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Conflict Resolution in Senior High Schools in Ghana

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Abstract

Conflict resolution requires an understanding of best resolution practices which should be used to address them when they arise. The study sought to investigate into the methods adopted by senior high schools for resolving conflicts, find out the nature of outcomes of methods used and finally to develop and propose new conflict resolution model for Senior High Schools in Ghana. The study employs the use of a mixed approach based on the two-phase sequential exploratory design strategy. The qualitative phase employs the use of in-depth interviews with selected Head teachers. The quantitative phase employed the use of a validated questionnaire to collect data. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample 800 participants consisting of Head teachers, teachers and students. Several analytical techniques including the Correspondence analysis, Chi square analysis, Cramer's V test and the Spearman's correlation were used to address objectives of the study. The findings of the study revealed that conflicts were mostly resolved by the disciplinary committees which mostly employed the use of punishments and suspension of students. There was a significant relationship between the method used in conflict resolution and the nature of outcome. Finally, the research also found that delay in conflict resolution; biasness and leakages of issues to public could undermine the resolution of conflicts in schools. The research recommended that Colleges of Education should introduce components in conflict resolution to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skill.

Keywords: Senior High School, School Leadership, Disciplinary Committee, Conflict Resolution

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Background and the Problem

The consensus strategy (a strategy based upon agreement by the total group), employed by many organizations leaves community leaders ill-prepared to deal with those persons or organizations who refuse to concede without a struggle (Umstot, 2008). As people are organized into groups to seek a common goal, the probability of conflict greatly increases. This equally applies to schools as well. Conflicts are a natural part of life and therefore a natural part of school life. As Umstot (2008) observes, resolving conflict at schools has been an age-old challenge for educators. For an organization to be effective and efficient in achieving its goals, the people in the organization need to have a shared vision of what they are striving to achieve, as well as clear objectives for each team or department and individual (Francis, 2011). It is therefore imperative that leaders need ways of recognizing and resolving conflict amongst people, so that conflict does not become so serious that co-operation is impossible. Gundiza & Namusi (2012) argue that conflict may escalate and lead to non-productive results, or it can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products. Therefore, learning to resolve conflict is integral to a high-performance team (Winfield, 2009). Conflict resolution is the principle that all conflicts can necessarily be resolved but learning how to resolve conflicts can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation (Umstot, 2008).

In Ghana, conflicts do exist in schools as barely a month passes without either the head conflicting with the teachers or the teachers amongst themselves (Mankoe, 2009). 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 (dysfunctional), performance suffers. Consequently, innovation and change may become unmanageable and the organization may not adapt to change in its environment (Beardwell & Claydon 2007). If conflict is resolved in a proper manner, it adds to innovation and productivity (Murphy, 2006).

The biggest challenge today confronting humans is not about the occurrence of conflict per se, but how these conflicts are fully resolved whenever they occur to prevent them from further escalating. Conflict will continue to exist with humanity since they are like death, which is inevitable. The inevitability of conflicts, however, becomes pathological to society depending on the type and nature of the resolution methods used.

The structure of the Ghanaian education system is a 6-year cycle of primary schooling, 3 years of junior high school (JHS) and 3 years in senior high school (SHS). As the school system functions under a different set of circumstances at the various levels, several incidences of conflict occur among various interactive groups in all institutions. Conflicts in Ghanaian Public Senior High Schools been reported to be on the rise in the recent past.

It has been observed that from the pre-colonial time until now, all educational reforms in Ghana were based on academic courses, provision of text books and either increase or decrease in the number of years one needs to complete school. There has been nothing mentioned about ways to improve educational administration and conflict management and resolution in the school system in Ghana. It therefore stands to reason that, the educational system has relegated conflict resolution to the background creating lack of knowledge, strategies and technical-know-how within the school system. Although conflict is inevitable and natural aspect of most ongoing close relationships, the implementation of proper resolution method to reduce or prevent effects of conflict within the school is essential.

Several researchers including Collard (2003) and Abosede (2006) have consistently counseled on the need for quick resolution to organizational conflicts. It is important for school administrators to pay attention to this call because studies by Lynch (2000) & Onoyume (2007) show that when conflict is not adequately resolved, or when there is undue delay in the resolution of conflict, properties, lives and academic hours of unimaginable magnitude are lost.

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Delay in resolution of school conflict has resulted in disruption of school calendars leading to economic as well as psychological exertion.

Many studies have researched into organizational conflicts, their causes and effects on the day to day administration of the organization, but failed to establish appropriate conflict resolution mechanism that could be used in the school system. For instance, Afful-Broni (2012) looked into causes of conflict in the Senior High School in a district in Ghana. However, his study, he lamented that, "... efforts should be made in future research to incorporate nature of outcome of conflict resolution activities and proposition of an authentic model that could be used to serve the need of the schools in conflict situations.....' Moreover, the researchers failed to establish comprehensive antidotes as to how to curb poor leadership in school and the appropriate conflict resolution mechanism that could be used in the school system.

The main problem of this study is that there are limited empirical studies that adequately capture specific conflict resolution strategies that could be used in schools in developing countries like Ghana. Existing disciplinary committees has not captured possible contextual variables such as Win-win, win-lose and lose-lose nature of resolution and its relationship with the areas of conflict in schools (Mankoe 2009, Ampiah, 2009, & Afful-Broni, 2012). Therefore, this study attempts to contribute to filling this gap in the education literature by developing a model which helps to initiate resolution process to aftermath of the resolution. This research work, finds appropriate conflict resolution methods to address these recurrent problems once and for all. In view of the destructive nature of conflict, an appropriate conflict resolution method will have to deal with the curative side as well as the preventive approach. With regards to the curative, the resolution method should be such that it should be able to effectively resolve the problems as they occur. In the case of the preventive methods the approach should be able to anticipate an emerging problem and resolve it before it begins to escalate.

Objectives, Questions and Hypothesis of the Study

The general objective of the research is to contribute to the general body of knowledge in the area of school administration particularly in the resolution of conflict in the school system. Specifically, the study seeks to assess the conflict resolution in the Senior High School System, to examine the adapted methods for resolving conflicts and the nature of outcomes of methods in the Senior High School System. The above objectives will be achieved by asking the questions: What is the relationship between the conflict resolution method employed and the areas of conflict? What are the specific methods employed by disciplinary committee in resolving student related conflicts? What natures of outcome are associated with each resolution methods employed? Which factors militate against general conflict resolution in the school community? and which factors militate against the activities of the disciplinary committee? The following hypotheses are further tested in order to answer the research questions above: The area of conflict and the method of conflict resolution are related, there is a preference for a particular resolution method by the disciplinary committee, nature of outcome depends on the conflict resolution method used.

Review of Relevant Literature

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Holt & DeVore, (2008) mentioned that all over the world people are concerned with creating and maintaining peace, and hence understanding conflicts and how to handle them helps to sustain peaceful relations. Conflict resolution thus, has become an important tool that can be used to promote and sustain peace among diverse cultural groups throughout the world. Conflict resolutions in cultures that are more individualistic prefer conflict styles of problem solving, compromising, and forcing. Such conflict handling styles involve strong verbal communication, less internal communication, and are less concerned with the needs of others. Suping, & Jing, (2006) on the other hand, indicated that communal cultures emphasize the needs of one's group

to be more important than those of an individual, which is reflected in their conflict handling styles. Conflict resolution handling styles that are valued highly in such relationships include smoothing and compromising; however, withdrawing can be used in these cultures in an effort to prevent embarrassment of significant others (Holt & DeVore, 2008).

Socially appropriate behaviour differs among genders, and it is assumed that different genders would prefer to resolve conflicts using different styles. As females have a greater value of relationships, they prefer such styles as smoothing, withdrawing, compromising, and they are typically involved in indirect-communication strategies that are directed to diffuse the conflict. Contrariwise, males commonly use direct-communication strategies while in a conflict and they prefer styles such as forcing, problem solving, competing, and dominating that are directed toward a specific outcome rather than a relationship (Holt & DeVore, 2008).

Domenech & Gomez (2014) noted that the philosophy of conflict resolution should have two basic assumptions: conflict is basic and inevitable, and that the resolution process can lead to different outcomes that can be either constructive or destructive. In school settings, conflict resolution strategies should be directed toward students' self-discipline practices that help them to discover and develop their own internal system of self-discipline and self-regulation. Conflict resolution skills should encourage a commitment to help and care for others, enhance perspective-taking abilities, and improve communication and problem-solving skill.

Türnüklü, Kaçmaz Gürler, Kalender, Zengin, & Sevkin, (2010), noted that schools and colleges should be places where vital life skills, such as interpersonal conflict resolution skills, are introduced and acquired. The interpersonal conflicts and acts of violence that students experience in school provide them with a natural opportunity to learn non-violent conflict resolution methods. This helps students to socialize through conflict resolution processes using various conflict resolutions and peer-mediation programs that might be initiated by the school.

Conflict Resolution Process in the School

The role of the instructional leader in a group is to integrate conflict prevention and management into a conflict resolution process. It essentially revolves around diagnosis and intervention (Tshigwane 2008). Kgomo (2006), in Tshigwane (2008), suggested that the institutional head's role in conflict resolution revolves around engaging in the conflict resolution process and this requires him to play several roles; being an agent of communication, a problem solver, a negotiator, a leader, a mediator, a decision-maker and a researcher. The head has a key role in empowering the other members of staff by incorporating these attributes. As a problem-solver he/she will facilitate the process of empowering the staff with the steps that need to be followed when solving problems such as the following: Defining the problem, analyzing it, determining possible solutions, selecting the best solution, implementing the solution and evaluating the implementation. In resolving conflict, the team has to be protected by an effective code of conduct which is without any loopholes.

Steyn & Van Niekerk (2007) mentioned that essentially, the headteachers and the teaching staff have the task of implementing the code of conduct, in ensuring that it gives the necessary procedural support to the entire staff. In the same vein the headteachers and staff plays a major role in the disciplinary hearings of learners that are accused of serious misconduct, such as vandalizing school property, assaulting and raping other learners, and using drugs in school premises. Sanctions that may be imposed by the school authorities in such misconduct include suspension and expulsion from school. The authorities must ensure that they comply with the due process in their conduction of disciplinary hearings so as to resolve the conflict effectively among all the victims and culprits

According to Michael (2006), conflict resolution occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties, and to adequately address interests; so that each party is satisfied with the outcome. Consequently, conflict resolution is usually involving

consensus, “horse trading”, conciliation and other techniques. Kestner & Ray, (2009) stated that processes of conflict resolution vary from institution to institution such as negotiation, mediation and arbitration. In this understanding, negotiation is the act of dealing with or bargaining with others, through mutual decision, in order to arrange the terms of a transaction or agreement, as in the preparation a contract or treaty (Babbitt, 2006). It occurs between two parties talking to one another; there can be one negotiator serving as a go-between between two parties or there can be two or more negotiators representing the disputing parties (Hampson, 2006; and Babbitt, 2006), and in this case, negotiation involves the two direct conflicting parties in a process of decision which seeks to bring them into voluntary agreement. Although negotiation is not about who is right or wrong in a situation or conflict, it is the process of resolving a situation through agreement. Thus, its purpose is to arrange for or bring about settlements by means of discussion.

On the other hand, "mediation is an informal process in which disputing parties discuss their situation with the goal of reaching a mutual satisfactory agreement or gaining new perceptions about the situation, with the help of a neutral third party who serves as an intermediary to assist the disputing parties to reach their own agreement or resolution" (Kestner & Ray, 2002, 2008). As a result, mediation is a voluntary or confidential process in which a neutral third party facilitator helps people to discuss a difficult issue and negotiate an agreement. Thus, mediation is using third party to help the conflicting parties to come to neutrally satisfactory agreement. Accordingly, Schulenburg et al (2007), the third neutral party follow mediation process including gathering information, framing the issues, develop options, negotiating, and formalizing agreements. However, the mediator does not have any decision making power rather parties create their own solutions. Therefore, the mediator’s task is not to solve the problem for the disputants but to help them to find a way to solve the problem themselves so as to create peace in the school environment.

Conflict Resolution Outcome

Lencioni (2007) asserts that possibly the most important part of the conflict resolution process is using the most appropriate resolution strategy for the conflict at hand to ensure appropriate outcome. He established that conflict resolution would be more effective by considering specific outcome and also considering the situation at hand. Mankoe (2009), also highlights some basic conflict resolution outcome in educational institutions to include: The Win-Lose; the Lose-Lose; and the Win-Win.

The Win-Lose

The win-lose method, according to Mankoe (2009), creates winners and losers, often similar to the results achieved through majority vote. He intimates that an administrator or supervisor who views conflict as a personal threat may use the win-lose approach, using supervisory authority to impose a decision on employees. He contends that the supervisor feels like a winner, while the employees, who may not be in a position to complain, end up becoming the losers. Afful-Broni (2011), supported this view and observed that a win-lose outcome to conflict resolution is characterised by one basic element, that is the contesting parties see their interest to be mutually exclusive. No compromise is possible. One must fail at the price of the other's success. According to Machingambi & Wades (2012), in an educational environment, win-lose approaches to conflict resolution largely find expression in the conflict occurring between; headteacher and teacher as well as a student and another student and the attendant efforts to settle the misunderstanding and disagreement. Bercovitch & Scott (2009), observes that conflict outcome of this nature are highly sentimental and characterised by accusations and counter accusations as conflicting parties try to defend themselves rather than listening to what is being said. In Rahims’s view (2011), little is accomplished in a win-lose conflict resolution situation because communication gets constrained as those involved lose, trust and acceptance of each other.

McNamara (2007) identifies the following as the major limitations associated with win-lose outcome to conflict resolution: its emphasis on victory implies that it is a closed approach that is fraught with bias and prejudice; and it intensifies antagonism and hostility between the winning and losing groups. The first prevents members involved from adopting possible alternatives to the conflict. The second is a situation that creates long-term dysfunctional behaviours that lead to a downward spiral of institutional health.

The Lose-Lose

According to De Dreu, & Gelfand, (2008) the Lose-Lose outcome results from compromise where individuals in the conflict do not achieve all they wanted. The individuals get only part of what they require, based on the assumption that half a loaf is better than none, and that the avoidance of conflict is preferable to personal confrontation. This means that, in this case, no one emerges a winner. Goldman, et al (2008), intimates that this outcome is often used when employees have a definite solution to a problem but feel that those in charge of operations would not accept it. What happens here is that the employees and the supervisors try to compromise to avoid offending each other. The Lose-Lose outcome, Wing, (2009), asserts, revolves around personal perspectives rather than institutional perspective. This is so because the individual as an entity, other than ways of finding a solution to a problem, is what is considered most under such circumstances. Thus, according Wing, there is a clear distinction between the needs of the conflicting parties and the solutions that would be acceptable to each other. Hopt, & Steffek, (2012), however, points out that while compromise may sometimes be necessary; it is not the best means of resolving conflict. The Lose-Lose outcome of conflict resolution, according to Hopt, & Steffek, (2012), is ineffective in dealing with problems that require solutions of high quality and high acceptance. This is suggestive that this resolution outcome should not be subscribed to handle school-related conflicts.

The Win-Win

Volpe & Chandler (2007) indicated that win-win approach is a conscious and systematic attempt to maximize the goals of both parties through collaborative problem solving. Gerami, (2009), points out that the Win-Win strategy not only focuses on consensus but requires individuals to express their needs and ideas. This approach, Gerami intimates and seeks to produce solutions acceptable to all parties involved in the conflict. Gerami claims this can be achieved when all parties are open and honest about facts, opinions and feelings, whereas defensiveness, apprehension and aggression are diminished. Riaz, & Junaid (2011) admonishes that to achieve a Win-Win outcome in conflict resolution, supervisors should adopt and practice a problem-solving style of approaching and resolving conflict that allows open participation and commitment to a solution that is acceptable to all. Ramani & Zhimin (2010), argue that in a win-win approach to conflict, each person should try to see the conflict through the other person's eyes, (commonly referred to as active listening). This is vital as it helps to foster trust and acceptance, qualities which are essential in conflict resolution.

Other outcomes, according to Ramani & Zhimin (2010), can equally be used in resolving conflict. Some of these may overlap, facilitate or complement the win-lose, lose-lose, or win-win strategies. They assert that they may also be used temporarily, when appropriate during the process of problem-solving with the eventual goal of achieving a Win-Win solution. They also suggest that the appropriate strategy to resolve and redress conflict depends on the nature of the situation, the task, and the people involved.

The above review shows that very little has been done in Ghana concerning conflict resolution, the few research in Ghana also failed to establish the conflict resolution model that could be used to resolve conflict entirely in schools, but rather in districts which does not give a true representation of the country's public Senior High School in their various countries. This study therefore fills the gap by using an extensive data from 5 regions in Ghana to to develop and propose new conflict resolution model for Senior High Schools in Ghana.

Methodology

The study employs the use of a mixed approach. This was based on the two phase sequential exploratory design strategy described by (Creswell, 2007). The initial phase involves a qualitative approach and a final phase involving a quantitative approach. The qualitative phase was performed by employing a number of research instruments which consist of in depth interviews and observation. The second phase of design was the quantitative approach which used questionnaire to collect quantitative data on perception of respondents on conflict and conflict resolution issues and then proceeded to analysis so as to explain the phenomena of conflicts in Schools.

The study employs quantitative analyses consisting of Chi-square independence test to test for association between the areas of conflict and rate of occurrence and to test for association between the conflict resolution method and nature of outcome, Cramer's V test to determine the strength of association between the two nominal variables, area of conflict and conflict resolution method. Correspondence analysis, to determine underlying relationships between the areas of conflict and rate of its occurrence and Spearman's correlation analysis to determine the strength of relation between ordinal variables and also to test for the significance of the measure of relationship.

The population for this study comprised 503 Senior High Schools with total population of 9,552 students, headteachers and teachers. Sampling of respondents in this study employed the use of multi-stage sampling techniques involving; a purposeful sampling, stratification, a Simple random sampling and finally a quota sampling. The first stage of sampling was done using a purposive sampling. 5 Regions were sampled for the purpose of this research. Overall, 160 schools and 800 respondents comprising of 320 headteachers, 320 teachers and 160 students were selected for the survey. In all, 779 questionnaires were retrieved during the survey.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Qualitative Analysis

Do Conflict Occur in your schools?

All headteachers were asked if conflict occurs in their school. Analysis of headteachers views reveal that conflict was a common phenomenon as all participants admitted that conflict did occur in their schools. Below are some of the responses provided by participants during the interviews:

School 2, Accra – “well.... my school has not been experienced conflict since I took over office three (3) years ago, but the minutes book acknowledges conflicts resolution activities the school has undertaken.

School 25 Volta - Yes. Conflicts experienced in the school are always on teacher-student relationship. There have been several times teachers have been engaging in an unhealthy relationship with the girls in the school to the extent of making some girls pregnant. All the problems are always handed over to the Court. Some are still pending.

School 29 Volta- personally; I have witnessed numerous conflict situations in this school, some of which have criminal connotation. We have seven students here who are gays and always have problems with school and dormitory mates who are not gays. We are still trying to find a judicious ways of dealing with it.

These responses suggest that despite the effort by headteachers to curb conflict, it has not been able to yield the needed result worthy to be talked about.

What methods are employed to address conflict within the various areas in the school?

Headteachers were asked to describe the adopted methods for resolving conflicts in the senior

high school system, the answers provided are analyzed as follows:

Analysis of responses reveals that methods employed were the employment of disciplinary committees, reconciliation, mediation, negotiations and the involvement of opinion leader and the Parent Teacher Association. The method of resolution however, was dependent on the area of conflict. Most headteachers stated that student-student issues which were mostly out of class issues were directed to the disciplinary committee for issues to be resolved. They however, stated that for issues which occur in the class were first handled or tackled by the class teacher who tries to resolve the issue between students by means of reconciliation and when this process fails, it is then directed to the Guidance and Counseling Coordinator (GCC).

With regards to Teacher-Students Conflict interviewees totaling about 17 out of the 30 Headteachers were of the view that conflict is first tackled by the Headteachers and some teachers who constituted a committee to deal with issue or to the disciplinary committee which has a fair representation of all the positional groups in the school community become part of the resolution process as indicated by the Head-teachers. Three Headteachers stress that in the event of serious issues, for example, when a teacher impregnates a student, an opinion leader (including PTA) comes in to settle the issue according to one of the headteachers. Student at the disciplinary committee level is likely to lose any case with a teaching according to the headteachers. The reason they gave was that students are supposed to obey orders and comply with school rules and regulation. This has created very fruitful grounds for conflicts to erupt especially when a student has been genuinely bruised in the heart and the worst part is that they are given punishment. If this does not get resolved, it goes to the District Director of Education to refer the case to the district disciplinary committee.

With regards to Teacher-Teacher conflicts, 18 Headteachers mentioned that conflicts between teachers are best resolved with reconciliation. They indicated that in order not to let one party feel aggrieved, frustrated and vexed, reconciliation was adopted to arrive at win-win so peace and harmony will prevail. They indicated that conflicts are first tackled by the Headteachers and his or her deputy, and sometimes they include friends of both parties. If it is not resolved, the matter is referred to board of directors, then to the District Director of Education (DDE) if all attempts prove futile. That is the order of action used to resolve teacher-teacher conflict in senior high schools in the district if all efforts fail according to the Headteachers who were of majority and have been part of the resolution process.

From the interview, it became evident that Teacher-Headteacher conflict was best resolved by mediation and reconciliation depending upon the conflict situation at hand. 19 of the interviewee agreed that in case of conflict resolution, the Assistant Headteacher first tries to settle the conflict but where this attempt is fruitless, it is referred to the District Director of Education (DDE) who mediates between the teacher and the Headteacher. They indicated that a Headteacher may have the same rank as the teacher and so needs a level platform to enable better resolution of conflicts

20 out of 30 interviewee mentioned that conflict involving the School-Community are first tackled by the Chiefs and elders (opinion leaders) of the town or village, or the board of directors and then passed on to District Director of Education if unresolved. If it occurs in a unit school (faith based), the matter goes to the Regional Manager of the school concerned and then to the District Assembly if the case relates to land encroachment, as indicated by the Headteachers.

What is the result of the outcome of these methods?

The essence of this question was to seek the opinion of headteachers on the outcome of the resolution methods applied above, which is reconciliation, mediation, opinion leaders and disciplinary committee, negotiation and adjudication

Analysis of responses reveal that nature of a conflict resolution method may be win-win, win-

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lose or lose-lose. 26 respondents indicated that the nature of the methods used has all the time been win-lose outcome. They indicated that this phenomenon has existed because students are to obey orders rather than challenging authority of the Headteacher and teacher. This nature of resolving conflict usually occurs between teachers and students. Moreover, they indicated that in our traditional setup, the child is always wrong and have no right to win a case to the detriment of the teacher or the Headteacher.

Commenting on the win-win nature, 21 interviewee indicated that it is a phenomenon they are all looking up to so that conflict could be curbed. Win-Win methods of resolving conflicts were found to be least used by teacher- students and between student-student. They mentioned that win-win is mostly as a result of negotiation so that each party's interest will be satisfied. In the school system it's rare, unless in most extreme cases where it involves the Headteacher and the teacher especially when they are of at the same rank, so as to avoid intimidation, hatred and anarchy.

With regards to lose-lose nature of conflict 12 out of the 30 respondents showed that it's the least conflict resolution outcome seen in the school. This phenomenon was discussed to occur when it involves the intervention of government where every party is seen as a loser.

What could be done to improve conflict resolution activities in schools?

Headteachers were finally asked to suggest way in which conflict resolution in their schools could be improved. Analysis of their response suggested a common consensus, that there was a need for members handling conflict issues to be trained.

"In my view schools should be given the opportunity to handle criminal cases by attaching experts in the field of adjudication and mediation so issues could be resolved at the school level". (School 24 Central).

"The disciplinary committee should be given due recognition. It must be upheld as a body mandated to resolve school related conflicts judgments that are passed must be acceptable by all". "Culprits must accept punishment given without involving opinion leaders. Confidentiality should be the committees hallmark so people will respect it. (School 1 Greater Accra).

"I mentioned earlier that the committee does not have personnel with technical-know-how to mediate issues. I therefore suggest that in service training must be conducted occasionally for members of the committee to equip them with contemporary resolution skills so they can work efficiently and effectively. I will conclude by saying that headteachers should have knowledge in conflict resolution before the person will be appointed to head a school" (school 3, Greater Accra).

"This is a million-dollar question. I will suggest the headteachers, teachers, students, parents and board of governors must all cooperate when it comes to finding a lasting solution to a pending issue. Integrative decision making helps to resolve problems in its totality without leaving behind sentiments. Moreover, if there is cooperation follow-up is done aftermath of the resolution process so to see to it that all is at peace so work efficiency will be enhanced (school 6, Greater Accra).

"Parents and the community must help in training the children so that they can obey authority and accept responsibilities as well. By this the system will have less problems to handle" (school 12 Ashanti).

Quantitative Research Analysis

Sample (socio-demographics) Characteristics

Sample characteristics were analysed using frequency distributions (Table 1). Analysis shows there were more females (52.2%) who participated in the study. The modal age group was below 30 years representing (38.2 %) of the sample data. With respect to status of respondent

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within the school students, teachers and headteachers accounted for (19.9%), (39.3%) and (40.7%) respectively. The regional distribution of participants was uniform with each region, except one, accounting for (12.6%) of the total sample.

Table 1. Demographics of Respondent in Study

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age				
Below 31	277	36.1	38.2	38.2
31-40	185	24.1	25.5	63.7
41-60	263	34.2	36.3	100.0
Gender				
Male	333	43.4	47.8	47.8
Female	364	47.4	52.2	100.0
Status in School				
Student	147	19.1	19.9	19.9
Teacher	290	37.8	39.3	59.3
Headteacher	300	39.1	40.7	100.0
Regions				
Accra	96	12.5	12.6	12.6
Ashanti	96	12.5	12.6	25.2
Brong Ahafo	96	12.5	12.6	37.8
Eastern	96	12.5	12.6	50.5
Volta	96	12.5	12.6	63.1
Western	96	12.5	12.6	75.7
Central	96	12.5	12.6	88.3
Northern	89	11.6	11.7	100.0

Source: Author

Conflicts Resolution Methods and outcomes

The responses for the methods for resolving the various areas of conflict were coded for analysis with codes 1-Reconciliation 2-Mediation 3-Adjudication 4-Disciplinary committee 5-Opinion leaders. The frequencies with the corresponding probability are presented in Table 2.

Generally, Table 2 suggests that different resolution strategies were employed in different conflict situation. Disciplinary committee approach appears to be the major conflict resolution strategy adopted in resolving student-student conflicts in schools representing (56.8 %). This was followed by Mediation (24.2 %). The most frequently used conflict resolution strategy in resolving Student-Teacher conflicts is the use of the disciplinary committee representing (56.5 %), this was followed by mediation (29.8%). With teacher-teacher conflict, it appears that the reconciliation was mostly adopted (48.6%). This was followed by Mediation (31.8%). For Teacher –Headteachers conflict, mediation (58.8%) was dominantly employed, followed by reconciliation (30.0%). The involvement of opinion leaders is the most adopted strategy

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(46.4%) for resolving school-community conflict. This was followed by reconciliation (26.0%) method.

Table 2. Cross tabulation on the perceptions on resolution methods used for areas of conflict

		Method					Total
Conflict Area		Reconciliation	Mediation	Adjudication	Disciplinary committee	opinion leaders	
Student-student	Count	107	184	37	432	1	761
	%	14.1%	24.2%	4.9%	56.8%	.1%	100.0%
Teacher-student	Count	72	227	19	430	13	761
	%	9.5%	29.8%	2.5%	56.5%	1.7%	100.0%
Teacher-teacher	Count	370	242	51	97	1	761
	%	48.6%	31.8%	6.7%	12.7%	.1%	100.0%
Head-teacher	Count	226	443	22	10	52	753
	%	30.0%	58.8%	2.9%	1.3%	6.9%	100.0%
School-community	Count	198	144	49	17	353	761
	%	26.0%	18.9%	6.4%	2.2%	46.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	973	1240	178	986	420	3797
	%	25.6%	32.7%	4.7%	26.0%	11.1%	100.0%

Source: survey data

To investigate the relationship between variables and also established the methods used especially in student related conflicts, we employ the Chi square test of independence. The result is shown in Table 3

Table 3. Chi-Square Tests results for the areas and methods of conflict

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.564E3 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	2.465E3	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.572	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	3797		

The result of the chi-square test reveals a significant relationship (Chi-square = 2.564E3, p-value = .000) exist between the rate of occurrence and the area of conflict.

A follow up test to determine the nature of relationship is done using the Cramer's V statistic. The results of the Cramer's V are presented in Table 4. The test result reveals a strong

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association between the methods employed and the areas of conflict. This relationship was also significant (0.411, p-value=0.00).

Table 4. Symmetric Measures for strength of association

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.822	.000
	Cramer's V	.411	.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.635	.000

Source: Author

The study also sought to explore the specific methods employed by the Disciplinary committee during conflict resolution. The respondents were asked to rate these methods of the Disciplinary Committee which included; punishment, suspension, withdrawal, counseling, others, on a scale of 1-5 with 5 = Very often and 1 = Not at all. The joint distribution of the bivariate data is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Perceived rate of occurrence for the method employed by the Disciplinary Committee

		Rating					Total
		Not at all	Rarely	Neutral	Usually	very often	
Punishment	Count	34	98	132	252	244	760
	% within Dc	4.5%	12.9%	17.4%	33.2%	32.1%	100.0%
Suspension	Count	26	131	141	271	192	761
	% within Dc	3.4%	17.2%	18.5%	35.6%	25.2%	100.0%
Withdrawal	Count	59	384	148	169	0	760
	% within Dc	7.8%	50.5%	19.5%	22.2%	.0%	100.0%
Counseling	Count	42	140	138	237	204	761
	% within Dc	5.5%	18.4%	18.1%	31.1%	26.8%	100.0%
Others	Count	76	161	153	217	154	761
	% within Dc	10.0%	21.2%	20.1%	28.5%	20.2%	100.0%

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Total	Count	237	914	712	1146	794	3803
	% within Dc	6.2%	24.0%	18.7%	30.1%	20.9%	100.0%

Source: survey data

Generally, perceptions show that all are employed by the disciplinary committee. From Table 5 punishments appear to be the most perceived conflict resolution strategy adopted by the disciplinary committee in resolving student-student conflicts in schools representing (cumulative percentage= 65.8%) and the least used adopted strategy was withdrawal of students from the institution.

The study further sought to investigate the relationship between variables and also established the methods used especially in student related conflicts. If there exist no relationship between bivariate data then the two variables are said to be independent, then the joint probability of the variables equals the product of the marginal probabilities of the two variables. The Chi square test was therefore used to test the independence. The test results are presented in table 6.

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests results on the rate which method are employed

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.756E2 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	683.487	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	52.698	1	.000

Source: Author

The chi- square test shows that significant relationships existed between the rates of occurrence and the method employed by the disciplinary committee (P-value< 5%).

A follow up test to determine the nature of relationship is done using the Cramer's V statistic. The results of the Cramer's V are presented in table 7.

Table 7: Symmetric Measures of associations

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.389	.000
	Cramer's V	.195	.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.363	.000

Source: Author

The measure of symmetric association also shows a significant association (Cramer V. = 0.195, p value = 0.000) between the rate of occurrence and the method adapted.

Discussion of Study Results

It was found that there is significant relationship which exists between the conflict resolution method employed and the areas of conflict. A further study revealed the following methods for

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the various areas of conflict: Reconciliation and Mediation for Teacher- Teacher, Headteacher–Teacher, The involvement of the Disciplinary Committee for Student-student and student-teacher and Involvement of opinion leaders in the school- community conflicts. Although very little study has been done on how conflict are resolved at the various levels in the school community in Ghana, Gordon (1990), and Johdict et al (2012), confirmed the result of student related conflict by pointing out that those headteachers and teachers who resolve student-student or student-teacher conflict, rely on power- based and authoritative methods to coerce students to conform.

It was further found that punishment was the most frequent method adapted to resolve issues, suspension and counseling were the next used methods for resolving issues, while withdrawal was the least method used in conflict resolution. This finding is in line with De Flaminis (1976), who argues that 75% of teachers respond to students with either authoritarian or coercive behaviours, followed by manipulation and persuasion. This is however contradictory to the findings from the studies of White (1975) and Adler (2008) who opine that punishment, which was used in the American schools was a negative reinforcement to induce motivation. The use of corporal and other forms of subversive punishment in Ghanaian schools is based on the rather antiquated thinking that it facilitates learning among pupils (Boakye 2006).

Below is the conflict resolution strategy we propound to complement the disciplinary committee system to be used in Senior High School system.

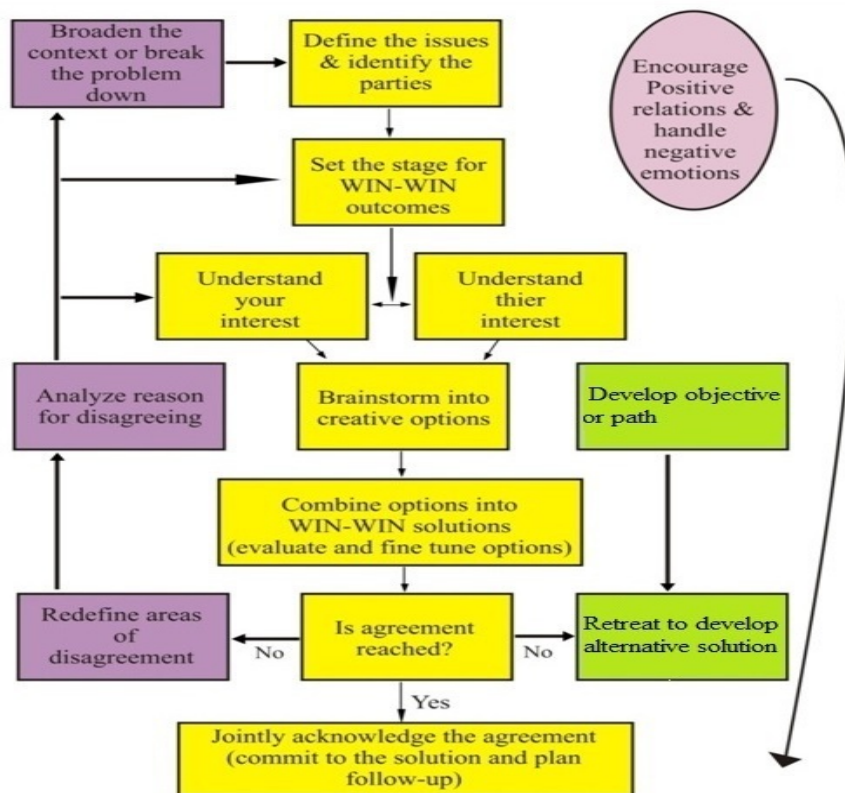


Figure 1. Best Alternative to conflict resolution in Schools

The diagram above depicts conflict resolution strategy that we propound to help complement the existing disciplinary committee to resolve conflicts in the senior high schools in Ghana and beyond. After thorough analysis of both local and international conflict resolution styles, it has become necessary to have an appropriate strategy that could be conveniently used in the senior high schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study we sought to investigate into the methods adopted by senior high schools for resolving conflicts, find out the nature of outcomes of methods used and finally to develop and propose new conflict resolution model for Senior High Schools in Ghana. The study employs the use of a mixed approach based on the two phase sequential exploratory design strategy. The qualitative phase employs the use of in-depth interviews with selected Head teachers. The quantitative phase employed the use of a validated questionnaire to collect data. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample 800 participants consisting of Head teachers, teachers and students. Several analytical techniques including the Correspondence analysis, Chi square analysis, Cramer's V test and the Spearman's correlation were used to address objectives of the study. The findings of the study revealed that conflicts were mostly resolved by the disciplinary committees which mostly employed the use of punishments and suspension of students. There was a significant relationship between the method used in conflict resolution and the nature of outcome. Finally, the research also found that delay in conflict resolution; biasness and leakages of issues to public could undermine the resolution of conflicts in schools.

We therefore recommend to school management and teachers that, Headteachers and teachers should through their teacher association establish resource centers and in these centers, a facilitator or mediator of conflict should be employed together with other specialists like curriculum ones. A facilitator specializing in conflict resolution and management will assist school managers, teachers and students to resolve conflicts. He or she could also be involved in the running of resolution courses for teachers as well as conducting research into school administration.

To Colleges of Education and the Ministry of Education, we recommend that Colleges of Education should introduce a component on conflict resolution for teachers. This could be part of the school administration courses. In teaching the component on conflict resolution, case studies from conflicts in schools should be used. This would infuse a practical component into theories of conflict. Case studies would help to contextualize the course, and ground it in the Ghanaian education system

Finally to the Government and Stakeholders of Education, we recommend that all those with a stake in education, particularly Senior High School level, should pass for the introduction of alternative education by the government. The new education system should respond equally to the varied needs and interests of all students in the country. It should be education that has a comprehensive curriculum.

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