipkemboi and Kipruto (2013) posited that some conflict among the school personnel sometimes is a result of inadequate school resources. In some case heads of schools are blamed for the lack of teaching and learning resources resulting in conflict between school administration and teachers or parents.

2.10 Conflict Management Strategies of School Heads

According to Bisno (2008), conflict management strategy is an operational plan to achieve a conflict goal. Conflict management strategy can be defined as the behaviour towards the intensification, reduction and resolution of conflict (Corvette, 2009). According to Oyebade (2013), conflict seemed as inevitable therefore various authors have

highlighted various ways of resolving these conflict situations as many of these are relevant in school situation. Kilmann (2005) identified five types of conflict management techniques which are described as cooperating or collaborative problem solving, competing, avoiding, accommodating and compromising. These are briefly explained as follows:

2.10.1 Avoidance Strategy

According to Morgan (2006), avoiding means ignoring the conflict and letting fate take its course. It is based on the belief that conflict is unnecessary, inappropriate, dysfunctional and costly. A manager who uses the avoiding style is both unassertive and uncooperative. The managerial behaviour associated with the avoiding style are ignoring conflict in the hope that it will disappear, putting problems on hold, invoking slow procedures, use of secrecy and appealing to bureaucratic rule (Morgan, 2006, Putting & Wilson, 2002). According to Appledaun, (2009), in certain circumstances, the manager may be wise to avoid conflict. Classical management theories believed in the use of clear lines of authority, division of work, and strict rules as effective means of preventing conflict in organization (Bisno, 2008). Morgan suggest that avoiding may be ideal when the issue is trivial or when there are no perceived chances of satisfying your concerns, or further still, when others can resolve the conflict more effectively.

2.10.2 Collaborating

According to Wheeler (2005), this style enables people to work together so that everyone can win. In using this style people try to find a solution that will help everyone

meet their interest and help everyone maintain a good relationship. This is in line with Larson and Mildred's (2000) explanation that the collaborative style involves a behaviour that is strongly cooperative and assertive which reflects a win-win approach to resolving conflict. Cunningham (2008) contends that collaboration aims at resolving conflict by means that are analytical and that get to the root of the problem. Managerial behaviours associated with collaboration include sharing information, investigating the underlying problems, searching for situations where all can win and seeing problems and conflict as challenging. In a study on the relationship between conflict management strategies and subordinate performance Hatfield and Hatfield (2006) found that collaborating was associated with high performance while controlling was associated with low performance.

2.10.3 Competing Style

According to DeVault, Sayard and Yarber (2002), choosing a competitive style to resolve a conflict means a person is putting his or her interest before everyone else's interest. As Hayes (2006) indicates, people who adopt a competitive style try so hard to get what they want that they end up ruining friendships or relationships. In the view of Nelson-Jones (2005), there is always a winner and a loser with the competing style which allows one party to adopt the "I win-you lose" approach to resolving the conflict and so does all in his or her power to win the conflict.

2.10.4 Compromising Style

Whetten and Cameron (2005) posit that compromise is an attempt to have a partial satisfaction for both parties in the sense that both receive the proverbial "half loaf..." and

this compels both parties to make sacrifices to obtain a common gain. A manager who uses the compromising strategy is moderately assertive and moderately cooperative (Pondey, 2007). Compromising is a lose/lose strategy in which each of the contending parties gives up some of their original demands. It may be implemented through negotiation when the contenders look for tradeoffs and solutions acceptable to all in a give and take spirit. Compromising is used when opponents with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals (Morgan, 2006).

Thomas (2001) examines conflict management strategies by focusing on general strategies used by administrators in an educational setting. These strategies for management are: citizens' advisories, confrontation sessions, sensitivity training, process involvement, educational pluralism, volunteerism, cooperative studies and failure fact of life. Therefore, conflict can be said to be a reality in any social system that provides challenges for the parties involved in a conflict. Ladipo (2007) identified conflict management strategies of forcing, structural changes, avoidance, compromise and smoothing. In a related study, Hodge and Anthony (2001) identified conflict management strategies as suppression, smoothing, avoiding, compromise, third-party intervention, cooperation, democratic process, job rotation as well as confrontation.

Nevertheless, the strategy identified by Meyer (2004) was effective communication which he described as the best because it makes the group aware of the kind of communication which could lead to problem solving. Ibukun (2011) identified problem solving, appeal to superior organizational goals, prevention and avoidance, expression of opportunities and resources, use of authority and command, changing the structure of the organization and compromise as management strategies for resolving conflict in

organizations. Blake and Mouton (2008) identified five conflict solving strategies, smoothing, compromising, forcing, withdrawal and problem solving.

2.11 Effects of Conflict on Teaching and Learning

Amaize and Onoyume (2013) show that when conflict is not resolved or when resolution is delayed, properties, lives and academic hours of unimaginable magnitude are lost. Delay in conflict resolution was also found to lead to descriptions of academic calendars, leading to economic as well as psychological exhaustion. Conflict affects the accomplishment of organization goals due to their tendency of manipulating stress, hostilities and other undesirable factor when poorly managed (Zckmann, 2002). Managing conflict can help to identify previously undetected problems and attitudes.

When conflict occurs there is a tendency for morale to be lowered hence it connotes a stressful, unhappy, depressing, annoying and frustrating state of affairs that may adversely affect teaching, learning and schooling effectiveness (Opoku-Asare; Takyi & Owusu-Mensah, 2015). Within the school institutions conflict makes the educational process more complicated. A study carried out in Nkayi Municipality in Zimbabwe by Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013) revealed that almost every week the head has to deal with one or two cases of conflict. Another study by Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012) on conflict resolution between heads and teachers in Masvingo Municipality in Kenya also indicated that barely a month passes without either the head conflicting with the teachers or the teachers amongst themselves. The Chronicle Newspaper of the 26th of June, 2014 reported a case of conflict in one Senior High School in the northern region of Ghana between the school teacher and

a student which finally resulted in a physical fight in which the student beat the teacher after a dispute over gloves that were not part of the school attire.

According to De Janasz, Dowd and Schneider (2006); Johdi and Apitree (2012); Dogan (2016); Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013); Opoku-Asare, Takyi and Owusu-Mensah (2015) and Dick and Thodlana (2013) conflict is a fact of life and is inevitable at all levels of human life and is a common phenomenon in organizations and workplaces and that if managed effectively, conflict can be constructive or functional and if not, it can be a destructive or dysfunctional force in people and organizations. While functional conflict can present opportunities for improvement, dysfunctional conflict is unhealthy, destructive and can create unwanted divergence in their learning environment and shift the focus of teachers and students in a school situation from the work to be done to the conflict itself and the parties involved (Opoku-Asare, Takyi & Owusu-Mensah, 2015). In the school environment, conflict can have adverse effects on the academic environment, including affecting the morale of educators, the pace at which they work, and increasing absenteeism and negatively impacts on student's performance and can become an obstacle towards achieving educational development or better performance (Jennings and Wattam, 2004). Dogan (2016) and Rawlings (2013) argues that if conflict is properly managed it presents ideal opportunities for learning or improved efficiency, develops the skills of communication, opens up important issues or highlights problems, develops trust, relieves anxiety, suspicion and trust and brings about sustainable development. Conflict therefore is part of doing business to any wise leader and is not necessarily a bad thing as long as it is managed effectively.

2.12 Challenges Heads of School Faced in Managing Conflict

Msila (2011) states that the challenge of school heads are to identify the problems endemic in their schools. Msila added that the workload of school heads is becoming unmanageable and as a result many school heads become unable to manage conflict in their school. As a result, the performance of the school may be lower due to the strategies used by them in managing conflict in their schools. Furthermore, some of them do not yet master the basic principles of school management or face problem understanding which may hinder the efficiency of the general administration of the school. Moreover, the initial training of some of them does not allow them to acquire enough knowledge in school administration and management.

Effective conflict management is very critical to the progress of every educational establishment. However, the process is daunting and most often confronted challenges. Toku (2014) maintains that one of the major challenges of conflict management is that, some of the conflict management styles usually turn out to be time consuming and this may cost the institution so much. In choosing the appropriate style for a particular conflict situation, a time consuming approach may be required and much of productive time would have to be forfeited in order to effectively employ a particular conflict management style. De Drue and Weingart (2003) also showed consistency with this argument on conflict management style. Also, managers may get carried away by the conflict management process such that, they may not realize it is eating into normal working hours.

According to Mitroff and Featheringham (2014), one of the challenges that could be encountered in managing conflict is the occurrence of some form of errors. One of such

errors is the probability of solving a wrong problem. The authors further contend that, this error usually occurred when there is lack of proper diagnosis of the problem and where there is inadequate understanding of the nature and cause of the conflict leading to the application of the wrong intervention to the problem.

Another challenge that could be encountered is lack of cooperation on the part of the two parties involved in the conflict (Toku, 2014). When either of the parties or both parties are reluctant to take active part in the conflict management process, the success of the entire style may not be achieved. One of the parties or both parties may refuse to take part in the conflict management process when they probably feel so hurt about the problem. According to French and Bell (1999), for a conflict management practice to succeed, the parties involved should be willing to take active part in the entire conflict management process. Back and Back (1994) were also consistent with the statement made by French and Bell (1999).

According to Cronin and Weingart (2007), conflict between or among people is associated with emotions. When the person handling the conflict does not have the professional skills needed to deal with the problem, he/she may end up worsening the situation. Conflict cannot just be managed by anybody. There are some technicalities required in managing conflict. Choosing the appropriate conflict management style could be very challenging as suggested by Euwema, Van de Vliert and Bakker (2007). But managers still need to jump this heddle and manage the problem. When a wrong approach to handling a particular problem is adopted, the end results could be disastrous (Brooks, 2009). It takes a professional to identify and choose the appropriate conflict management style to solve the right problem.

Another challenge in handling conflict has to do with the two dimensions of conflict, namely; affective and substantive conflict. According to De Drue (2014), affective conflict which is also known as relationship conflict deals with incompatibilities relating to interpersonal relationships while substantive conflict also known as task conflict deals with incompatibilities associated with group members. Substantive conflict was considered as good conflict while affective conflict was considered as bad conflict (De Church & Marks, 2002). Rahim (2002) in his studies drew a conclusion that, there was a positive correlation between the two dimensions of conflict and this is considered as a challenge. Simmons and Petersons (2000) in their studies also drew a conclusion similar to Rahim's conclusion when they reported a positive correlation between the two dimensions of conflict which were around 0.34 and 0.88.

2.13 Improvement of Conflict Management in Senior High Schools

The school head is responsible for the overall organization, control and maintenance of standards in the school (Education Act of 1961). A school head is therefore accountable for all that happens in the school. He/she is in charge of a community of variety of staff and students and it is to him/her that they look upon for guidance and direction (Iravo, 2002). Kochhar (2008) emphasizes the importance of the school head that he is the key cornerstone in the arch of school management and has the steering wheel in his/her hands. Kochhar (2008) asserts that the school head should be a group leader who knows how to involve people, arrange conditions and initiate process that bring out the best in each participant, that is the school personnel who include employees (teaching and non-teaching staff), and the students.

Okumbe (2008) agrees with the above view and indicated that conflict management was very important if learning activities have to succeed in schools. In managing conflict, there is need for school heads to attract human resources required by their schools. It is not enough to acquire the personnel. It is also important to develop, motivate and retain the human resource. There is the need to ensure that the organizational climate enhances employees' mutual relationship and co-operate effort. He asserts that the success of the organization depended entirely on how effectively its human resource is managed. Hughes (2004) advocates that performing management functions is a continued activity for a school head who faces responsibility and is hampered by the amount of time available to carry them out. He indicated that successful school heads should learn to lead and manage. Successful management of school conflict depends on a number of interventions. The following are some of the interventions school heads use to improve conflict situations in senior high schools.

2.13.1 In-Service Organization and Training in Conflict Management

Jantzi (2006) found out that school heads that are gifted in leadership experience minimal brush conflict in their institutions. Schools that experience fewer conflict have a link between motivation, commitment and capacity building. Research done by Harckman and Oldman (2002) on motivation indicated that teachers who have control over their work activities and are able to exert reasonable influence become satisfied. These teachers also develop personal responsibilities for their work and are personally accountable for the outcome. Kempiles (2007) indicated that teachers are less troublesome when they have job security, high interaction opportunity and institutional support. Kempiles indicated that teachers are motivated to work when their efforts are recognized. He also indicated that

teachers need good working conditions such as quality teaching materials, supervisory, supportive services and opportunities for initiative. Besides these, teachers need to be accorded with working environment conducive to efficient and effective delivery of educational services. Teachers of this category can be assisted by taking them for in-service courses for capacity building.

Fraser and Hertzal (2008) affirm the above view when they emphasized that the school head encounter students, teachers and parents on daily basis and require the value of caring. School heads therefore required knowledge in conflict management in order to handle various situations well. The school head should communicate trust through actions. When teachers know that they can count on the heads support and interest they may become more willing to try new practices, share information and are ready to co-operate with the head.

2.13.2 Use of Students' Representative Council (SRC)

Okumbe (2008) indicated that students are not only the raw materials in education industry but also important human resources in the organization. Sound management of students is therefore required. School management needs to ensure that students' activities and operations in an organization are well monitored. This calls for an educational manager who is properly grounded in the techniques of educational management. For a school head to be effective he or she must not only be conversant with concepts and newer perspectives in school management but also be able to employ appropriate management techniques.

Management of students requires that the school head should show concern and drive towards student's achievement through teaching and learning, constantly communication appropriately and effectively to and with students. Lack of proper

communication may lead to conflict with students. Right decisions can only be made if the management invest its resources in effective decision-making, solve problems by applying the appropriate problem solving techniques speedily, equitably, and cautiously, take disciplinary measures consistently and timely, motivate students by maintaining an organizational climate conducive to all stakeholders. In order to do this effectively, the school head can employ use of student government through use of student's representative council (SRC). Through this the school head will ensure that student's issues were addressed promptly through the right procedure (Okotoni & Okononi, 2003).



2.13.4 Regular Stakeholders Meeting and Consultation

It is important for the school head to know both educational expectations and attitudes of the people in the community. With this knowledge he was in a position to put in place educational programmes that meet the needs of the community in order to avoid conflict with educational stakeholders (Gordon & Ernest, 2006). Community norms need to be taken into consideration. The school head needs to change the education programmes that are in conflict with the norms of the community. When the school interferes with the norms of the community, then the community will tend to negatively act, causing difficulty to the school and the head. The people want to see the results of the schools' effectiveness and even be involved in decision-making process of the school (Gordon and Ernest, 2006).

Sergiovanni (2008) also indicate that school heads can avoid conflict in their school if the community is in full support of the educational programmes. The parents on the other hand should be made to feel that their children are in good hands. Partnership, participation and conversation should characterize the school and community relations. To achieve the community needs to be aware of what the school does. It is the work of the school head to teach the community not only on what is desires but also raise aspiration level about what the school is doing. He also indicates that conflict can be avoided if the school head interprets the educational programmes to the community. The citizens need to be aware of what is happening in the school.

The school head needs to work closely with representatives of the community. These include members of the board and parents representatives. The representatives become important means for spreading reliable information and enhancing aspiration of the community about the school. The school head need to work closely with those

interested in the school and particularly the youths. By linking together various agencies, the school head plays a key role in dealing with problems in school. The school head need to develop lines of communication and transmit information to the community and also seek information from the community (Sergiovanni, 2008). Holloway (2000) carried out research study in Missouri and North Carolina and found out that head teachers may minimize conflict if they understood the people they work with. There is need to collaborate with the families and the community. There is also the need to understand the political, social, legal, economic and cultural climate of the community. This will help the school head work well with those around him or her. Kempiles (2007) shares this view and indicate that the school head needs to study his or her environment and develop leadership style that suit the school community.

2.14 Summary of Literature

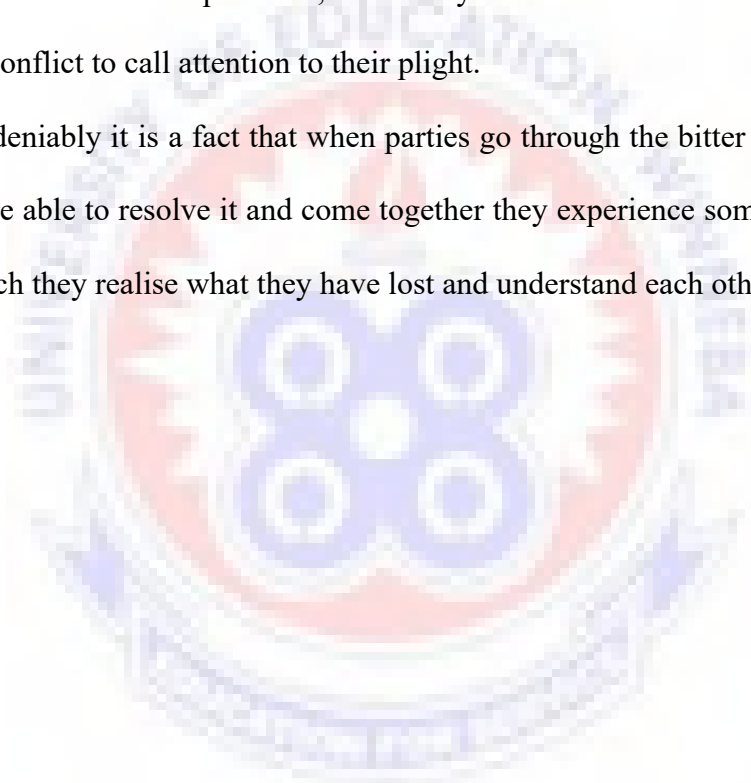
The study has so far reviewed related literature on conflicts in organizations. Interpersonal conflict occurs when two people have incompatible needs, goals, or approaches in their relationship. Conflict between opposing motives or ideas in your mind is shown by your internal dialogue and is at the intrapersonal level. Inter-group conflict also occurs between collections of people such as ethnic or racial groups, departments or levels of decision making in the same institution, union and management.

Intragroup conflict is also a clash among some or all of a group's members which often affects the group's progress and effectiveness. In a classroom situation, an intragroup conflict may occur within members of a class where pupils sit in close proximity and interact with each other. Role conflict also involves very real differences in role definitions,

expectations or responsibilities between individuals who are interdependent in a social system.

It was revealed that conflict in schools can be a positive force and that the creation and/ or resolutions of conflicts often lead to constructive problem solving. The need to resolve conflict can cause people to search for ways of how to do things. Afful-Broni (2007) outlines some ways in which conflict impacts positively on organisation such as the school. A unit section or department, which may have been overlooked over certain issues, could use conflict to call attention to their plight.

Undeniably it is a fact that when parties go through the bitter experience together and they are able to resolve it and come together they experience some sense of cohesion within which they realise what they have lost and understand each other.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The study sought to investigate conflict management practices of headmasters/headmistresses of Senior High Schools in the Kwabre East Municipality in Ashanti Region of Ghana. This chapter describes the methodology that was used in the study. It includes the research design, population, sampling techniques, sample size, instrumentation, data collection procedure, pilot testing and the data analysis plan.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher adopted mixed research design involving quantitative and qualitative approaches. Mixed method research involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). According to Kothari (2004), qualitative approach is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Best and Kahn (1998) maintain that qualitative approach helps the researcher to understand particular social situation, event, role and group of interactions. The qualitative approach was selected due to the nature of the study which seeks to investigate conflict management strategies of Senior High School heads. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to interact with respondents to get the firsthand knowledge of the problem under investigation and an in depth study of the issue.

Quantitative approach was used to supplement qualitative approach where appropriate. According to Strauss and Corbin (2009) the underlying principle of using quantitative approach is that, it generates quantitative data that can be processed

statistically. On the other hand, an aspect of quantitative approach helps to summarize the descriptive information. Likewise, quantitative approach was selected due to its powerfulness in data analysis. It uses statistical analysis to reach particular conclusion.

3.2 Population

The target population for this study was Senior High Schools in the Kwabre East Municipality in Ashanti Region. Statistics from the Head of Statistical and Planning Department of Municipality education office indicates that there are 580 teachers and 15 headmasters for 2017/18 academic year. The target population for this study comprise 15 headmasters since it is their role to manage conflict in their respective schools.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was utilized which involves selecting samples using set criteria such as type of school, boarding status or whether the school is boys, girls or mixed (Orodho, 2009). For this study, the headmasters/mistresses were purposively sampled. Simple random sampling was used to select 90 teachers. In selecting the teachers, pieces of papers with “Yes” and “No” written on them were folded and the teachers were asked to pick one each without replacement. All those who picked “Yes” were included in the study.

3.4 Instrument

Questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers. The questionnaire study was developed by the researcher under the supervision and guidance of the supervisor. Questionnaire offers advantages of easy and cost effective and is used to collect information from large population (Orodho, 2009). Section A collected background information of respondents. Section B dived into causes of conflict, section C asked responses on conflict management strategies. Section D sought respondent opinion on challenges heads face in managing conflict in the schools. Section E sought teacher's views on ways of improving conflict management in the schools. The items on the questionnaire were mostly liket-type scale.

3.5 Interview Schedule

Interview guide was used to collect data from Heads. This was used to confirm responses from the questionnaire. Interview was considered appropriate because it provides in-depth information concerning conflict in schools. The interview schedule covered heads knowledge on causes, conflict management strategies, challenges and ways that can be used to manage conflict in senior high school.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher collected an introductory letter from the head of educational leadership, to permit her gain access to the schools. In each school, the research contacted the heads and explained the objectives of the study of them. The heads introduced the research to the teachers and established rapport with them. The teachers were given

relevant instructions verbally and assured of confidentiality after which they were given one week to fill the questionnaire.

3.7 Pilot Testing of Instrument

The questionnaire and the interview schedule were pilot-tested at Aduman Senior High School. The testing was important in establishing the face validity of the instruments which led to the improvement of the instruments format and the scale used. Cronbach alpha was used to analyze the pilot test and the reliability efficient obtained was 0.82. The pilot test helped to determine the clarity of the instruments, the problem to be encounter in the main data collection and the reliability of the instruments.

3.8 Data Analysis Plan

Data collected from the field were coded on the computer. Percentages and frequencies were used to analyze all he research questions with help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Results of data analyses presented in tables. The interview results were first analyzed using thematic analyses. Results were presented through content analyses. The outcome of the interview was used to confirm results of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of field data on conflict management strategies. The aim of the study was to find out how headmasters and mistresses in senior high schools manage conflict. The data were gathered from 105 respondents including 90 teachers and 15 headmasters and mistresses in public Senior High Schools at Kwabre East Municipality in Ashanti region through questionnaire and interviews. The interpretation of the data was done with the use of frequency and percentages.

This chapter has been grouped under five main areas. These are:

1. Background information of respondents
2. Causes of conflict
3. Conflict management strategies
4. Challenges of conflict
5. Improvement of conflict management strategies

4.1 Background Information of Respondents

The background information of respondents such as gender, age, level of education and years of teaching experience were examined. Respondents background information were required to enable the researcher know the type of respondents used in the study. The first part of the results was based on gender of respondents for the study. The results are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	52	58
Female	38	42
Total	90	100

Source: Field data, 2017.

There were more male teachers than female teachers in the study. Male teachers represented 52(58%) of the respondents while female teachers represented 38(42%) of the respondents

The participants were asked to indicate their age range and details are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-29 years	4	4
30-39 years	43	48
40-49 years	33	37
Over 50 years	10	11
Total	90	100

Source: Field data, 2017.

Results in Table 2 indicated that 4(4%) of the teachers were between 20-29 years, Over43(48%) of the teachers aged 30-39 years, 33 (37%) were between the ages of40-49 years while10 (11%) aged over 50 years.

4.1.1 Level of Education

The level of education was further analyzed. This information was used to find out the level of education attained by teachers. Table 3 presents responses given by respondents on their level of education.

Table 3: Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Master Degree	28	31
Bachelor's Degree	62	69
Other Qualifications	0	0
Total	90	100

Source: Field data, 2017.

Table 3 shows that majority of the teachers 62(69%) had obtained bachelor's degree while 28 (31%) headmaster's degree. None of the teachers had PhD Degree or other qualifications. This means that majority of the teachers are holders of bachelor's degree. This finding is in line with G.E.S requirement that the minimum qualification to teach at senior high school be at least bachelors degree.

4.1.2 Years of Teaching Experience

Another important aspect of background information that was analyzed was years of teaching experience teachers had gained in their respective schools. Table 4 displays the results.

Table 4: Years of Teaching Experience

Source: Field data, 2018.

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 Years	12	13
6-10 Years	32	36
10-15 Years	40	44
Over 15 Years	6	7
Total	90	100

Table 4 shows that 12(13%) of the teachers had worked for 1-5 years, 32(36%) had worked for 6-10 years, 40(44%) had worked for 10-15 years while 6(7%) had worked for over 15 years. Based on these results, it can be observed that majority of the respondents had worked for 10-15 years and therefore, they had adequate experience to perform their job and were in a position to give useful insights into challenges facing school heads and teachers in managing conflict.

4.2 Analysis of Result Based on Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the causes of conflict in senior high schools in Kwabre East Municipality?

In relation to this question, causes of conflict in senior high schools were presented. To answer this question, the participants were asked to respond to items in the questionnaire on the major causes of conflict in senior high schools. Table 5 presents information.

Table 5: Causes of Conflict

Causes	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree				Total	
	Agree		Disagree		Disagree		Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
leadership style of school head	52	56	32	36	4	5	2	3	90	100
Lack of communication	25	28	51	56	10	11	4	5	90	100
Indiscipline on the part of students	71	79	12	13	5	5	2	3	90	100
Indiscipline on the part of Teachers	10	11	24	27	50	56	6	6	90	100
Favoritisms by the school head	66	73	14	16	7	8	3	3	90	100
Inadequate resources	18	20	40	44	32	36	0	0	90	100

Source: Field data, 2018.

Results in Table indicated that 52(56%) of the respondents strongly agreed that leadership style of heads resulted to conflict in the school. 32(36%) agreed to the statement 4(5%) of the respondent disagreed while 2(3%) strongly disagree to the statement. Majority 71(79%) of the respondents strongly agreed that indiscipline on the part of students contributed very often to conflict. This affirms the interview with the heads of schools as majority mentioned that indiscipline on the part of students was of the major causes of conflict in schools. 12(13%) also agreed to this view however, 10(11%) and 4(5%) of the respondent refuted this claim as they disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Favouritism by the heads was also found to cause conflict in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality as majority of the respondent 66(73%) of the respondent strongly agreed to this claim. 14(16%) agreed while 7(8%) and 3(3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed to the claim that it often leads to conflict.

Again, 56% of the respondents disagreed that indiscipline on the part of teachers caused conflict in senior high schools. 24(27%) of the respondents agreed to this view 10(11%) of the respondent strongly agreed while 5(6%) strongly disagreed favoritism by the school head led to conflict while 3% disagreed to the statement. On inadequate resources contributing to causes conflict to senior high school nearly half 40(44%) of the respondent agree that it often cause conflict, 32(36%) disagree to this claim while 18(20%) strongly agreed.

Indiscipline on the part of teachers, inadequate resources, and lack of communication were found to contribute least to cause conflict in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality.

On lack of communication, 51(56%) of the respondent agreed that it often cause conflict 25(28%) strongly agreed this claim 10(11%) disagreed while 4(5%) strongly disagreed to this view. The results mean that leadership style of heads, indiscipline on the part of students and teachers and favoritism by heads cause conflict in senior high schools.

Research Question 2: What conflict management strategies are adopted by senior high school heads in Kwabre East Municipality?

Table 6 illustrates major types of conflict management strategies mostly used by school heads in managing conflict in schools. Table 6 provides the details.

Table 6: Conflict Management Strategies

Strategies	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ignore conflict whenever it occurs	5	6	20	22	53	59	13	14	90	100
Conceding to others to maintain harmony	49	55	21	23	14	15	6	7	90	100
Imposing viewpoint on others	0	0	6	7	46	51	38	42	90	100
Fairness in dealing with all staff members	67	74	16	17	5	6	2	3	90	100
Dialogue with conflicting parties	27	28	47	52	18	20	0	0	90	100

Source: Field data, 2017.

From Table 6, majority of the respondents 49 (55%) strongly agreed that conceding to the needs of to maintain harmony was often used 21(23%) agreed to this claim 14(15%) of the respondent disagreed while only 6(7%) strongly disagreed to this view. With respect to fairness in dealing with all staff members to manage conflict majority 64(74%) of the respondent strongly agreed that it was often used. This was also in agreement with what majority of the school heads mentioned that fairness in dealing with all staff members was often 16(17%) agreed that it was very often used 5(6%)disagreed while 2(3%) strongly disagreed to the claim that it sometimes used. Again majority 47(52%) of the respondent agreed to the usage of dialogue to manage conflict. Similarly, this was also in line with what majority of school heads said that they often use dialogue to manage conflict. 27(28%) strongly that it is often use while 18(20%) disagreed to this view. Over 47(52%) of the respondents agreed that dialogue with conflicting parties was adopted as conflict management strategy by heads. About 53(59%) of the respondent disagreed that they ignore conflict whenever it occurs while 20(22%) agreed to this claim 13(14%) strongly

disagreed while 4(5%) of the respondent strongly agreed that this strategy was sometimes used.

Research Question 3: What challenges are associated with heads of senior high conflict management strategies in the Kwabre East Municipality?

Research question 3 investigated challenges facing heads of schools in applying conflict management strategies. Table 7 presents the results.

Table 7: Challenges Facing School Heads in Managing Conflict

Challenges	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Overload of work	46	51	30	34	10	11	4	4	90	100
Lack of leadership skills of school heads	0	0	10	11	15	17	65	72	90	100
Inadequate training given to school heads	45	50	30	33	10	11	5	6	90	100
Inappropriate conflict management strategy	47	52	23	26	17	19	3	3	90	100
Inability to identify cause of conflict	0	0	5	6	60	67	25	27	90	100
Lack of cooperation of conflicting parties	59	66	21	23	10	11	0	0	90	100

Source: Field data, 2017.

From Table 7, majority 46(51%) of the teachers strongly agreed that overload of work presented a challenge to heads when managing conflict in the schools while 4% disagreed. As many as 72% disagreed that heads lacked leadership skills to manage conflict and only 11% agreed. Over 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that inadequate training

given to heads posed challenge and only 6% disagreed. About 52% of them strongly agreed that inappropriate. The least percentage, 3 disagreed to the statement. conflict management strategy was posed challenge to heads management of conflict. Similarly, majority 60(67%) of the teachers strongly agreed that Inability to identify the cause of conflict was a challenge to heads management of conflict.

With regard to lack of cooperation on the part of conflicting parties, 66 (59%) strongly agreed, while 10(11%) disagreed to the statement. Similarly, an interview with the school head also affirms that lack of cooperation on the part of the conflicting parties is a one of the major challenges they face in managing conflict

Research Question 4: How can conflict management be improved in senior high schools?

The forth objective of this study was to identify ways to improve conflict management practices in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality. In relation to this, four ways likely to improve conflict management practices in senior high schools were presented. Table 8 provides.

Table 8: Ways of Improving Conflict Management Strategies

Ways of Improving Conflict Management	Strongly Agree				Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	N%
Involvement of SRC in decision making	52	58	27	30	10	11	1	1	90	100
The need to take a course in conflict management	61	68	24	27	5	5	0	0	90	100
Regular stakeholders meeting and consultation	12	13	33	37	4	50	0	0	90	100
Strengthening guidance and counselling units	21	23	30	33	3	44	0	0	90	100

Source: Field data, 2017.

From Table 8, the involvement of student's representative council (SRC) and the need to attend courses in conflict management were identified as major ways for improving conflict management practices in senior high schools. With regard to the involvement of SRC in decision making, majority of the respondents representing 58% strongly agreed, while 1(1%) strongly disagree. This is also in agreement with what the school heads mention during an interview that the involvement of SRC in decision making is important in managing conflict. Similarly, 61(68%) strongly agreed that taking a course in conflict management could improve conflict management strategies of school heads. On the contrary, 45(50%) of the teachers disagreed that regular stakeholders meeting and consultation could improve conflict management strategies and 33(37%) either strongly agreed. Also, 44% disagreed that strengthening guidance and counseling units could improve conflict management strategies of school heads none of the teachers strongly disagreed.

4.3 Interview Report

The school heads were interviewed on the causes of conflict, effect of conflict on academic activities, strategies they have been using, effective strategies for managing conflict and means to improve conflict in their schools.

On causes of conflict majority of the heads mentioned indiscipline on the part of the students and lack of communication as the major causes of conflict in their school. With regards to the strategies they used to reduce conflict in schools, most of the heads said that they use different conflict management strategies depending on the type of conflict while some of them mentioned involvement of all teachers in decision making as the means of

resolving conflict in the school. One of the school heads said that *“I use different strategies depending on the type of conflict that arises on effective strategies use in managing conflict the heads mention that there was no single conflict management strategy that is more effective”*. One head of the school stated *“conflict management is situational and hence it is difficult to use one strategy four to use one strategy for every conflict will never work. Every strategy is effective depending on the type of conflict the needs to be resolve”*.

In relation to the ways of improving conflict in school, most of the heads identify involvement of teachers and SRC in decision making, ensuring free flow of information and dialoging with both conflicting parties.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The objective of the study was to examine conflict management practices of senior high school heads and its effect on teaching and learning. The discussions of findings were based on areas such as causes, management strategies, effects of conflict on teaching and learning, as well as challenges and ways of improving conflict. The discussions of findings were presented according to the research questions formulated to guide the study.

Findings from research question one indicated that leadership style of school head, indiscipline on the part of students and favoritism by the school head were believed to be the main factors responsible for conflict in senior high schools. The finding of this study is inconsonance with Johdi and Apitree (2012) observation that poor leadership by school heads are a common cause of conflict with teachers. Poor leadership of school heads fail to achieve purposeful cooperation and collaboration among teachers hence teachers lack self-commitment and personal motivation. Such poor leadership by school heads does not develop teachers to be innovative and self-motivated to continuously develop and drive the

school as an organization. The findings of this study corroborate Dick and Thodlan's (2013) study that much of the school management practices were characterized mainly by dictatorial tendencies with harsh consequences for any form of dissent. Rono (2012) shared the views of Dick and Thodlans (2013) and indicated that some school heads display poor leadership qualities that created conflict in school.

Findings of the study also show that favoritism in appointments to key positions is one of the factors driving conflict as attested to most of the respondents. This finding corroborates Afful-Broni (2012) that conflict sometimes arise through the struggle to have control over power or authority. He noted that sometimes within the school, it is common to find especially the old and new staff or those with the highest qualification and those with the least qualification seeking to outdo each other in order to have control of authority. This inevitably leads to conflict. Lack of clarity roles and responsibilities were found to occasionally cause conflict in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality. This is in line with Omboko and Kipyego (2013) and Smith (2013) assertion that school heads sometimes favour some teachers at the expense of others and this fosters a sense of resentment, anger and hatred. Smith (2013) contends that it is this resentment that brews rumor, jealousy and conflict at work place.

Indiscipline on the part of teachers, poor academic performance, inadequate resources, and poor communication were found to contribute least to cause conflict in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality. The findings is in contrasts with the earlier findings of Boateng and Oduro (2012) that communication gap between school heads and teachers are the leading cause of conflict in Senior High Schools in Ghana. Also, Adegun (2013) identified communication lapses as a problem to administrative

effectiveness in Nigerian institutions of learning. Again, Mukoro (2013) suggested that communication gap between school heads and staff might cause conflict and adversely affect administrative effectiveness in schools. The authors argued that where harsh words or foul talks dominate the course of interaction, if left unchecked, the consequences will be hostile reactions and conflict will invariably emerge. Communication, therefore, becomes a central issue in conflict generation, escalation and de-escalation. Kipkemboi and Kipruto (2013) observed that when there is too little communication, associates do not know enough about each other's intentions, goals, or plans. Coordination becomes difficult, and misunderstandings are more likely to occur, which can result in conflict. Omboko, and Kipyego, (2013) also reported that resources are available assets which may include time, money and material possessions and affects the incidences of conflict to a large extent. Meek, Heit and Page (2005) confirmed that conflict may arise when there are insufficient resources in a groups or organizations. In this instance, individuals try to have their share of the available limited resources and most likely step on each other's toes in the course of the struggle or competition resulting in the emergence of conflict. The implication of these findings suggest that heads of senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality encounter myriad of conflict in their day to day administration of the school which could hamper their administrative roles as chief executive of the school.

Findings from research question two indicates that conceding to the needs of others to maintain harmony, fairness in dealing with all staff members and dialogue with conflicting parties ranked high as the strategies used by heads of senior high schools to manage conflict. The results suggest that most senior high school heads appreciate the existence of conflict in their institutions and therefore employ various approaches to

resolving such conflict. By conceding to the needs of others to maintain harmony and also ensuring fairness in dealings with staff member is an indication that most heads of senior high school appreciate the importance of managing. Larson and Mildred (2000) explained that behaviour that is strongly cooperative and assertive which reflects a win-win approach to resolving conflict is the best strategy to use. Also, Cunningham (2008) contends that collaborative means of resolving conflict is analytical and gets to the root of the problem. The strategy identified by Meyer (2004) to resolve conflict in school was effective communication which he described as the best because it makes the group aware of the kind of communication which could lead to problem solving. Thus when teachers dialogue with school heads on matters affecting their professional growth, it generates a sense of affection and helps build trust and respect. Ibukun (2011) notes that grievance procedures create opportunity for the concerns and complains of staffs to be dealt with promptly. This can prevent bad feelings from festering and growing into resentment and bitterness. The failure of school heads to resort to established grievance procedures could make conflict management difficult.

The findings further indicate that senior high school heads often ignore conflict whenever it occurs. Ignoring or avoiding conflict is an ineffective attitude for problem solving. The inability to deal with conflict respectfully, constructively and in a timely manner will undermine the leader's credibility and the progress of an organization. This confirms the assertion of Mpokosa (2012) that some school heads deliberately avoid conflict as a way of dealing with it. The challenge of conflict lies in how one chooses to deal with it. The findings agree with Opoku-Asare, et al. (2015) statement that conflict that are avoided and poorly managed can wreak havoc on both individuals and organizations.

Conflict can cause unimaginable havoc when ignored or allowed to escalate unabated in a school. Also, Johdi and Apitree (2012) posited that, tension between school heads and teachers often arise because most teachers do not like being told what to do.

Findings from research question three shows that workload of school head, inadequate training given to school heads and lack of cooperation of conflicting parties were identified as major challenges facing school heads in applying conflict management strategies in their schools. This study is in agreement with Msila's (2011) submission that, the workload of school heads is becoming unmanageable and as a result many school heads become unable to manage conflict in their school. Msila (2011) indicated further that initial training of some of them does not allow them to acquire enough knowledge in school administration and management. French and Bell (1999) affirmed that for a conflict management practices to succeed, the parties involved should be willing to take active part in the entire conflict management process. Back and Back (1994) were also consistent with the statement made by French and Bell (1999). It was the view of Cronin and Weingart (2007) that, when the person handling the conflict does not have the professional skills needed to deal with the problem, he/she may end up worsening the situation. Thus, when a wrong approach to handling a particular problem is adopted, the end results could be disastrous. It was on this premise that Brooks (2009) proposed that for conflict to be resolved, the school head needs to identify and choose the appropriate conflict management style to solve the right problem.

Findings from research question four indicated that, the use of student's representative council (SRC) in decision making and the need to attend course in conflict management were identified as major ways for improving conflict management practices

of senior high school heads in the Kwabre East Municipality. The findings confirmed Jantzi's (2006) study that, schools that experience fewer conflict have a link between motivation, commitment and capacity building. In similar view, Kempiles (2007) indicated that school heads can be assisted by taking them for in-service courses for capacity building. Fraser and Hertzal (2008) also affirm the above view and indicated that school heads require knowledge in conflict management in order to handle challenging issues in their institutions. Moreover, Okumbe (2008) indicated that for a school head to be effective he or she must not only be conversant with concepts and newer perspectives in school management but also to employ the use of student government through use of student's representative council (SRC). Sergiovanni (2008) also indicate that school heads can avoid conflict in their school if the community is in full support of the educational programmes. Likewise, Holloway (2000) carried out research study in Missouri and North Carolina and found out that head teachers may minimize conflict if they understood the people they work with. Kempiles (2007) shared this view and indicate that the school head needs to study his or her environment and develop leadership style that suit the school community.

The findings suggested that heads of senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality do not involve students in most of important decisions bothering on their interest and welfare. The implication is that school activities may not go on smoothly which may a go a long way to affect teaching and learning negatively.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides overview of the study, conclusions drawn, recommendations made and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Overview of the Study

The objective of this study was to examine conflict management strategies of senior high school heads. Four research question were formulated to guide the study. The research design used was descriptive survey. Mixed-method approach was applied. The population comprised heads and teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 heads. Ninety teachers were selected using simple random sampling technique.

Sample size of 105 respondents was used for the study. Two instruments namely questionnaire and interview schedule were used for data collection. The pilot test achieved reliability co-efficient of point 0.82percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the data and the results were presented in tables.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

From the study, number of findings emerged. They include the following:

1. On causes of conflict, it was found that poor administrative leadership of school head, indiscipline on the part of students and favoritism by the school head were the major causes of conflict in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality.
2. On conflict management strategies, it emerged from the study that **giving in to the needs of other conflicting** parties to maintain harmony and fairness ranked high as the

- strategies used by heads of senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality in managing conflict.
3. On challenges facing schools heads in managing conflict, it was find that overload of work, inadequate training giving to school heads and lack of co-operation of conflicting parties and inappropriate conflict management strategies, challenges facing schools heads in applying conflict managing strategies in their schools.
 4. On ways to improve conflict management practices, it came to light that involvement of students in decision making and the need for school heads to take courses in conflict management were the main interventions required to minimize conflict in senior high schools in the Kwabre East Municipality.

5.3 Conclusions

The study found that heads are confronted with countless of conflict in the day to day administration of the schools. This impedes or hamper effective management of the schools and achievement of overall goal of the schools

It can be concluded that school heads use a number of strategies such as dialoging with conflicting parties, fairness in dealing with conflict that arises in the school. It could therefore be concluded there will be peace and harmony in schools which will result to less conflict arising in the schools.

The study further concludes that school heads are faced with the challenges of overload of work, inadequate training, lack of corporation from conflicting parties and inappropriate conflict management strategies. This increases the workload of school heads and as a result, many school heads will not be able to manage conflict in their respective schools.

It could be concluded that in order to improve conflict management in senior high schools at Kwabre East Municipality, students should be involved in decision making, heads should also attend workshops to enhance their conflict management skills so that school activities can go on smoothly which may go a long way to affect teaching and learning positively.

5.4 Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ghana education service should organize workshops for heads of schools to enable them acquire leadership skills so as to improve their managerial skills.
2. It is recommended that conflict management strategies identified by the school heads such as fairness in dealing with all staff members must be strengthened and continued to be used when conflict arises in the schools.
3. It is also recommended that involvement of students in decision making should be enhanced to enable them share their views.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Study

The study was conducted in the Kwabre East Municipality in Ashanti Region. It is suggested that this study should be replicated in other Municipalities of Ashanti to either confirm or refute the findings. It is therefore suggested that further research should be conducted to establish relationship between conflict management and leadership styles of school heads.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

SECTION A

Background information

Please tick (✓) where appropriate or fill in the required information on spaces provided.

1 Gender Male () Female ()

2 Age (in years):

Between 20-29 ()

Between 30-39 ()

Between 40-49 ()

Over 50 ()

3. Level of education

Masters ()

Bachelor's degree ()

Others specify ()

4. Years of teaching experience

1-5 years ()

6-10 years ()

10-15 years ()

Over 15 years ()

SECTION B

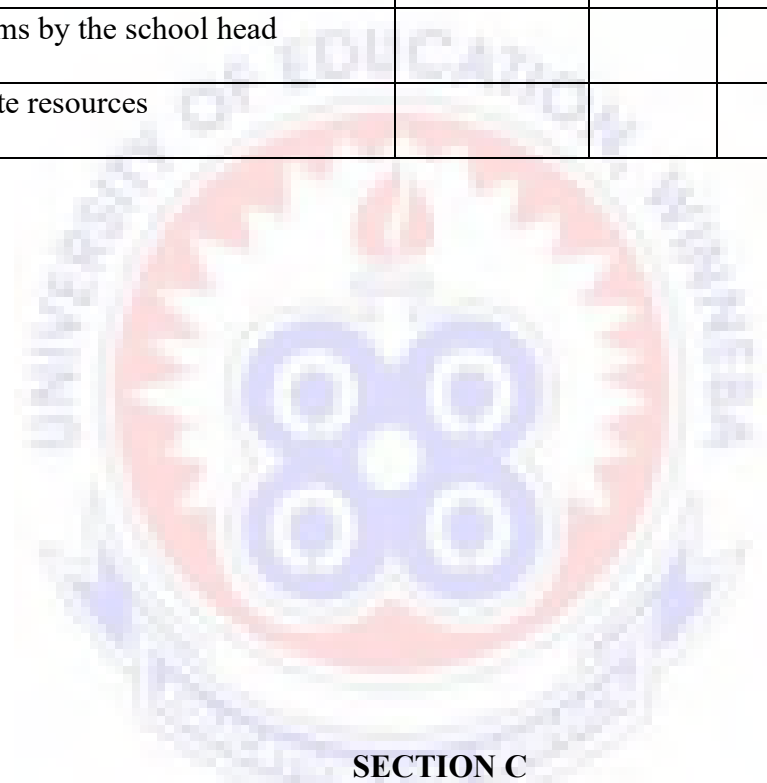
Major Causes of Conflict in Senior High Schools

Please tick (√) where appropriate or fill in the required information on spaces provided.

The following are causes of conflict in schools. Please tick (√) where appropriate in your school.

Causes of Conflict	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. ineffective administrative leadership of school head				
Poor communication				
Indiscipline on the part of students				
Indiscipline on the part of Teachers				
Poor academic performance				
Favoritisms by the school head				
Inadequate resources				



SECTION C

Conflict Management Strategies

Tick (✓) where is applicable appropriate response

Management strategies	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Conflict management strategies				
Ignore conflict whenever it occurs				
Conceding to the needs of others to maintain harmony				

Imposing viewpoint on others				
Fairness in dealing with all staff members				
dialogue with conflicting parties				

SECTION D

Challenges of managing conflict

The statements below are some challenges schools heads face in managing conflict.

Please tick (✓) the once which are applicable in your school.

Challenges	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Challenges Facing Heads of Schools in applying conflict management strategies.				
Overload of school head making conflict management difficult.				
Inadequate training given to school heads				
Inappropriate conflict management styles exhibited by school heads.				
Inability to identify the real cause of conflict in the school.				
Lack of cooperation on the part of the two parties involve in the conflict.				

SECTION E

Ways of Improving Conflict Management

The statements below are ways of improving conflict management in senior high schools. Please tick (✓) the extent of your agreement to the statement bellow.

Please tick (✓) the extent of your agreement to the statement bellow.

Improvement of conflict management strategies	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Involve SRC in decision making				
The need to attend course in conflict management				
Regular stakeholders meeting and consultation				
Strengthening guidance and counselling units				



APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA, KUMASI CAMPUS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN LEADERSHIP

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADS

- 1 What do you think are the causes of conflict in your schools?
- 2 Tell me the effects of conflict on academic activities in your school?
- 3 Mention some strategies you have been using to reduce conflict in your school?
- 4 Which of the strategies are effective in managing conflicting your school?
- 5 What possible means can be used to improve conflict in your school?

