

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

**GROUP AND INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AT**  
**ROCKLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL : AN ORGANISATIONAL**  
**ANALYSIS TO ASCERTAIN THE IMPLICATIONS**  
**FOR POLICY MAKING**

November 1994

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**GROUP AND INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AT  
ROCKLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL : AN ORGANISATIONAL  
ANALYSIS TO ASCERTAIN THE IMPLICATIONS  
FOR POLICY MAKING**

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of the requirements for the degree  
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Faculty of Education

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**DISCLAIMER STATEMENT**

I, Mogamad Waheeb Gasant, hereby declare that the work contained in this minor dissertation is my own, original and unaided work that has not been submitted to any other institution before for assessment purposes and that all sources, references and peer, tutor and other assistance have been acknowledged.

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## ABSTRACT

Change, whether organisational or societal, presents a fertile environment for the development of conflict. The probability of organisational conflict occurring in schools in South Africa is heightened by the fact that the country is in the throes of national political change. The main force influencing political events in the country, democratisation, maintains its prominence when one looks at the causes of organisational conflict in schools in the disadvantaged sectors of the South African society.

Rocklands Secondary School, the area of the research, epitomises the South African situation with regard to the occurrence of organisational conflict in the context of the wider conflict taking place at all levels of society in the country.

Although the traditional views of organisational conflict - as an occurrence that is evil and needs to be avoided - are evident at the school, a large percentage of the staff regard conflict as necessary but feel that it needs to be resolved.

Because of the pervasiveness of conflict at all levels in society, there seems to be a difficulty amongst organisational behaviour theorists, in formulating an all encompassing definition for the concept. The occurrence of the phenomenon is classified variously according to source, severity, structure, issues, outcomes and social interaction levels.

Structural and Process models of conflict as it occurs in organisations have been developed by Thomas, Rahim and Pondy. These models attempt to better understand conflict in organisations.

Informal groups would seem to play a major role in inter and intra group conflict in organisations. The social dynamics of these groups hold the potential for causing much conflict in schools. The major causes of conflict in the school as an organisation are

breakdowns in communication, personality traits or clashes, factors that are inherent in the way that organisations are structured and external factors.

Personality clashes which precipitate school conflict occur because of differing personality traits, status incongruities, role dissatisfaction, differences in goals amongst staff members and differences in values and perceptions. The structural factors that precipitate conflict in schools include limited resources, the heterogeneity of the staff, leadership style, interdependence of the components of the organisation, organisational change, organisational climate, power and authority in the organisation, bureaucracy, the size of the school, and conflict caused by the tensions to be found between line and staff. External factors like the school's relations with its community also cause conflict in the school.

The effects of organisational conflict occurring in schools are classified mainly according to the outcomes that it has for the school. These outcomes are listed as functional or dysfunctional and as those for winners and losers in the conflict.

The empirical investigation revealed a heterogeneous staff with regard to gender, age group, qualifications, teaching experience, professional rank and status, support for teachers' organisations and religion. Despite this heterogeneity there appears to be some commonality with regard to the causes of the conflict, the views of conflict, the effects that the conflict has on the pupils, staff and parents, and the resolution strategies being used to resolve the conflict occurring in the school.

Leadership and the exercise of authority seem to be regarded by the staff as a widespread cause of conflict in the school. The conflict has also caused suspicion and mistrust amongst staff members and brought about polarisation of staff members.

Attempts to resolve the conflict occurring on the staff have not been successful and there is a perception amongst staff members that avoidance, the use of authority and withdrawal have been the mediums that have been used.

In conclusion it is evident that schools, even though they are unique organisations by virtue of the type of activity that they are involved in, are no different from other organisations in the way that they experience conflict and the way that it affects them. With this in mind, strategies by educational managers to handle the conflict in the best interests of the school function need to be focused on the functional, constructive resolution of the conflict when policies for the management of organisational conflict occurring in schools are formulated.

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## CHAPTER ONE :

### INTRODUCTION

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#### 1. BACKGROUND TO THE INVESTIGATION

##### The Social Environment of the School

Mitchell's Plain is a relatively young suburb of the greater Cape Town [Appendix D]. It has roughly 400 000 'coloured' people [Pennington and Boase:4], 46 primary and 15 secondary schools.

The use of the term 'coloured' to describe the racial identity of the inhabitants of Mitchell's Plain belies the complexities of the community. With regard to the origin of the Cape Coloured people, M.F. Katzen [Wilson:184], somewhat controversially, regards the 'coloured' people as a distinctive group formed in the "miscegenation between whites, slaves, Khoikhoi, and San". This controversy continues to bedevil discussions of identity in the coloured community. The 'coloured' people however also comprised communities from the Near East (India) as well as the Far East (Indonesia, Malaysia). Amongst them were also political exiles from the Far East, aside from slaves. The people residing in Mitchell's Plain could be considered, in terms of Nationalist Party Government Policy, neither as a heterogeneous group classified as neither 'white' nor 'black'.

The 'town' of Mitchell's Plain, as envisaged by planners in 1974, consists of nine residential areas. [Ibid:2]. These are Westridge, Portlands, Rocklands, Strandfontein,

Woodlands, Tafelsig, Eastridge, Beacon Valley and Lentegeur. These areas range from those where dwellings are owned - where one could expect the more 'affluent' families to reside - to those where dwellings 'cater for lower cost housing and blocks of flats' [ibid]. Although Mitchell's Plain was seen by J.G. Brand, the then City Engineer, as an 'instrument for social transformation, cultural upliftment, educational advancement and hence human development', [Brand:2] its 'glaring flaw' was its status as a Group Area development which precluded the first tenet of humane housing - free choice of location. [Financial Mail, May 5, 1978].

Mitchell's Plain was created in answer to the urgent need for housing in Cape Town but it was also part of the then governments Apartheid policy of the segregation of people based on ethnic and racial classification. The area thus became a 'coloured' township where the coloured community could "develop separately". To realise the objective of the then government, of creating this coloured 'homeland', diverse communities were forcibly removed from their residential areas where these areas stood in the way of consolidating certain suburbs so that these could form a larger geographic entity settled by 'whites' only. The people of Mitchell's Plain thus originate from a variety of social backgrounds and personal characteristics and were thrown into a 'melting pot' in an attempt to form a homogeneous, coloured community.

The concept of Mitchell's Plain's people constituting a community becomes an illusive one, bearing in mind the diverse backgrounds of its constituents and the manner in which they were settled into the area.

The socio-political composition of the people of Mitchell's Plain bears further testimony to the complexity of the area. In the recent 1994 election, for example, the National Party, who were the creators and purveyors of the system of racial segregation in the form of the Group Areas Act and who created Mitchell's Plain in the name of Apartheid, ironically gained the most support. The liberation movements came off second best in this election despite the fact that the electorate were constantly reminded of the racist policies of the then government. The National Party successfully stirred up and fuelled racial tension in the area by running a racist election campaign based on the coloured people of Mitchell's Plains' perceived fear of black people and liberation movements like the ANC and the PAC. Such fears were not allayed by incidents such as the take-over of newly built houses for coloured people in Mitchell's Plain by black squatters, impatient for the authorities to provide them with adequate housing.

The disparate and complex nature of the Mitchell's Plain 'community' in a symbolic way, impacts on the school and in particular the composition of the staff of Rocklands Secondary school. The staff is, in a sense, a microcosm of the socio-political complexity that one finds in Mitchell's Plain. There are two major religions represented on the staff viz. Christianity (76,4%) and Islam (18,2%). Support for teachers organisations, which transgress religious affiliations, is evenly divided viz. 43,6% of the staff belong to SADTU and 41,8% are non-aligned while 14,5% belong to the CTPA. 49,1% of teachers fall into the age group 20-29 years old whereas 45,4%

belong to the 30-39 year old age group. 29% of staff are predominantly English speaking whereas 71% speak mostly Afrikaans.

It seems apparent then that the Mitchell's Plain community comprises diverse socio-political elements and that the staff of Rocklands Secondary School appear to symbolise and form a microcosm of this community.

Issues in the broader South African society are reflected in Mitchell's Plain. Thus one finds that political (e.g. competition and strife between political parties and teacher organisations), economic (e.g. government cost cutting to combat the economic recession, the struggle between labour and management), social (e.g. over population and high crime rate), and cultural issues (e.g. religious and sport affiliation differences), all exist in the area and impact upon the school population. Several points are worth noting about the area.

Despite its relative youthfulness, the suburb has been an active site of the struggle for freedom in the country. The United Democratic Front (UDF), a mixture of community organisations, united by its opposition to the South African government's Apartheid system, was founded in Rocklands, a suburb of Mitchell's Plain. Mitchell's Plain has also, however, a reputation for being unsafe. Its crime rate is one of the highest in the country and would appear to be indicative of a high level of general intolerance.

The fact that it is a relatively 'young' (approximately 18 years) settlement also means that most of the schools in the area do not have a long tradition in the community.

Only three of the secondary schools have been in existence for more than 10 years. Most of the schools are also staffed by relatively young, inexperienced teachers because the suburb was and still is a growth point of the greater Cape Town and as such offers the beginner teacher easy entry into the profession. Older, more established schools' staff establishments are saturated and thus young teachers stream into the relatively new schools. This situation has its own problems. As the schools are relatively 'new' they also present the best opportunity for the teacher who is eligible for promotion and thus most of the promotion posts are filled by relatively young teachers. At Rocklands Secondary there are 63 staff members. The average age of the senior staff - who number 15 - is 35.7 years. The departmental heads - who number 13 - have an average of 3.2 years' experience as departmental heads. All these demographic factors have an influence on the management of schools, and particularly the management of conflict within the schools.

Another factor which has a bearing on the functioning of the school and the occurrence of conflict (especially politically related conflict) is the close proximity of the schools to each other. This often results in political conflict having a 'conflagration' effect. During 1993, teachers, under the banner of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) went on a nation-wide strike on two occasions. This action caused a large amount of conflict on an interpersonal and group level in schools and between the education authorities, teacher unions and parents. The strike action was a part of a broader movement - the unionisation of teachers - to counter government unilateral actions in education. This unionisation in turn also formed part

of a broader struggle on a political and organised-labour front to democratise the country's governance system.

A consequence of the fact that most of the residents of Mitchell's Plain were uprooted from their previous residential areas which were reclassified as 'white' by the government (in the application of the Apartheid policy) and forcibly placed in Mitchell's Plain, is that there is anger and frustration in the community. This is aggravated by the discriminatory political dispensation in the country and the poor economic climate. Large sections of the suburb consists of small, tightly packed houses which have small grounds and most of the residents thus live 'cheek by jowl'. The area is thus a 'powder keg' and has, on occasion been the scene of violent outbursts with tragic consequences on the community.

## 2. GENERAL CONFLICT IN SCHOOLS

Schools in Mitchell's Plain generally have been marked by **intergroup**, **intragroup** and **interpersonal** conflict amongst the role players in their organisation. This conflict reflects and is related to the conflict in the broader society.

### Intergroup Conflict

Hodge and Anthony [1991 :535] define this as conflict... 'that occurs between two or more units or groups within an organisation.'

The polarisation of staff members based on the support for **political groups** is a symptom of the trend in the country as a whole. The reason for this is the fact that the country is in the midst of a painful political transition from a situation where the majority of citizens are disenfranchised to one where there will be more participation in the political life of the country. This polarisation takes the form of support for the 'progressives' and the 'conservatives'. I will distinguish between the two by regarding the supporters of the progressives as those in favour of the 'vigorous' methods of struggle e.g. mass action of the broad democratic movement in South Africa, viz. the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and other minor groupings, and the supporters of the conservative movement as those (not necessarily supporters of the National Party government) who oppose those methods of struggle in favour of a more peaceful negotiation process. This intergroup conflict, based on political allegiance, is prevalent in staff rooms in the whole district of Mitchell's Plain and takes the form of support or non-support for programmes of political action which involves educational institutions. The resultant effect on the cohesion in the staff room causes a split on the staff which, unless handled properly by the principal, affects the functioning of the school.

The intergroup conflict based on membership or support for **teacher organisations** is allied to the above mentioned conflict in that teacher organisations can be categorised in much the same way as 'progressives' and 'conservatives' above are. Thus there are supporters of the newly formed South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) - 'progressives', and those of the

Cape Teachers Professional Association (CTPA) who link up with their national body, the Union of Teachers Associations of South Africa (UTASA) - 'conservatives'. The action programs of these two organisations, although in the ambit of the teaching profession, deal mostly with access to decision making and are political in nature because education has been, and continues to be a site of struggle for the oppressed in the country. Schools in the area, and 'non-white' urban schools in general, have acted as a lightning rod for political upheavals in the broader society and when programs of action are launched there is much debate and wrangling about participation or non participation. This results in conflict and increased polarisation on the staff.

Membership of **religious groups**, with the inherent cultural differences it generates, accounts for conflict in schools in the area. Part of the problem is the suspicion - whether justified or unfounded or real - that there is discrimination in the school based on religion. There is a basis for such type of feelings if one considers that the staffs of two of the secondary schools in the area are disproportionately staffed by members of one religious group. This perceived discriminatory practice, based on membership of a religious group leads to conflict, polarisation and disunity amongst personnel.

There is also **inter-departmental** conflict based on membership of a group teaching the same subject e.g. between the geography and biology departments. This conflict takes the form of competition for scarce resources and for the attention of learners. If unchecked, the conflict leads to disunity and creates discord in the system.

Membership of different **power groups** within the school organisation has also led to conflict in schools. Thus there is conflict between members of the senior staff as a group and members of the ordinary staff. This has to do with power as it manifests itself in organisation, whether it is the origins of the power or the acquired power by virtue of position or seniority in the system. This type of conflict leads to staff discord and difficulty in getting educational programs accepted or completed.

Although currently submerged because of more 'prominent' forms of conflict, there has been conflict in schools based on allegiance to different **national sport groups**. Because of its prominence in the social life of the country, sport has become a 'site' of struggle and the schools have been used as a vehicle through which to channel the conflict. The vying of national sport interests for the allegiance of students and teachers has flowed over into the school and has led to conflict. This has had the effect of polarising the staff based on this allegiance and support. Thus there is a group supporting the National Sports Congress (broadly aligned to the political Congress Movement) and one aligned to the South African Council on Sport (SACOS). Schools and teacher groups have been alienated by national and provincial sport organising bodies because of membership of different groups.

Intergroup conflict also occurs between **schools and the administration**. This conflict has its origin in the perception that the administration is the manifestation of oppressive political structures in the country. It has its outcome in the wanton destruction of departmental property by pupils and the alienation between the government educational administrative staff and the school.

Intergroup conflict also manifests itself in the relationship between **parents and the school**. This arises out of suspicion of each others' role and leads to

- a. disinterest on both sides,
- b. the lack of support for the programs of the school,
- c. lack of pride in the school, and
- d. lack of faith in the ability of the school to influence the lives of students.

The use of the school to further the ends and objectives of community, political and teacher organisations is also prevalent in Mitchell's Plain.

### Intragroup Conflict

Hodge and Anthony [1991:535] describe this conflict as

that which... 'occurs among members of a group or between two or more subgroups within a group.'

Intragroup conflict which includes interpersonal conflict, often occurs amongst **senior staff members** of schools in the form of difference in perceptions of duties, differences which arise when problems are being solved and differences in levels of co-operation and commitment. Such conflict can have a damaging effect on the morale and the interpersonal relations on the senior staff and affect the functioning of the school as a whole. Problems are also sometimes experienced with the leadership style of the principal.

Intergroup conflict also exists amongst **informal groups** on the staff, e.g. teachers who work together or sit together at one table in the staff room. The source of this intergroup conflict is often :

- conflicting opinions,
- competition for the leadership of the group,
- economic status,
- teacher rank within the group,
- manipulation within the group, and
- membership of other opposing groups in the staff room.

Intragroup conflict also occurs between members of specific **departments** in the school e.g. the history department. Such conflict, for example, has to do with differences about the work allocation in the department, seniority in the department itself and in the school's organisation, the competition for scarce resources, different levels of commitment amongst teachers in the department, problems with the leadership of the department and membership of other departments and informal groups in the school.

### Interpersonal Conflict

Hodge and Anthony [1991:535] define this as being conflict which occurs 'between two or more organisation members at the same or different levels.' This type of conflict occurs in schools amongst teachers or amongst the principal and individual teachers as a result of differences in:- rank or seniority; economic status; task orientation; approaches to human relations; personality; professional values; work

allocation; religions; membership of opposing groups; and personal habits e.g. excessive alcohol intake.

### The Unionisation of teachers

The unionisation of teachers deserves special mention as a general cause of conflict in schools and conflict between the community, education authorities and teacher organisations.

The formation and recognition by education authorities of SADTU marked the start of the unionisation of teachers. Although teachers continue to organise themselves as professional associations, SADTU has now aligned themselves (though not officially) with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and formed part of the labour movement.

Since all teachers on the staffs of institutions did not join SADTU, opposing groups, based on opinions of the manner in which to face the government's racially discriminative and unilateral administering of education, developed in schools.

Strike action which was called for by SADTU twice during 1993 served to further exacerbate the differences that existed. Conflicts on group and interpersonal levels occurred in schools based on views of the actions of SADTU and how these actions affected education. The involvement of parents and community organisations in the fray further aggravated the situation.

### **3. THE MANIFESTATION OF CONFLICT AT ROCKLANDS SECONDARY**

The type of interpersonal, intergroup and intragroup conflict described above has manifested itself in various ways at the school. The following are practical examples of conflict situations.

#### Intergroup conflict

##### Support for political organisations

An example of intergroup conflict where the groups are defined by support for the actions of political organisations occurred on 12 February 1990, after the setting free of Nelson Mandela, a political leader who had been incarcerated for 27 years. There were teachers on the staff who felt that teaching time had already been utilised on the quest to have him released. On the other hand there was a group who felt that his release had to be celebrated by a program of action as called upon by the ANC. Matters were resolved when the principal allowed the ANC support group participation in the program but also insisted on a complete, although shortened school day.

##### Support for opposing teacher organisations

Staff conflict surrounding the support for opposing teacher organisation groups (SADTU vs CTPA), particularly with regard to the type of action to take in opposing the government's unilateral rationalisation measures in the Department of Education and Culture: House of Representatives was responsible for tension on the staff and provides an example of intergroup conflict. Some staff members feel that action

should take place outside school hours so as not to waste further teaching time, while others feel that for the action to be effective, it needs majority support and thus should take place during school hours. The fact that the program of action stretches over a long period of time has caused virtually every day from the second term onwards to be filled with tension. The intergroup and interpersonal conflict on the staff peaked during the times of the teachers strikes of 1993.

#### Membership of religious groups

Intergroup conflict based on membership of religious groups often takes the form of certain group members alienating themselves from the rest of the staff as a sign of 'protest' at not being consulted in situations where religion plays a role, e.g. having a staff party on the day of an important religious event. Conflict can also be generated when principals (who are followers of Islam for example) give preference to members of their own religious group when making appointments. The minority group members (who for example are Christians) in the staff room then feel threatened and isolate themselves from the rest of the staff.

#### Interdepartmental conflict

Conflict between departments often flares up at Rocklands Secondary. Recently conflict developed as a result of pupils in one department spending a large slice of their time on that particular subject to the detriment of another or all other subjects. The teachers in the two departments concerned, Biology and Geography, came into conflict with each other and this competition for pupils' time caused polarisation between the two groups.

### Differing authority levels

Groups with more authority in the school, e.g. senior teachers, often come into conflict with those with less authority and power on the staff. On Rocklands' staff this kind of conflict may be played out in the form of non-cooperation in the programs of the school as set out by the principal and the senior staff. A recent arrangement which was designed by the principal and the senior staff to accommodate an extra mural program which called for changes to the times and length of the school day - was rejected by non-senior staff members because it was managed in a 'top-down' manner and they were not consulted in the decision making process. Although a compromise was struck, the program has still not been implemented because of the organising group's continuing protest at the manner in which the decision was taken. This group was democratically chosen by the staff to organise the program.

### Membership of sport organising bodies

Allegiance to the National Sports Congress (NSC) and South African Council on Sport (SACOS) causes continual conflict within the staff as the root cause of the problem is a political one. SACOS members are not allowed to partake in events of the NSC and vice versa. Pupils of the school participate under the banner of SACOS. Although speakers of both sport groups have been given opportunities to speak to pupils and teachers, the conflict still exists. The conflict is further exacerbated by the fact that SACOS still administers all sport in schools. Tension developed recently when the cricket program at the school, which linked up with the NSC controlled

cricket authorities, caused SACOS to question officially the school's affiliation with NSC administered sport group.

#### Educational authorities and the school

The conflict between the Department of Education and Culture: House of Representatives and teachers at the school results from financial stringency and perceived negative bureaucratic measures, for example teacher rationalisation, on the part of the department. This conflict causes non-cooperation with some of the directives and administrative procedures of the department.

#### Intragroup Conflict

##### Senior Staff

Intragroup conflict among the senior staff occurs mainly when clear guidelines have not been given about a specific task, e.g. the organisation of the final examination. A recent problem developed when the teachers responsible for duplicating examination question papers could not keep up with those who were responsible for counting and preparing the papers for the next day. The question papers had not been handed in on time and this caused a delay. The resultant conflict caused a tension among the senior staff which affected their productivity.

##### Specific departments

Departments (e.g. the Biology department) have often identified problems when the organisation of the department is being planned for the following year. Teachers for example had problems with the work allocation - they perceived their load to be

heavier than that of the next teacher or felt that they were being relegated to teaching the junior classes. Problems are also often created when there is competition for scarce resources, e.g. microscopes. There is also conflict between the Biology teachers and the department head, as he is less experienced as a biology teacher, although better qualified, and appears to be harder working, than other teachers in the department.

### Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict is prevalent among the staff of Rocklands. Very few senior teachers (2 out of 14) have their lunch in the staff room as senior teachers are perceived to be 'from the office' and thus not welcome in the staff room. Interpersonal conflict also exists between those teachers who are perceived to be 'not pulling their weight' and those who are more committed to their work. An example of interpersonal conflict which is assuming alarming proportions is that existing between the school's principal and individual staff members. This type of conflict often takes the form of arguments and passive resistance on the part of teachers to the functioning of the school.

### Preliminary investigation

A preliminary investigation of the staff's attitude towards the principal and in particular the staff's expectations of his leadership style in specific situations was launched. It is clear that there exist differences between the principal and staff in their perceptions of the leadership style that is appropriate in specific situations. This provides an indication of the source of some of the conflict manifested among the

staff and necessitates further investigation. Staff members were also asked to place the principal's task and relationships orientation on the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid which is a "more descriptive attempt to conceptualise the task dimension and the people dimension of supervisory behaviour" [Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983:83]. His style of leadership according to the Grid can be conceptualised as high on task orientation and low on relationship orientation. This classification would conceptualise him as a 'dedicated' [Hoy and Miskel, 1982:255-257] principal, and in terms of leadership style, place him somewhere between a Benevolent Autocrat and an Autocrat. The actual placing on the Grid was 7,4.8 which validates the interpretation of the above comment and which seems to indicate that support exists for the view that conditions could be such that interpersonal conflict easily takes place on the staff with the principal as one of the main protagonists. The investigation also asked questions about the principal's concern for the completion of tasks and for relationships (people) on the staff. These questions were taken from Stogdill's studies at the Ohio State University with regard to the dimensions of leadership [Hoy and Miskel, 1982:224]. When a Likert scale is used to quantify the responses to the questions, the staff scores the principal higher on the system - orientated part of the questions than on the person - orientated part. This correlates with the staff's responses to the Blake and Mouton Grid (1964) in that the principal is seen as one who has more regard for the accomplishment of the task than for his relationships with staff members. Here again there is an indication that the principal's greater emphasis on task orientation than on relationships could be a fertile ground for fuelling interpersonal conflict. Principal - staff conflict is manifested in various ways, e.g. by the staff's avoidance of the principal, sharp criticism of him in informal groups,

passive and sometimes active resistance to the implementation of academic and extra-mural school programs, outright refusal to carry out instructions and lack of interest in the affairs of the school. In times of intergroup conflict this interpersonal conflict between the principal and staff members is accentuated.

#### 4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Group and personal conflict among the staff is creating high levels of tension amongst staff members of Rocklands Secondary and this is affecting their work relationships. This tension is also filtering down to the pupils, who, in the past have often been used in accentuating and escalating conflict between the principal and the staff, for example by being given instructions from teachers who are in conflict with the principal not to accept or hand letters to parents. The conflict has led to polarisation between supporters and opponents of the principal and affected the organisation and management of the school adversely.

A gradual disintegration of the cohesiveness of the staff and a proliferation of informal groupings have become evident. Conflict related to questions about political transition in the country (as set out in the manifestation of conflict at Rocklands Secondary) is affecting relationships in the school by the polarisation of opposing groups. Such conflict has affected staff discipline and consequently the reputation of the school, which has been known in the area for its good discipline, and led to the deterioration of relations with the immediate school community, i.e. the parents.

The group and interpersonal conflict has also led to the progressive weakening of relations between the principal and the staff and on occasion has led to staff members leaving the school.

There is a high level of suspicion at personal and group level amongst staff members and confidence in the management of the school is waning. This has increased polarisation among the staff and led to the undermining of the harmony amongst the staff.

Hypothetical Assumption:

Group and interpersonal conflict among the staff of Rocklands Secondary School has had a negative effect on human relations.

**5. AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

From the outset I would like to point out that the aim of the research is not to develop a model for conflict resolution in secondary schools or to develop organisational development strategies for intervention and resolution of the conflict. Rather, the research aims to make principals, teachers, educational administrators and parents aware that the conflicts exist in specific sectors of the school's relationships structure, on a group and interpersonal level. It aims at developing an understanding of the types of conflict occurring in the school with a view to dealing with it in an effective way and (most importantly) so that minimal damage is done to the teaching and learning that occurs in the school.

The aim of the study, then, is to analyse the conflict occurring at the school. It will focus specifically on the manifestations of group and interpersonal conflict and attempt to identify the origins of the conflict, investigate its nature, trace its stages and look at the manner in which conflict situations are currently being managed or resolved. This will be done with a view to suggesting basic guidelines which can assist principals and school administrators to identify different types of conflict and in so doing assist them to manage conflict for the betterment of the institution. Ultimately a policy model of conflict management at the school will be formulated.

The development and holding of workshops for principals, deputy principals and heads of departments will be proposed to educational authorities. The purpose will be to make school leaders aware of the type of conflict they can expect amongst staff members and ways of managing it effectively. I intend to make use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of investigation into personal and group conflict amongst the staff. The quantitative methods will comprise collecting data about the general, biographical and professional details of the teachers and then matching this with data on: their views of conflict; the nature, extent and causes of conflict; conflict indicators; and current conflict resolution strategies. In the qualitative evaluation of the data, general impressions will be formulated about the views, causes, extent, and nature of conflict and the strategies currently being used at the school to resolve the conflict. These impressions will be gained also as a result of the use of chi square tests for a R-by-2 arrangement [Mulder, 1982:172].

These methods are suitable for the material since data for independent groups will be generated and divided up into more than two categories by the use of a questionnaire and frequencies in the responses will then be observed.

## 6. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study will focus on all **teachers** (63) at Rocklands Secondary school and include the principal. It will request biographical data from them and solicit their opinions about the nature, origin, effects and possible resolution of conflict among the staff.

## 7. DELINEATION OF KEY TERMS

### **Conflict:**

Conflict exists in a relationship when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in their values, needs or interests, and purposefully employ their power in an effort to defeat, neutralise or eliminate each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction [Anstey, 1991:4].

### **Intergroup conflict:**

The type of conflict that occurs between members of different groups in an organisation.

### **Intragroup conflict:**

The type of conflict that occurs within a group between members of the group.

### **Interpersonal conflict:**

The type of conflict that occurs between individuals in an organisation.

**Role:**

A set of expected behaviour patterns attributed to someone occupying a given job in the organisation [Robbins, 1983:422].

**Organisation:**

The planned coordination of the collective activities of two or more people who, functioning on a relatively continuous basis and through division of labour and a hierarchy of authority, seek to achieve a common goal or set of goals [Robbins, 1983:421].

**Competition:**

The process by which social units, observing certain social rules, work against each other for the same scarce rewards [Goodman and Marx, 1978:74].

**Conflict management:**

The integrating style of handling conflict so that energies, expertise, and resources are channelled towards the synergistic solution of common problems or attainment of organisational objectives [Rahim, 1992:38].

**8. METHODOLOGY OF PROCEDURES**

The following steps indicate the methodology of this study:

- a) an introduction to the study would be given
- b) a review of the literature would be undertaken
- c) a survey in the form of a questionnaire would be given to the staff in which responses would be required concerning the views, nature, causes, effects, and current management of school conflict

- d) the statistics would then be collected, collated, quantified and analysed to ascertain whether there are correlations in the data or trends that can be identified
- e) Conclusions would be drawn based on the integration of the statistical analysis and the literature reviewed

## 9. POSSIBLE PROBLEMS TO BE INVESTIGATED

The most important problems identified for study include the following:

- a) the placing into context of educational change in South Africa in the light of political changes in the country
- b) the role of the bureaucracy in heightening conflict
- c) the involvement of teachers in professional teacher organisations and how it affects relationships at schools
- d) the lack of and the deficiencies in the training of school principals and other management staff in conflict management in high schools
- e) the allocation of resources (including human and physical) and accommodation in the schools
- f) the divisions in sport and religion in the community

## 10. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The research has been structured in six main divisions:

### **1 Introduction**

the background to the study,  
the occurrence of conflict in schools,  
the problem to be investigated, and  
the aim of the study.

## **2 Review of the Literature**

## **3 The Empirical Investigation :**

the aim of the investigation  
the information gathering method  
the results

## **4 Findings, conclusions and recommendations**

## **5 Appendixes**

## **6 References**

### **11. THE RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study is important for school management generally and for the Mitchell's Plain area in particular. Factors, mentioned above in the Background to the Study, would indicate that the area is experiencing 'growing pains' typical of settling communities. These factors are spilling over into the schools and affecting the already sensitive situation among the staff of Rocklands Secondary in particular and local secondary schools in general, in the area. There is thus a need to investigate the conflict in order to become more aware of its root causes, its existence and its implications for the management of schools in general and for school policy that pertains to staff conflict in particular. The study would be made available to principals, staffs and educational administrators in Mitchell's Plain in order to heighten the awareness of conflict and its potential, if not managed properly, to seriously affect the functioning of the school and the quality of education it delivers.

It is envisaged that the study will assist principals in **formulating institution based policies for the handling of conflict** at their schools.

## 12. REASONS FOR CHOOSING ROCKLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

The reasons why I chose Rocklands Secondary as the focus of my study are the following :

1. I have been teaching at the school since 1984 (11 years)
2. I have progressed at the school from being a department head to senior department head, to deputy principal and have acted as principal for a six month period. I am thus well acquainted with the school and its problems and feel confident to interpret them based on the tendencies coming out of my research.
3. I live near to the school - 10 minutes' drive and thus contact with the school and travelling-time constraints will not be a problem.
4. I have a very good personal and working relationship with the principal and access to school records will thus not be problematic.
6. I have 20 years' teaching experience, 10 of which have been spent in the primary school, and have been teaching in the Mitchell's Plain area for 13 years.
7. The school is achieving good results but these could be improved upon if conflict on the staff could be better understood and managed.
8. Resources are also available to me at the school.

Permission for research to be done at the school

I have been in verbal contact with the Director of Education at Head Office and the Regional Chief Inspector of Education of Mitchell's Plain for permission to use the schools' staff for the research and to access the records of the school and the Regional Office if necessary. A formal letter of request was forwarded to the Executive Director of Education, the chairman of the school committee and the principal and staff in this regard. The reply from the Department of Education and Culture: House of Representatives giving permission for the study, is included [Appendix B].

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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#### 1. THE SCHOOL AS AN ORGANISATION

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on conflict, particularly conflict in schools. Emphasis is placed in this review on perspective of conflict found in Organisational Theory. For purposes of scholarliness a brief summary of the New Sociology of Education approach to conflict is also included. It must be stressed, however, that the approach which informs this work comes from Organisational Theory. This theory is explored here to provide a basis for interpreting conflict at Rocklands High school. There is agreement in the literature surveyed that schools are formal organisations with a fair degree of complexity [Handy and Aitken, 1986:32; Paisey, 1983:Preface; Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983:28; van der Westhuizen, 1991: 617]. Sergiovanni and Starratt [1983] state the primary reasons for this complexity as “...the sophistication of their technology, the diversification of their goals, the varied nature of their tasks, and their patterns of structure.” Handy and Aitken however, are of the view that the complexity is based on the “expectations laid upon them and the critical place that they have in society” [Handy and Aitken, 1986:32].

Schools as organisations are nevertheless distinctive. While Handy and Aitken [1986] state that the context of the issues facing the school are different from that of other organisations, Van der Westhuizen [1991] is more specific in this regard viz. “... the

school...is not focused on certain input and output processes”, “... there can never be any question of production based on a profit motive.” Paisey, [1983, Preface] in referring to the distinctiveness of the school, classifies the school as “a species of public sector organisations”.

Schools can be classified as organisations based on the general characteristics of organisations. While Handy and Aitken [1986:32-33] mention specific issues, Van der Westhuizen [1991: 597] listed these general characteristics as:

- a) ...a certain composition and structure
- b) ...orientated towards aims and objectives
- c) ...use of certain methods to realise its objectives such as differentiated tasks and management
- d) ...continuity of events in an organisation (1991:597).

As a consequence of the acknowledgment of schools as organisations, scholars and researchers draw on the universal literature in organisation theory and management studies aside from general literature in education, in commenting upon organisational activities of and within schools [Paisey,1983: Preface].

## **2. VIEWS OF ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT**

For the purposes of this study, organisational conflict will be regarded as a ‘social phenomenon’ [Robbins, 1974:24] occurring between two social units which may be individuals or groups and which is sometimes referred to as ‘dyadic conflict’ [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:890].

There has been a change in the views of, and attitudes towards conflict in organisations [Stoner and Wankel, 1986:380; Hodge and Anthony, 1991:529; Gray and Starke, 1980:306]. Stephen P. Robbins, who traced this 'evolution' [Stoner and Wankel, 1986:380], labelled these 'transitions in conflict thought' [Robbins, 1986:294] as the **traditional**, **behavioural** and **interactionist** views of conflict in organisations.

#### Traditional views of organisational conflict

The traditional approach (also referred to as the 'classical' approach by Huse and Bowditch, [1977:202] Hodge and Anthony [1991:529] and Rahim [1986:4]) to organisational conflict has been variously interpreted by a number of authors, such as [Stoner and Wankel, [1986] Robbins, [1986] Brown, [1983] Plunkett and Attner, [1989] Williams, [1978] Gray and Starke, [1980].

Traditional organisational theorists view organisational conflict as 'undesirable' [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:202; Hodge and Anthony, 1991:529], and 'dysfunctional' [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:202; Owens, 1987: 245]. According to the traditional theorists, organisational conflict needed to be eliminated [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:202], avoided [Ibid; Robbins, 1986:294] and 'stifled at almost any cost' [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:529]. The classicists viewed organisational conflict as 'disruptive, dangerous and indicative of underlying social pathologies' [Brown, 1983:6] and managers regarded it as a problem to be 'diffused or suppressed' as soon as possible [Ibid:7]. Organisational conflict was seen as 'bad' or detrimental for organisations

[Rahim, 1986:4; Gray and Starke, 1980:306] and proof that there was something wrong with the organisation [Ibid; Stoner and Wankel, 1986:380]. Traditional organisational theorists considered organisational conflict to be unnecessary and harmful [Stoner, 1978:343; Plunkett and Attner, 1989:439] and indicative of a malfunction in the organisation [Robbins, 1986:294]. Deetz and Stevenson deemed conflict in organisations an 'unnatural departure from human sociability' [1983:11].

According to Rahim [1986:4], organisational structures like 'rules and procedures, hierarchy and channel of command' were thus set up in 'Traditionalist' organisations in order to minimise the chances for conflict amongst members.

#### Behavioural view of Organisational Conflict

The Behaviouralists' argument that conflict is a natural and inevitable outcome of organisational life [Robbins, 1986: 294] is an important difference from that of Traditionalists who view conflict as inherently unnatural in organisations.

Conflict is regarded as a frequent occurrence [Stoner, 1978:344; Plunkett and Attner, 1989:439] in the daily functioning of organisations by the Behaviouralists. Plunkett and Attner [1989] report that this frequency of conflict is ascribed by Behaviouralists to people's nature, the allocation of resources and the complexities of organisational life. According to Robbins [1986:294] the Behaviouralists reckon that this conflict 'need not be evil' (in an allusion to the Traditionalists' views of organisational conflict) and that it has the potential to be beneficial to the organisation [Robbins: 1986]; Stoner, 1978:344]. The Behavioural view of organisational conflict is that it is

something harmful that has to be resolved or eliminated once it arose [Robbins: 1986; Stoner: 1978]. Robbins [1974:13] feels that the Behaviouralists' view of organisational conflict seeks to rationalise its existence.

#### The Human Relations approach to organisational conflict

Nightingale [in Strauss, 1975:143], although admitting an oversimplification, has separated the underlying assumptions about organisational conflict into two extremes or camps viz. the Human Relations Approach and the Pluralist Approach [Strauss: 1975]. Hodge and Anthony [1991:529] and Rahim [1986:6] refer to the Human Relations school of organisational thought as the Neoclassical school.

Human Relations organisational theorists regarded conflict as bad [Nightingale in Strauss, 1975:143] undesirable, [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:529], and unnecessary [Williams, 1978:346]. According to Nightingale [in Strauss, 1975:143] the environment played a major role in organisational conflict and this is where corrective and preventative measures should be taken. Hodge and Anthony [1991:529] refer to this organisational environment as the social system of the organisation. They reiterate this view of Nightingale [1975] that this is the area in which the potential for conflict should be lessened by a 'nurturing, accommodating social network' [1991:529]. Organisational conflict was thus not inevitable according to the Human Relations theorists [Nightingale in Strauss, 1975:143] and could be prevented by altering the environment [Strauss : 1975].

An important point of agreement between the Traditionalists' view of conflict in organisations and that of the Behaviouralists and Human Relations Approach is that conflict needs to be eliminated [Williams, 1978:346; Huse and Bowditch, 1977:202; Stoner, 1978:344; Nightingale in Strauss, 1975:143; Rahim, 1986:6]. This needed to be done in order to increase the effectiveness of organisations [Rahim, 1986:6].

### The Interactionist view of organisational conflict

The Interactionist view represents the most recent perspective of conflict in organisations [Robbins, 1986:294]. Current views of organisational conflict including the Pluralist Approach as set out by Nightingale [in Strauss, 1975:143] subscribe to this perspective or aspects of it.

According to this view, conflict is regarded as good, necessary and desirable for organisational health [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:202; Stoner, 1978:344; Hampton, Summer and Webber, 1973:669; Plunkett and Attner, 1989:439; Robbins, 1986:294; Hodge and Anthony, 1991:530].

The positive aspects of this necessity and desirability for conflict in organisations include that it:

- a) is healthy and useful for organisations [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:202],
- b) keeps workers on their toes [Huse and Bowditch:1977],
- c) improves performance and overcomes staleness and inertia in organisations [Nebgen, 1979:25],

- d) its absence would lead to poor and unchallenged decisions [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:207],
- e) stimulates revitalisation of the organisation [Deetz and Stevenson, 1983:12],
- f) facilitates group cohesiveness and improves group and organisational effectiveness [Robbins, 1986:307; Stoner, 1978:344],
- g) is a source of organisational renewal [Lindelow and Scott, 1989:23],
- h) leads to a search for solutions within the organisation [Stoner, 1978:344],
- i) can stir creativity in the organisation [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:530; Brown, 1983:7] and
- j) is beneficial to administrators [Margolis and Tewel, 1988:2].

A difference between the Traditionalists, the Human Relations Approach and the Behaviouralists on the one side and the Interactionists on the other, is that the latter view organisational conflict as inevitable, unavoidable and often legitimate [Rahim, 1986:7; Owens, 1987:246; Kelly, 1979:12; Hodge and Anthony, 1991:530; Deetz and Stevenson, 1983:11; Gray and Starke, 1980:307; Ray and Ray, 1988:288; Hampton, Summer and Webber, 1973:669] and that it cannot be permanently suppressed.

According to Robbins [1974:13] the interactionist view of organisations ...

1. recognises the absolute necessity of conflict,
2. explicitly encourages opposition,
3. defines conflict management to include stimulation as well as resolution methods, and

4. considers the management of conflict as a major responsibility of all administrators.

In spite of the continued negative connotations attached to conflict in organisations, there has been a 'shift in the way that conflict is conceptualised' [Rahim, 1986:6]. Its occurrence is now accepted as a *fait accompli* by organisation theorists. Attention is now focused on ways of managing this conflict and harnessing it in the interests of more effective organisation.

Osler, writing in Track Two [1993:1], a publication of the Centre for Intergroup Studies, sums up the phenomenon of conflict in organisations by stating that "Organisations worldwide are inherently conflictual." De Witt, referring directly to conflict in schools says that

(translated from Afrikaans)

To accept that conflict, even in an EXCEPTIONALLY well organised school, can be weathered, is unrealistic wishful thinking. Organisational conflict is therefore a management reality (1990:122).

Despite the positive aspects of conflict in organisations there are authors who feel that conflict is 'frustrating for most people' [Deetz and Stevenson, 1983:10] and that much of it is still dysfunctional for organisations. [Stoner and Wankel, 1986:380] De Witt states that:

(translated from Afrikaans)

Conflict, as a facet of management is mostly given a negative connotation in South African and overseas literature. Moreover, it is regarded at best, as a less pleasant facet of a leader's management task - the culmination of problematic situations (1990:122).

This negative aspect of organisational conflict is regarded by Huse and Bowditch [1977:207] as the other side of a 'two sided coin.' Organisational conflict is considered a force for destruction [Owens, 1987: 244; Nebgen, 1979:25] and potentially harmful for organisational health [Ray and Ray, 1986:288]. Too much conflict is thought to be dysfunctional and undesirable for the organisation [Stoner, 1978:344; Huse and Bowditch, 1977:203; Nightingale in Strauss, 1975:147; Kelly, 1979:12]. Summing up the discourse surrounding the potential of conflict in organisations, Hampton, Summer and Webber [1973:670] point towards a central theme which is that 'too little manifestation of conflict is stagnancy, but uncontrolled conflict threatens chaos.'

#### The persistence of a negative view of organisational conflict

There seems to be a problem with the attitude to and handling of conflict amongst personnel in organisations, including schools. For although, as the Interactionist school of thought indicates, well managed organisational conflict is necessary for change and growth in organisations, the Classical view still dominates organisations [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:530; Gray and Starke, 1980:306; Robbins, 1986:296]. A 'plausible' reason for the persistence of this Traditional view of conflict in organisations and the apparent 'conflict paradox' is advanced by Robbins:

we live in a society that has been built upon the traditional view. Institutions, for the most part, have historically reinforced anticonflict values and emphasised the importance of getting along with others (1986:296).

Hodge and Anthony [1991:530], referring to Robbins, expound upon this and trace the inculcation of the traditional view of conflict from the child's acceptance of the decision making role of his parents, to the subordinate role children play in schools under teachers. This pattern is continued into religious beliefs where anticonflict sentiment plays a major role and eventually into the roles of managers of organisations in whom the quality of 'getting along with others' is a sought after commodity [Hodge and Anthony:1991].

### 3. CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONS

Current organisational theorists view conflict as a precursor to and an instrument of change in organisations [Stoner, 1978:344; Maidment, 1987:Preface]. The role that conflict plays in change in organisations is regarded as 'vital' [Jefferson, 1986:113] and 'central' [Jamieson and Thomas, 1974:321]. The relationship between conflict and change is seen as an interdependent one [Thomas and Bennis in Jamieson and Thomas, 1974:322]. While Stoner and Wankel [1986:380] see conflict as a means to bring innovation into the organisation and Osler [1993:1] acknowledges its potential for growth, Reece and Brandt [1987:319] feel that when change is imposed onto an organisation, conflict could result. The association between conflict and change in organisations during the period of transformation and transition in South Africa is succinctly summed up by Sue Collins [1993:2] in her article 'Working through Change' in Track Two [August 1993, Vol 2 No.3]

In the workplace we are acting out the changes... And because change is stressful and difficult for most of us, the workplace has become the setting for major conflicts at both the organisational and personal level.

#### 4. THE DEFINITION, NATURE AND CLASSIFICATION OF ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT

##### The definition of organisational conflict

The apparent difficulty in framing an all-encompassing definition of organisational conflict, has led to a variety of definitions being formulated. This observation is expressed by Morton and Grace [1988: 888], Owens [1987:245], Robbins [1986: 293] and Stoner and Wankel [1986: 379].

Stoner and Wankel [1986] refer to 'semantic difficulties' and 'different conceptions' whereas Robbins [1986] refers to 'divergent meanings' in expressing the difficulty of drafting a definition to fit the multitude of situations - in organisations and in society generally - in which the 'phenomenon' of conflict occurs. Robbins puts it succinctly

Conflict is a term that has acquired a multitude of meanings. Much of the semantic jungle has been created by the number of disciplines.... who are concerned with conflict (1974:22).

Pondy [in Thomas, 1972:359] uses four 'states' or 'conditions' to cover the use of the term 'conflict' in the literature. This handling of the definition of the term seems to span the spectrum of possibilities. They are:

- (a) antecedent conditions (for example, scarcity of resources, policy differences) of conflictual behaviour,
- (b) affective states (e.g. stress, tension, hostility, anxiety, etc.) of the individuals involved,

- (c) cognitive states of individuals, i.e. their perception or awareness of conflictual situations, and
- (d) conflictual behaviour, ranging from passive resistance to overt aggression [Thomas, 1972].

An analysis of some of the literature pertaining to conflict in organisations seems to suggest that malfunctions in interaction between people or groups create differing perceptions amongst these parties. When and if these differences are felt to be threatening, the parties act upon the threat. This action upon the threat - the outcome of the differing perceptions - is conflict, and can manifest itself in different ways.

These malfunctions in interactions which are termed oppositional or antagonistic interactions by Robbins [in Margolis and Tewel, 1988:1] and which are analogous to Pondy's antecedent conditions of conflictual behaviour [Pondy in Thomas, 1972:359] between individuals or groups take the form of :

- a) incompatible activities, goals, views, aims, values; [Deutsch, 1973:10; Frost and Wilmot in Ray and Ray, 1986:288; Owens, 1987:245; Hodge and Anthony, 1991:528; Nightingale in Strauss, 1975:142]
- b) unrealised expectations [Likert and Likert, 1976:3]
- c) divergence, differences, disagreements; [Margolis and Tewel, 1988:1; Owens, 1987:245; Deetz and Stevenson 1983:12; Stoner, 1978:345; Anstey, 1991:4; Reece and Brandt, 1987:319; Everard and Morris, 1988:80]

- d) competition for scarce resources [Du Pisani, 1984:6; Rahim, 1986:1; Coser in Rahim, 1986:1; Stoner, 1978:345]
- e) frustration and deprivation [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:203; Margolis and Tetel, 1988:1]
- f) interference, blockage [Gray and Starke, 1980:300; Robbins, 1986:293]
- g) exclusive behavioural preferences [Rahim, 1986:1].

The component of the definition of organisational conflict which has the most dramatic and potentially productive or damaging effect on organisational health is the behaviour that ensues from the 'antecedent conditions.' In examining the literature this ensuing behaviour is variously stated as :

- a dynamic process, [Nebgen, 1979:27; Pondy in Thomas, 1972:359; King, 1981:13; Margolis and Tetel, 1988:1; Jamieson and Thomas, 1974:322]
- a force, [Maidment, 1987:Preface; Owens, 1987:244; Williams, 1978:346; Dubrin, 1974:301]
- a type of behaviour, [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:203; Gray and Starke, 1980:300; Jamieson and Thomas, 1974:322; Nightingale in Strauss, 1975:142]
- an action, [Deutsch in King, 1981:13; Robbins, 1986:294]
- an active striving, [Likert and Likert in Morton and Grace, 1988:888; Reece and Brandt, 1987:319; Owens, 1986:245]
- a struggle [Coser in Anstey, 1991:2]

In this study the definition of conflict has been analysed from the different perspectives of the authors consulted. It seems apparent that a comprehensive definition, to define conflict as it occurs in society - whether this be in organisations or in the broader society, is still lacking. The contributions of the various authors in order to clarify the definition have thus far been helpful towards the creation of a comprehensive definition.

## **5. THE NATURE/CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT**

Organisational conflict is a social phenomenon located in the interaction between units in the social structure of the organisation. King [1981:13] regards it as 'a functional part of the social process,' which is, by implication, a view also adhered to by Du Pisani [1984:7] who considers conflict a "social relationship.....which implies a structure with situational, behavioural and attitudinal dimensions".

In keeping with the Interactionist viewpoint [Robbins : 1986], the current view of the occurrence of conflict in organisations considers conflict a common and everyday event in organisations regardless of their size and function' [Reece and Brandt, 1987:317; Nebgen, 1979:25; Webber, 1979:446]. This 'routineness' of conflict can also be applied to schools [Jamieson and Thomas, 1974:322]. Because of the diversity of groups involved in the school 'unanimity seldom exists' and conflict, especially over goals and means, occurs [Nebgen, 1979:25; Jamieson and Thomas, 1974:322; Plunkett and Attner, 1989:436]. The potential, of the diversity of the groups involved in the functioning of schools, for conflict creation is exacerbated by the implied

interdependence of the education process [Kelly, 1979:12]. Thompson [in Kelly, 1979:12] states that an increase in the interdependence, the pressure from outside forces and the variety of groups, in schools, would 'increase the probability of stress and conflict.'

There are symptoms which indicate the existence of conflict in organisations. Bennett [1991:129] has listed these symptoms as :

- frequent and unwarranted arguments among employees;
- communication problems;
- destructive competition;
- exhibition of inflexible and insensitive attitudes;
- withholding of information from each other;
- unfair criticism of certain individuals;
- excessively formal interpersonal relationships

In a more specific treatment of the symptoms of conflict in schools, Frey and Young [1978:18] and Likert and Likert [1976:217] mention "teacher, student, and parent militancy; parent apathy; teacher strikes; increased absenteeism; increased vandalism; student demonstrations and disruptions; and differences within the school system and with parents about teaching methods and curriculum content and emphasis". When the indications of organisational conflict are overt as in the symptoms mentioned above, they would seem to be easier to handle. Everard and Morris [1988:81], however, consider covert organisational conflict to be 'more dangerous' for the school as the

parties involved do not communicate openly but canvass support from supposedly influential parties.

The comments of Lipsky [in Isherwood, 1985:215] regarding the nature and characteristics of social conflict involving groups would seem to be applicable to organisational conflict in its specific application to schools:

- Conflict is considered to be a 'political' process, the aim of which is the attainment of group goals.
- The tactics used for the attainment of these goals are bargaining, persuasion and coercion.
- The media are used to "generate" news and use is made of third parties.
- Characteristics of this type of conflict include the withholding of information, the distortion of facts, and the further formation of groups.

#### Classification of organisational conflict

A literature survey and analysis of organisational conflict would seem to be served by the classification of conflict into types as it occurs in organisations. A typology of conflict occurring in organisations would also enhance the understanding of conflict with a view to limiting its destructive potential and utilising its constructive capabilities towards the creation of a more effective organisation.

### 1. Classification based on the source of the conflict

According to Rahim [1986:15] organisational conflict can be classified on the basis of 'the antecedent conditions which led to the conflict.' These were listed [Rahim, 1986:15-16] as:

- **Affective conflict** which occurs when two social units realise that their feelings and emotions are incompatible;
- **Conflict of interest** between two social units who are competing for scarce resources;
- **Conflict of values** occurs when two social units differ on issues on the basis of their differing values or ideologies;
- **Cognitive conflict** which occurs when two parties realise that their perceptions or thought processes are dissimilar;
- **Goal conflict** which occurs when the goals being striven for by two parties are inconsistent or different;
- **Substantive conflict** which occurs when social units disagree on their task or issues over content.
- **Realistic vs. Nonrealistic conflict** which occurs when the conflict is real or when it is an expression of a party's need for releasing tension [Rahim, 1992:20].
- **Institutionalised vs. noninstitutionalised conflict**
- **Retributive conflict**
- **Misattributed conflict**
- **Displaced conflict** [Rahim, 1986:21].

## 2. Classification based on the severity or quality of the conflict

Steven Bailey [in Lindelow and Scott, 1989:340-341] suggested categorising organisational conflict in this way. He proposed 'levels of conflict severity' [Lindelow and Scott, 1989] and at the **first level** he placed the 'endless simmer of petty personality conflict reflecting the chemistry and foibles of interacting humans' [Lindelow and Scott, 1989:340]. The **second level** involves inconsistencies with regard to program and budgetary matters. [Lindelow and Scott, 1989] At the **third level**, Bailey [in Lindelow and Scott, 1989:341] placed 'revolutionary conflict' which was a struggle surrounding the 'legitimacy of the regime' rather than the priorities of the program of action.

## 3. Classification based on structure, group and cognition

In an ERIC Clearinghouse Research Action Brief [Oct.1978:2], three types of conflict thought to be most applicable to schools are discussed. It is suggested [ERIC: 1978] that structural conflict, group conflict and cognitive conflict exist simultaneously in schools.

**Structural conflict.** Corwin [in Research Action Brief No.3, 1978:2] relates some of the conflict to the organisational structure of the school. In classifying conflict in schools in this way, he mentions five organisational characteristics which serve as variables :

- \* structural differentiation (the number of administratively distinct but functionally interdependent subunits),
- \* participation by subordinates in the authority system,
- \* regulating procedures (rules, supervision),

- \* staff heterogeneity and stability (faculty age, faculty additions) and
- \* interpersonal structure (social contact outside of school, lunching patterns).

**Group conflict.** It is generally accepted that groups form an inherent part of organisations. As such it can be safely assumed that the chances of there being divergent interests in the organisation is high. This divergency and possible competition that develops in organisations because of the existence of groups can act as sources of organisational conflict. [ERIC, 1978:3]

**Cognitive conflict.** In the Research Action Brief [1978:4] this classification of organisational conflict is based on the view that human judgement is not always entirely rational but that it is also based on 'experience, social background and personal psychology.' Brehmer, quoted in the Research Action Brief [ERIC:1978] states that these cognitive differences can develop into fullscale emotional and motivational conflict.

#### 4. Classification of conflict according to issues

Schmidt and Tannenbaum [in Lindelow and Scott, 1989:340] classify organisational conflict according to disagreement on the issues at stake for the parties involved.

These disagreements can take place over :

- facts, as in the relevancy and factual content of information or differing views of respective power,
- goals, as in the outcomes aspired to by the organisation or sectors thereof,

- methods, as in 'procedures and strategies' for attaining the goals of the organisation,
- values or ethics, as in 'the way power should be exercised' [Lindelow and Scott:1989].

#### 5. Classification based on the outcomes of conflict: Functional or dysfunctional conflict

This type of conflict is also labelled constructive / destructive conflict [Robbins, 1986:295; Deutsch, 1973:17] and is based on its consequences for the performance or goals of the organisation [Stoner and Wankel, 1986:381].

Du Pisani [1984:7] categorises functional / dysfunctional conflict in terms of positive and negative outcomes. These outcomes are interpreted as 'long-term consequences of events at an interface' [Du Pisani, 1984:7] that can affect many aspects of a conflict situation :

- a) distribution of resources,
- b) flow of information,
- c) quality of decisions, or
- d) future relations among participants [Ibid].

Plunkett and Attner [1989:436] base the functional / dysfunctional classification of conflict on the way that the conflict is managed in the organisation. This perspective is shared by Anstey [1991:7]; Deutsch, King [in Anstey, 1991:7]; and Stoner [1978:345].

The classification of organisational conflict as functional / dysfunctional albeit based on the outcomes for the organisation, would seem to be too rigid and clear cut. Robbins [in Lindelow and Scott, 1989:340] alludes to this 'defect' in the categorisation by stating that the demarcation between what is functional and what is dysfunctional is neither clear nor precise. Robbins [Ibid] goes further

“No level of conflict can be adopted at face value as acceptable or unacceptable... The level that creates healthy and positive involvement towards one group's goals, may in another group or in the same group at another time, be highly dysfunctional”

In classifying conflict in organisations as functional/ dysfunctional or constructive/destructive it would seem that this classification would be more encompassing were it to be based not only on the outcomes for the organisation, but in the way that the conflict is managed, the performance of the organisation and the organisational health and climate.

#### 6. Classification based on the state of affairs

Deutsch, [1973:11] based his categorisation of conflict in this manner on the relationship between the objective and subjective perceptions of the conflicting parties regarding the conflict. This qualifying of the mindset of the conflicting parties towards the state of affairs or the conflict episode allows Deutsch [1973] to characterise six such types of conflict :

- a) **Veridical conflict.** This type of conflict 'coincides with realities' [The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1988:1193].

According to Deutsch [Ibid] 'this type of conflict exists objectively, is perceived accurately, and is not contingent upon features in the organisational environment that are easily altered'.

- b) **Contingent conflict.** This type of conflict is dependent on rearranged circumstances which are not accepted by the conflicting parties [Deutsch, 1973:12]. It is based on changed environmental conditions which are not recognised by the conflicting parties.
- c) **Displaced conflict.** In this typology of conflict, what is being acted out by the conflicting parties is the manifest conflict but the underlying conflict is not being dealt with. In Deutsch's view the parties are in conflict over 'the wrong thing' [1973:14].
- d) **Misattributed conflict.** According to Deutsch this type of conflict is 'between the wrong parties and usually over the wrong issues'. In qualifying this type of conflict further, Deutsch mentions that the tactic of 'divide and rule' is a phenomenon that often occurs [1973:14].
- e) **Latent conflict.** Deutsch describes this as a conflict that should be occurring but is not. The conflict is not being experienced as it should because it has been 'repressed, displaced or misattributed or it does not yet exist psychologically' [1973:14].
- f) **False conflict.** In this typology of conflict there is no objective basis for its occurrence. Deutsch [1973:14] indicates that this type of conflict implies misperception or misunderstanding.

### 7. Classification according to social interaction levels in the organisation

Several authors have classified organisational conflict according to the social interaction levels at which it occurs in the organisation [Owens, 1987; Hodge and Anthony, 1991; Gray and Starke, 1980; Stoner and Wankel, 1986; Plunkett and Attner, 1989; Rahim, 1986; De Witt, 1990].

As this type of conflict occurs between social units in the organisation, the individual / person or group/s are involved. Thus this type of conflict is typecast as intrapersonal / intra-individual conflict; interpersonal conflict; intra-group conflict; intergroup conflict; and individual vs. group conflict.

A more detailed analysis of intrapersonal or intra-individual conflict, where it pertains to organisations, is omitted from the focus of this literature survey as it is excluded in the research proposal. A reason is that other (as in unrelated to the organisation) factors in a person's psychological make-up influence an individual's actions in the organisation. This leads to complexity in analysing the precise effect of these factors on organisational health, climate and conflict. Suffice to mention that intrapersonal conflict as it pertains to organisations "is felt within a person and is caused by being pushed in two or more directions at once resulting in role overload" [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:531].

**Interpersonal conflict.** This type of conflict occurs between two or more individuals in the organisation [Owens, 1987:244]; [Gray and Starke, 1980:304; Schofield, 1977:6; Rahim, 1986:16]. De Witt [1990:123] rates interpersonal conflict as the 'most

general and visible' type of conflict occurring in schools although he considers it to be mostly about low profile matters. Rahim [1986:16] remarks that this type of conflict can take place between individuals on the same or different hierarchical levels in the organisation.

**Intra-group conflict.** According to Owens [1987:244] this type of conflict occurs within social units (groups) in organisations. Groups are formed for varied reasons in organisations but the main reason seems to be that they feel they can accomplish more through collective behaviour than they can as individuals [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:532]. There are times, however, when group members cannot work together harmoniously and intra-group conflict arises [Hodge and Anthony:1991]. Hamner and Organ [in Hodge and Anthony, 1991:532-533] take intra-group conflict a step further by classifying it into :

- role conflict which occurs in the course of carrying out one's assigned activity in the group,
- issue conflict which occurs when the individual values and orientations of group members conflict when the group gets together to decide on an issue,
- interaction conflict which occurs when the required cooperative behaviour from the group member is not forthcoming.

**Intergroup conflict.** This type of conflict is experienced between two or more groups or social units [Owens, 1987:244; Hodge and Anthony, 1991: 535; Plunkett and Attner, 1989:436] or subgroups [Rahim, 1986:16] within an organisation. Gray and Starke [1980: 304] regard intergroup conflict as occurring between 'aggregations of

people, regardless of size' in the organisation. Hampton, Summer and Webber [1973:672] view "interdepartmental conflicts over authority, jurisdiction and work flow" as intergroup conflict and regard this type of organisational conflict as exceedingly common.

Schofield [1977:7] categorises conflict between the school as a group and a group(s) outside of the school as intergroup conflict. In comparison with Schofield [1977], De Witt [1990:125] is more specific with regard to conflict between groups where the school as a whole is one of the groups involved. In this case, De Witt mentions 'school-community' conflict in which (in his view) communities attempt to use the school to attain religious, social or political goals [1990:125].

**Individual-group conflict.** In this type of conflict in organisations, the individual as one of the conflicting parties, is not a group member and is as such 'going up against the group.' Individual-group conflict, (as defined above) as opposed to intra-group conflict [Owens:1987] may arise 'from an individual's effort to promote his own interests' [Hampton, Summer and Webber, 1973:672]. Gray and Starke [1980:304] define one type of individual-group conflict as that which occurs when the 'boss' (as an individual) conflicts with subordinates (as a group) who 'collectively disagree with the course of action the boss wants to take'.

#### 8. Pondy's theoretical framework for the classes of conflict that occur in organisations

Pondy developed three models to explain the occurrence of conflict in organisations [Thomas, 1972:372-379; Hodge and Anthony, 1991:545-549]. The Bargaining model,

the Bureaucratic model and the Systems model are the consequence of Pondy's utilisation of material pertaining to the levels and bases of organisational conflict [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:545].

**The Bargaining Model.** Pondy considers the incongruity of the demands of groups and individuals in the organisation for limited resources a cause of 'a reasonable measure of the potential conflict among a set of interest groups' [in Thomas, 1972:372]. Thus he classifies the conflict resulting from the competition for goal achievement and scarce resources as a model of conflict that occurs in organisations [Thomas, 1972: 357].

**The Bureaucratic Model.** According to Pondy [Thomas, 1972: 374] this model classifies the conflict occurring in organisations 'along the vertical dimension of a hierarchy' and alludes to conflict concerning the basis of authority. Hodge and Anthony [1991:547] refers to the 'zones of indifference' surrounding a subordinate, with the zone closest to the subordinate being the area where he/she will experience the least conflict.

**The Systems Model.** In this model, Pondy bases his classification of organisational conflict on the problems developing from 'among the parties to a functional relationship' [in Thomas, 1972:376]. In the Systems model, Pondy explains lateral, or intergroup conflict as that which 'stems from situations that require a high degree of cooperation and coordination' [in Hodge and Anthony, 1991:548].

From the literature reviewed it is apparent that conflict in organisations is classified from different vantage points. These viewpoints enable one to get a broader picture of how pervasive the phenomenon of conflict is in society and of the variety of perspectives from which it can be analysed. The different ways of classifying organisational conflict, as has been portrayed in this literature survey, give one an idea of how differently the concept is viewed by organisational and social theorists.

## 6. CONFLICT MODELS

If organisational conflict is to be managed effectively, there needs to be a more thorough understanding of this phenomenon as it occurs in organisations. This understanding should include the knowledge of which conflict behaviour has the potential for constructive outcomes for the organisation and which conflicts could possibly be destructive [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:892]. Models of dyadic conflict have been developed by organisation theorists to understand conflict behaviour in organisations. Two types of models will be analysed, namely process models and structural models.

While **process models** attempt to :

...understand conflict phenomena by studying the internal dynamics of conflict episodes. ... the objective is commonly to identify the events within an episode and to trace the effect of each event upon succeeding events [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:892].

**Structural models** [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983] :

:attempt to understand conflict phenomena by studying how underlying conditions shape events, ... to identify parameters which influence conflict behaviour and to specify the form of that influence. Because

these conditions or parameters are relatively fixed or slow changing...I have referred to the model...as a structural model”.

## Process Models

### 1. Pondy's Model

According to Pondy, five stages of a conflict episode can be distinguished: latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict and conflict aftermath [Pondy in Thomas, 1972:360].

**Latent conflict.** This stage of the conflict comprises conditions that can lead to conflict. These ‘underlying sources of organisational conflict’ include :

- competition for scarce resources,
- drives for autonomy, and
- divergence of sub-unit goals [Pondy in Thomas:1972].

**Perceived conflict.** According to Hodge and Anthony [1991:542] this is a condition in which the parties become ‘aware of the potential for conflict’. As such it has been labelled the ‘cognitive aspect’ of the conflict episode because of the attachment of significance to the stimuli that bring about this awareness [Hodge and Anthony:1991].

**Felt conflict.** In this stage the conflict becomes ‘personalised’ [Pondy in Thomas, 1972:362] because ‘emotions are excited and feelings become hostile’ [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:542]. Two reasons for this personalisation are forwarded by Pondy [in Thomas, 1972:362] :

- (a) the whole personality of the individual is involved,
- (b) the inconsistent demands of an efficient organisation and individual growth which create anxieties within the individual.

**Manifest conflict.** Hodge and Anthony [1991:542] feel that this is the stage in which adversarial behaviour is exhibited and that these behaviours can range from aggression to apathy to strict adherence to rules.

**Conflict aftermath.** This is the state of affairs which exists after the conflict has occurred. It can be cooperative, if the conflict was constructively resolved, or it can lead to the 'recycling of the episode to a further stage of latent conflict' [Hodge and Anthony:1991] if it is not adequately resolved.

## 2. Thomas's Model

Five main events are characterised by the Thomas model. These are frustration, conceptualisation, behaviour, others' reaction, and outcome.

**Frustration.** In this event, conflicts seems to originate from one party's perception that another party is frustrating the satisfaction of one of its concerns [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:895]. While the conflict might originate from...

- disagreement,
- denial of a request,
- violation of an agreement,
- insult,
- active interference with performance,

- vying for scarce resources,
- breaking a norm, etc,

the concerns might cover the areas of...

- status,
- autonomy,
- formal objectives,
- promotion,
- scarce economic resources,
- behavioural norms and expectations,
- compliance with rules and agreements, etc. [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983]

**Conceptualisation.** This event comprises...

- (a) the definition of the conflict issue in terms of the concerns of both parties and
- (b) some notion of possible action alternatives and their outcomes [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:896].

**Behaviour.** This event entails the parties' conflict behaviour. Three elements of behaviour and their determinants are considered - orientation, strategic objectives, and tactics [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:900].

- a) Orientation of the party is categorised on the basis of the degree to which he would like to satisfy his own concerns and the degree to which he would like to satisfy the concerns of the other.
- b) Strategic objectives are the outcomes envisaged by the protagonists and entails the amount of satisfaction of each party at the end of the conflict.

- c) Tactical behaviour entails behaviour for avoiding issues, appeasing other, or striking equitable compromises [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983: 900-903].

**Interaction.** This event comprises interaction and is examined by Thomas [1983:904-909] from the perspective that the party's behaviour is strongly influenced by psychological dynamics which are triggered by the Other's behaviour and the self-conscious efforts of the parties to manage the conflict between them.

**Outcome.** Subsequent to the interaction between the parties is the outcome, whether this involves an explicit or tacit agreement. The outcome also involves the conflict aftermath and the long term effects of the conflict [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:909].

### 3. Rahim's Model

In synthesising the works of differing scholars in the field, Rahim developed a five stage model of the dynamics of organisational conflict which can be used to describe interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup conflict episodes [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:543]. The stages comprise antecedent conditions, behavioural changes, structure formation, decision process, and the conflict aftermath.

**Antecedent conditions.** This stage comprises the sources of conflict in organisations. Rahim [1986:61] classifies these as behavioural and structural and also concludes that demographic factors such as sex, age, tenure, and education may also affect the conflict situation. Behavioural conditions include 'personalities, philosophies and

orientations of the conflicting parties' [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:543]. Structural conditions allude to task and organisational structure [Hodge and Anthony, 1991].

**Behavioural changes.** Hodge and Anthony [Ibid:544] feel that this stage refers to 'aggressive behaviour accompanied by a reinforcing attitude.' Rahim [1986:61] describes this stage as one in which the conflicting parties are less interested in contributing to organisational goals than in winning and ensuring that the other side loses. Characteristics of this stage is the;

- a) perceptual distortion,
- b) negative stereotyping, and
- c) absence of objective evaluation of information of the other parties in the conflict [Rahim:1986].

**Structure formation.** This stage is characterised by the 'restriction of communication and interaction' amongst the parties [Rahim:1986]. Hodge and Anthony [1991:544] comment that in this stage the conflict is 'institutionalised and as formal as possible' and that the interaction between parties is limited to written communication and adherence to rules.

**Decision process.** As a result of the change in the form of interaction between parties, the decision making process that is used to solve problems is unusual [Rahim, 1986:62; Hodge and Anthony, 1991:544] and not a consensual reaching of agreements which satisfy both parties.

**Conflict aftermath.** Quoting Filley's [1975:17] comment on the period immediately after the conflict, viz.

Usually the resolution of conflict leaves a legacy which will affect the future relations of the parties and their attitudes towards each other. Rahim [1986:62-63] considers the subsequent attitudes of the parties to each other and to future conflict in the aftermath to the conflict episode.

## Structural Models

### Thomas's Structural Model

Thomas's structural model of organisational conflict centres on the behaviour of parties that shape events in a dyadic relationship [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:912; Owens, 1987:252; Anstey, 1991:12]. Consequently the structural model is thus concerned with:

- the aggregate mix of behaviours used by the two parties during negotiations - the prevalence of collaboration, competition, avoidance, etc.,
- the underlying parameters which shape those episodes,
- a number of pressures and constraints upon the parties [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:912].

In the structural model, [Dunnette, 1983] dyadic conflict is outlined by four types of structural variables :

- a) behavioural predispositions,
- b) pressures from surrounding social environments,
- c) response to the conflict incentives in the situation,
- d) rules and procedures which constrain behaviour.

**Behavioural Predispositions.** In outlining the predispositions of the behaviour of conflicting parties, Thomas specifically notes that this does not mean that these predispositions are inflexible and rigid. They are considered rather as tendencies which are formed by the motives and abilities of the party in the conflict [Dunnette, 1983:913]. Berkowitz, [1962] quoted by Thomas [Dunnette, 1983] refers to parties having a 'hierarchy of responses for dealing with conflict situations'.

**Social Pressure.** In the structural model [Dunnette, 1983:914] these pressures are seen to emanate from outside the dyadic conflict and from two sources:

- a) constituent pressure from groups which the party represents, and
- b) ambient social pressure from neutral parties or bystanders.

In considering constituent pressure, Thomas noted the 'obligation' and often 'coercion' that individuals belonging to groups are under, to conform to group norms.

He states [Dunnette: 1983] that

"Group norms sanction representative behaviour which the group perceives as contributing to group goals, and punish other behaviour".

Parties in organisational conflict could also be subject to pressure from groups outside of the dyadic relationship. These pressures might exhibit the 'norms, values and interests' of a broader social system of which the dyad is part, e.g. 'cultural values, organisational and work group norms, and public interest' [Dunnette, 1983:915].

**Incentive Structure.** Thomas [Dunnette, 1983:916] interprets incentive structure to mean

“the interrelationship between the concerns of the two parties - the manner in which the satisfaction of Party’s concerns is linked to the satisfaction of Other’s concerns”.

Because of the structural model’s emphasis on the conditions which influence behaviour in a conflicting dyadic relationship, Thomas is concerned with the ‘realities’ of the issues which have an influence on the concerns of both parties [Dunnette:1983].

In Thomas’s model, conflict behaviour is affected by two aspects of the incentive structure...

1. the stakes involved in the relationship, and
2. the extent to which there is conflict of interest between the concerns of the parties [Dunnette, 1983: 917].

**Rules and Procedures.** These rules and procedures pertain to the joint decision making machinery governing negotiations between the conflicting parties, in Thomas’s structural model of conflict [Dunnette, 1983:922].

Thomas [Dunnette, 1983:922-923] distinguishes three components of this decision making machinery :

- i) decision rules which dictate substantive decisions on issues,

- ii) negotiating procedures which constrain the interaction of the two parties, and
- iii) procedures for the involvement of third parties to resolve conflict issues through mediation or arbitration.

### Conclusion

The two types of models discussed characterise different aspects of conflict behaviour and 'complement each other' in the following ways :

- a) The structural model tends to be useful for suggesting systematic changes, while the process model tends to be helpful in managing an ongoing system.
- b) The structural model suggests long-run improvements in relationships, while the process model helps one cope with crises [Thomas in Dunnette, 1983:894].

Attempts to manage organisational conflict effectively such that the outcome of the conflict is constructive for the organisation and the parties involved are relatively satisfied with the outcomes, would seem to necessitate that aspects of both the process and structural models be carefully considered in conflict management.

## 7. CONFLICT PERSPECTIVES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

In his review of approaches to organisational conflict Haralambos comments,

Interactionists have often been accused of examining human interaction in a vacuum. They have tended to focus on small-scale face to face interaction with little concern for its historical or social setting. [1980:551].

The debate surrounding the role of education vis-a-vis society and more specifically the benefits education is supposed to confer on society as a whole exposes contradictions of the education in the lives of people. These contradictions appear to provide both a medium and the grounds for the existence or development of conflict in education and its institutions.

For our purposes the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire depicts conflict between educators as the struggle around the ideal of the need to “conscientise” students as opposed to moulding them to be “good citizens” - a process which Freire called the banking concept of education [translation by Myra Bergmen Ramos, 1972:48]. In the banking concept of education, man is reduced to a manageable being, [Freire, 1972:47] able to adapt to the world as it is. Reacting to this, Marxist sociologists and certain educationists claim that education serves to reproduce capitalist labour power [Blackledge and Hunt, 1985:179].

Insofar, however, as certain educators and students resist banking in this perspective are inherently prone to conflict and become sites of resistance to authority.

In characterising schools as sites of resistance or struggle [Giroux in Haralambos and Holborn, 1992:248; Blackledge and Hunt, 1985:180], schools are seen as institutions where a struggle is taking place in which different classes, ethnic and religious groups all try to influence both the content and the process of schooling [Giroux in Haralambos and Holborn, 1992:248]. Giroux regards schools as

contested terrains marked not only by structural and ideological contradictions, but also by collectively informed student resistance. Schools therefore are 'sites' for ideological struggle and for competition between competing class cultures [1983:260].

In *Education and Power*, [1982:14] Michael Apple takes the relationship between education and the economy further. Whereas in previous views he saw education as producing (through the curriculum - hidden or formal) docile workers that industry needed, he modified this belief to regard schools as autonomous and voluntaristic sites of resistance, conflict and struggle where

pupils, and to some extent teachers, constitute an oppositional tendency and countervailing pressure within the school system [Apple, in Blackledge and Hunt, 1985:180].

The idea that education presents an arena of social conflict is also expressed by Carnoy and Levin [1985:27]. They perceive an inherent tension in public schools between reproducing inequality and producing greater equality. The basis for this tension is ideology as it relates to the reality of social position, material wealth and political power [Carnoy and Levin, 1985:27].

It seems apparent then that views of conflict in education are based on the idea that 'groups within societies have fundamentally different interests' [Haralambos and Holborn, 1992:241].

In summarising this section in the light of the present discourse surrounding education in the 'new', democratic South Africa, one finds that conflict perspectives of the sociology of education, can be located in the debate.

The role of Soweto students in 1976, in resisting the 'banking concept of education' as expressed by Paulo Freire by protesting against the imposition of the 50/50 language medium policy in Black education [Hartshorne, 1992:74], bears testimony to the view that resistance, struggle and conflict result from persisting with this approach to education. Teachers became a part of this general movement to transform education and to improve it so that it becomes more responsive to the needs of communities. Progressive teacher organisations were at the forefront of the struggle against discriminatory education practices of the then South African government and debates surrounding the nature of their involvement or non involvement were prevalent in many staffrooms in disadvantaged communities throughout the country. The organisational conflict at Rocklands Secondary School which is the subject of this thesis, represents a microcosm of the broader social conflict occurring in education in South Africa which in turn can be located in the struggle for a new, democratic political dispensation in the country. The movement to transform South African education is thus part of a wider social, political and economic transformation occurring in the country.

## 8. INFORMAL GROUPS IN ORGANISATIONS AND THE CAUSES OF ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT

### Introduction

An analysis of the literature has revealed several factors which have been identified as causing conflict in organisations. These are varied and cover a wide spectrum and an attempt will thus be made in this study to group them together in order to expedite their understanding. The grouping of the causes of organisational conflict will not be done according to the levels in the organisational structure but under the following sub-headings: communications, organisational structure, personal behaviour factors and external factors. Grouping the causes of conflict according to organisational levels could lead to duplication as there are causes of conflict that occur in intra- as well as inter-group interactions, e.g. communication problems. The causes of organisational conflict impact upon the social interaction of individuals and groups in organisations.

Since this research is focused only on group and interpersonal conflict occurring in schools it is deemed facilitative to discuss groups in organisations. Hersey and Blanchard [1982:285], in commenting upon groups in their relation to the organisations in which they exist, state that 'A total organisation is really a composite of its various working units or groups.' Groups will thus be discussed in order to :

- a) create a better understanding of the characteristics and role of groups in the functioning of organisations, and

- b) augment our perception of the relationship between groups and organisational conflict.

### Informal groups in organisations

#### 1. Why individuals in organisations join informal groups

Strauss and Sayles's [1980:98] comment that :

“Feeling part of a large organisation is often a vague, nebulous attachment, but sharing experiences with immediate colleagues is among the most meaningful and potent sources of job satisfaction”

serves as a succinct introduction as to the reasons why individuals in organisations join informal groups.

Individuals often feel intimidated and even threatened by the formal organisation with its authority structures, rules and procedures. This feeling of insecurity [Williams, 1978: 285; Plunkett and Attner, 1989:229] and powerlessness leads people to join informal groups in organisations. The prospect of ‘collective action as a means of countering organisational power’ [Williams, 1978:285] offers the individual joining the group, protection and a safe haven from seemingly impersonal organisation decisions and actions.

Plunkett and Attner [1989:229] state that through joining informal groups in organisations, individuals are able to ‘maintain social and cultural values’ that they hold in common. Membership of groups also allows for social interaction, status and

the development of self esteem which lead to fulfilment for individuals [Plunkett and Attner:1989; Stoner, 1978:292-293]. The desire for better remuneration and improved working conditions through collective action and the social pressures in organisations for individuals to become part of this process are also reasons why people join informal groups [Williams, 1978:285-286].

## 2. Group functioning

Sergiovanni and Starratt [1983:154-156], mention general propositions and assumptions about groups which would lead to a better understanding of their dynamics in organisations :

- a) Group life is a natural form of social organisation for human beings.
- b) In and of themselves groups are neither good nor bad.
- c) Groups have unique "personalities" which are conceptually similar to individual personalities.
- d) A group culture emerges that includes norms of behaviour and a value system...that are unique to the group.
- e) Individuals behave differently when they assume group roles,
- f) Goals held for the group but not by the group tend to be rejected by the group.

### 3. Group interaction

Schofield [1977:11] identified three stages of group interaction:

- **the interpersonal conflict phase** is that in which no feelings of group cohesiveness have yet developed and there are still individual differences which 'separate' group members,
- **the confrontation stage** develops when group members gradually commit themselves to the specific task that the group is concerned with,
- **the substantive conflict stage** is reached when group members subjugate their individual preferences to those of the group. In this stage group-generated issues take precedence as consensus becomes the means by which decisions are reached and actions are taken.

### 4. Group cohesiveness

According to Deutsch [1973:72] group cohesiveness refers to 'the strength and types of linkages that bind the members of a group together'. This cohesiveness can be gauged by :

- a) interpersonal congeniality,
- b) the desire to remain a member of the group, and
- c) positive attitudes towards the group's functioning, amongst other measures [Deutsch, 1973:72].

Robbins [1986:194] feels that group cohesiveness is determined by the amount of time that individuals in organisations spend together interacting. Deutsch [1973]

refers to this as 'greater communication between members.' Robbins [1986:195] also regards the severity of the initiation that the member had to undergo to join the group as a determinant of group cohesiveness. Deutsch [1973:72] alludes to this when he mentions the 'greater readiness of group members to be influenced by the group' as associated with group cohesion. The amount of consensus amongst group members regarding attitudes and beliefs which relate to the functioning of the group, and the sense of responsibility of group members towards each other are also cited by Deutsch [Ibid] as factors that can be associated with group cohesiveness.

Robbins [1986:195] points out that cohesiveness decreases as group size increases as it is difficult for members to interact with each other and to maintain consistency in striving for common goals.

Prior success in collective bargaining makes group cohesion easier as it generates in the member a feeling that the group is able to positively affect decision making and actions in the organisation [Robbins, 1986:196].

In referring to those individuals in the organisation as the 'outgroup', Deutsch [1973:73] cites outgroup hostility as a factor which causes ingroup cohesion. Robbins [1986:196] alludes to this when he mentions external threats as having an influence on group cohesion. Deutsch [1973:76] also regards intergroup conflict as a cause of ingroup cohesion and refers to ingroup cohesion and outgroup hostility as factors which influence one another.

Strauss and Sayles [1980:105] feel that the group commitment that is generated, nurtured and strengthened by the factors that create and enhance group cohesiveness, can create problems because:

As group members convince themselves that their norms, values and perspectives are the correct ones, they inevitably come into conflict with outsiders and often with the larger organisation.

#### 5. The impact of informal groups on organisations

Davis [in Plunkett and Attner, 1989:238] mentions the negative and positive impact that informal groups have on organisational functioning.

##### Negative impact

- **Resistance to change.** In order to protect its values and beliefs informal groups often resist change in the organisation. This resistance can take the form of 'roadblocks' being placed in the way of change.
- **Conflict.** As a result of group commitment to group norms, individuals in organisations are often faced by the prospect of having to serve two 'masters.' This can lead to intra-personal as well as interpersonal conflict.
- **Rumour.** The spread of 'unofficial,' unverified information via the 'grapevine' can create communication problems for an organisation.
- **Pressure to conform.** Group cohesion places pressure on individuals in organisations to conform to group norms. The informal group member's behaviour is thus regulated by the possibility of sanctions of varying degrees being threatened if he/she does not adhere to accepted group positions and practices.

### Positive impact

- **Makes the total system effective.** The input and reactions of informal groups enhance the functioning of the organisation by making its decisions more democratic and allowing for the actions that are taken to be acceptable.
- **Provides support to management.** The involvement of informal groups in the decision making process acts as a support mechanism to management and lends legitimacy to the actions of the organisation.
- **Provides stability in the environment.** Whereas the formal organisation is often experienced as cold and impersonal by those belonging to it, the informal group can provide a 'place' where individuals are accepted and where a sense of belonging is present. This can lend stability to the organisational environment.
- **Provides a useful communication channel.** As an environment that is seen to be more 'personal,' the informal group provides an occasion for social information to be exchanged and for work-related conversation to take place.
- **Encourages better management.** The acknowledgement and awareness (by those managing organisations) of the existence and potential power of informal groups in the organisation acts as a 'check and balance' on the decisions and actions that are taken in organisations [Davis in Plunkett and Attner, 1989: 238-240].

The foregoing section provides an overview of the importance of groups in the functioning of organisations and how groups fit into processes and structures that lead to conflict in organisations.

## 9. CAUSES OF ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT

### 1. Communication

Poor communications has been referred to as the most cited and the major cause of organisational conflict [Stoner, 1978:349; Robbins, 1983:299; Nebgen, 1979:25; Lindelow and Scott, 1989:341; Reece and Brandt, 1987:320; Robbins, 1974:31].

The Concise Oxford Dictionary [1988:190] defines communication as the 'science and practice of transmitting information.' Anstey [1991:39] considers information 'an important source of power in intergroup situations.' The lack of shared information [Anstey, 1991:40] and the breakdowns in, and faulty communications cause conflict in organisations [Lindelow and Scott, 1989:341; Stoner, 1978:349]. Anstey [Ibid] also feels that the lack of information and inadequate information transfer 'reduces the parties' capacities to understand each other,' leading to potential conflict situations. Dissimilar information and the misunderstandings that develop from ineffective communication are also cited by Reece and Brandt [1987:320] and Gray and Starke [1980:311] as factors that generate conflict in organisations.

Smith [in Litterer, 1969:379] states that ineffective communication creates 'barriers between echelons' in the organisational structure, leading to conflict situations. The use of 'technical jargon' is sometimes an ineffective manner of communicating information and is a potential source of conflict in organisations [Gray and Starke, 1980:311].

Robbins [1974:32; 1983:299-300] discusses the problem of ineffective communication as a common source of conflict in organisations by using the pseudo-conflict model of Rhenman. Rhenman [in Robbins, 1974:32] regards ineffective transmission of information as a source of conflict and has termed the ensuing conflict 'pseudo-conflict' in order to distinguish it from conflict based on 'real' disagreements. In the model, three specific causes of pseudo-conflicts were depicted by Rhenman [Robbins:1974] as :

- a) semantic difficulties
- b) insufficient exchange of information, and
- c) noise

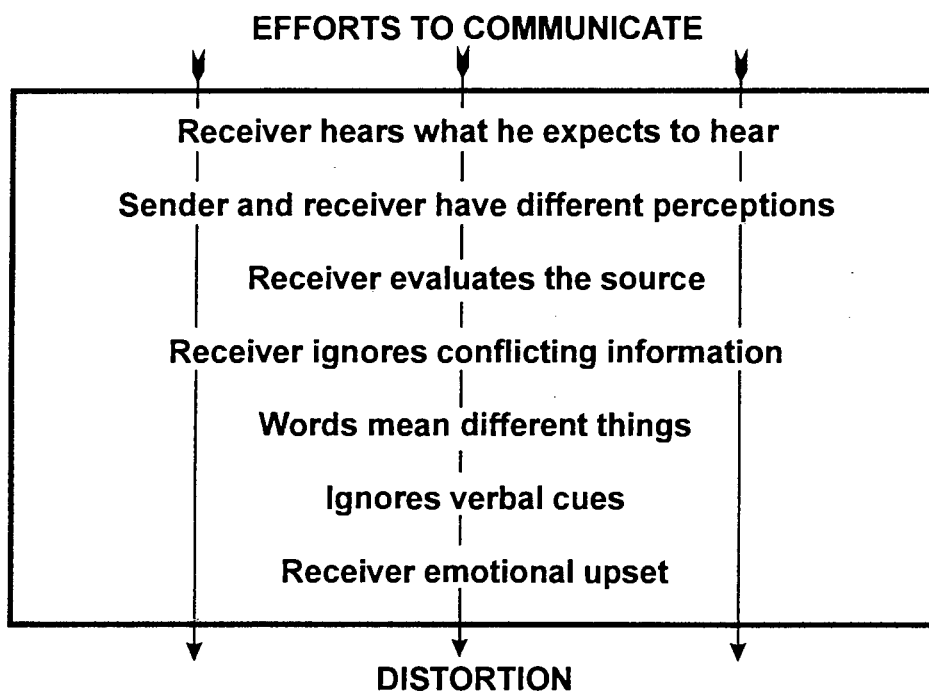
Semantic difficulties were referred to as the problems that arise when two people do not speak the same language and therefore cannot understand each other properly [Robbins: 1974].

Insufficient exchange of information was ruled as emanating from the constraints caused by the imperfections of the communications system of the individual [Robbins,1974: 32-33].

Besides the physical implications of 'noise' as a disturbance in communication, Robbins also interpreted 'noise' to include the errors in the transmission of information that are made by the sender [Robbins,1974:33].

By utilising the model of Berlo [Robbins, 1974:33-34] together with that of Rhenman [Robbins:1974], Robbins purports to have clarified the sources of communication distortion.

Strauss and Sayles's summary sets out the barriers to communication in a model :



[Robbins, 1974:35]

Robbins [1974:35] considers insufficient information, semantic difficulties in the message and noise from the communication channel sources of conflict in organisations. In qualifying semantic difficulties, Robbins [1974:36] referred to different connotations of words and the fact that 'Things mean different things to different people.' Robbins [1974:37-38] does point out, however, that 'perfect knowledge' as opposed to ambiguous information does not preclude conflict from occurring in organisations.

In reference to the use of channels of communication as a source of conflict in organisations, Robbins [1974:39] concludes that :

conflict is stimulated by both the filtering process of communications when it passes between levels and by divergence of communications from formal authority lines.

Robbins [1974:40] comments upon the consequences of the frequency of communication as a source of conflict in organisations by concluding that:

while an insufficient exchange of information and an abundance of information both increased conflict, a middle ground should be sought if one's objective is neither to increase or decrease conflict.

## 2. Personal behaviour factors

Personal behaviour factors have been distinguished from other conflict-causing factors in the organisation by the feature that they are 'largely' uncontrollable by the principal [Robbins, 1974:51; Lindelow and Scott, 1989:342]. These factors include personality traits, differences in goals, role dissatisfaction, status incongruities, and differences in values and perceptions [Robbins:1974; Lindelow and Scott:1989]. Although these personal behaviour factors lead to interpersonal conflict in organisations, some of these factors can also be attributed to groups and thus precipitate intergroup or individual vs. organisation conflict.

### Personality traits

Referring to empirical studies, Robbins, [1974:51] Lindelow and Scott, [1989:342] and Nebgen [1979:25] identified high authoritarianism, high dogmatism and low self-esteem as personality traits that predispose towards conflict in organisations. Nebgen [1979] feels that such individuals 'tend to misinterpret the behaviour of others,' are more apt to distort reality and thus are more prone to getting involved in interpersonal conflict in organisations. These traits have been found to be 'positive correlates of increased conflict' [Nebgen, 1979:25].

Plunkett and Attner [1989:438] cite individual approaches as a source of organisational conflict and define it by adding that individuals have differing ways of 'dealing with others and situations.' Other authors go further. Knutsen [1979:14] considers tolerance levels for disagreement, and Schofield [1977:10] regards low tolerance for ambiguity and desire for consistency as sources of organisational conflict. Dubrin [1974:304] feels that aggressive tendencies of some individuals result in organisations sometimes being used as 'arenas for the expression of conflict.' In a view that is more in keeping with the Interactionist philosophy of organisational conflict [Robbins:1986], Stoner [1978:349] cites individual styles as a source of conflict. Stoner adds that an individual's enjoyment of conflict, debate and argument can be used, discriminately, to 'stimulate organisation members to improve their performance' [1978:349].

### Status incongruities

Personal status, or how an individual perceives him/her-self 'in relationship to others' [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:205] in the organisation, can lead to conflict if the individual's perception differs from the one that the organisation 'bestows' on him/her. The incongruities between personal and organisational status attribution 'can significantly affect his performance and thus the potential for conflict' [Robbins, 1974:52]. The dimensions by which status is attributed in organisations include length of service, age, education, and remuneration [Robbins, 1974: 53]. Robbins [1983:298] and Hodge and Anthony [1991:537] feel that where the personal status of an individual in the organisation is changed, 'especially when they disturb a given accepted hierarchy' [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:537], conflict can develop.

### Role dissatisfaction

The behaviour expectations that the organisation has of its members, ie. the role demands, [Hampton, Summer and Webber, 1973:684] can cause conflict in organisations because individuals bring to a role 'a set of hopes and aspirations.' [Robbins, 1983:299] Hampton, Summer and Webber [1973] state that role conflict originates from:

- a) conflict between individual capacity and role demands,
- b) conflict between role desires and role demands,
- c) ambiguity or incompatibility in role demands, and
- d) conflict between the roles a person must play.

Hamner and Organ [in Hodge and Anthony, 1991:533] cite research that points out that high levels of role conflict are related to:

- low levels of job satisfaction,
- low confidence in the organisation,
- a high degree of job related tension, and
- a high propensity to leave the organisation.

Organisational conflict can thus develop between groups or individuals, from pressures to perform according to varying standards and/or expectations [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:533] from the organisation, individuals or groups.

### Differences in Goals

There is general consensus in the literature surveyed that differing goals amongst parties is a source of conflict in organisations [Anstey, 1991:13; Plunkett and Attner, 1989: 437; Stoner, 1978:348; Williams, 1978:348; Robbins, 1974:53; Huse and Bowditch, 1977:203; McInerney and Bennett, 1987:45].

Differences in goals may occur between :

- a) two individuals who have to work together but cannot agree on how to do so [Pondy in Owens, 1987:250].
- b) the personal goals of managers and those of employees with the goals of the organisation [Williams, 1978:348].
- c) subunits of the organisation as they become differentiated or specialised, [Stoner, 1978:348]

d) individuals and the organisation [Plunkett and Attner, 1989:437].

The differences that exist in organisations due to goal divergence or 'mutually exclusive structured interests' [Robbins, 1974:53] is the reasoning behind the premise by Dahrendorf in Robbins [Ibid] that 'conflict in organisations is inevitable.'

#### Differences in values and perceptions

Ryan [1992:259] defines values in an organisational context as 'beliefs, standards or wishes that underpin the workings of an organisation.' Hodgkinson [in Ryan, 1992:259] describes values as 'concepts of the desirable which tend to act as motivating determinants of behaviour.'

Differences in the attitudes, values and perceptions of individuals and groups can be linked to other sources of conflict in organisations [Stoner and Wankel, 1986:383].

Reece and Brandt [1987:174] regard value conflicts as responsible for some of the most common and deep-rooted interpersonal conflicts in organisations which emanate from employees from differing generations, races, cultures, ethnic or religious backgrounds.

Gray and Starke [1980:311] conclude that differences in perceptions as a source of conflict between individuals and groups in organisations results from the different life experiences and the consequent world views which organisation members have accrued. Dubrin [1974:306] considers the conflict that develops between union and

management as a 'most readily understandable example' of the phenomenon of the clash of values leading to organisational conflict.

### 3 The organisational structure

#### Limited resources

There seems to be general consensus in the literature that scarce or limited resources are an important source of conflict in organisations [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:198; Litterer in Huse and Bowditch, 1977:203; Owens, 1987:250; Lindelow and Scott, 1989:342; Stoner, 1978:347; Plunkett and Attner, 1989:437; Rahim, 1986:104; Hodge and Anthony, 1991: 534; Robbins, 1983:296].

Rahim [1986:104] suggests that scarce resources result in conflict in organisations because 'jurisdiction over property, authority, and responsibility have not been clearly defined.' Robbins would seem to agree with Rahim's [1986] view and considers the 'jockeying for resources and other power bases' a consequence of low formalisation i.e. the rules and regulations that standardise ways for units to interact. [Robbins, 1983:296] Fair treatment of parties in a situation where resources are limited would seem to be important if the potential for conflict is to be lessened. [Lindelow and Scott, 1989:342] The conflict that develops in schools as a result of decisions taken (about the utilisation of financial resources) at an organisational level higher up in the bureaucracy than the school, is another example of how limited resources becomes a cause of conflict [Lindelow and Scott:1989]. The conflict that stems from retrenchment policy making and labour/teachers union versus administration conflict

would seem to be partly concerned with the struggle for scarce resources for example financing.

#### Heterogeneity of staff

Robbins [1983:298] mentions that the differences in background, values, education, age and social patterns lessens the measure of collaboration amongst social units in the organisation and by implication the potential for conflict is heightened.

#### Leadership style

Leadership style as a source of conflict has not been conclusively established, [Robbins, 1974:45; Rahim, 1986:86] A number of leader attributes and characteristics have however been associated with an increase in the potential for conflict in organisations :

- a) close, one-to-one supervisory style [Robbins, 1974:45]
- b) a more directive style of leadership [Rahim, 1986:86]
- c) adversary management where employees are to be watched closely and out-manoeuvred [Reece and Brandt, 1987:321]
- d) an overly competitive climate fostered at various levels [Morton and Grace, 1988:889]
- e) favouritism shown by principals [Morton and Grace:1988]
- f) punitive, accusative or threatening treatment [Morton and Grace:1988]
- g) inconsistent patterns of rewarding accomplishment [Morton and Grace:1988]

### Interdependence

Consistent in the literature is the view that interdependence is an important source of organisational conflict [Robbins, 1974:84-49; Stoner, 1978:348; Gray and Starke, 80:309; Williams, 1978:347; Kelly, 1979:13; Morton and Grace, 1988:889; Rahim, 1986:104].

Whereas Robbins [1983:294-295] refers to mutual and one-way task dependence and Thompson [in Rahim, 1986:103-104] refers to pooled, sequential and reciprocal interdependence, interdependence refers to the mutual cooperation and dependence that units in the organisation need for the completion of jobs. In discussing the interdependence of units in an organisation as a source of conflict, Robbins [1974:49] concludes that :

Where we have one group gaining at another's expense or where asymmetrical (one-sided) interdependence exists, we can expect conflict to breed.

### Change in the organisation

Change within the organisation is regarded as a cause of conflict [Kelly, 1979:13; Dubrin, 1974:310; Morton and Grace, 1988:889]. These conflict-causing changes have been identified as :

- changes in the firm's environment, [Gray and Starke, 1980:311]
- change in delegation,
- change in status, and
- change in goals [Hodge and Anthony, 1991:537].

- ambiguity (uncertainty as to the boundaries of acceptable behaviour) [Anstey, 1991:40].

### Participation in decision making

Likert and Likert [1976:218] comment that :

the present decision-making structure of the schools requires patterns of interaction that often aggravate conflict rather than resolving it constructively.

Mc Inerney and Bennett [1987:45] consider organisational conflict an unintended by-product of decision making. In commenting on the support of behavioural scientists for an increase in the democratic process in organisations and its implications for joint/participative decision making, Robbins [1974:45] reports that:

given the impact of these scientists and their general support for reducing organisational conflict, one might intuitively hypothesise that joint decision making, ... would act to reduce conflict and promote cooperation. To the contrary, the literature does not support this hypothesis.

On the contrary, 'joint decision making, where those who will be affected by the decision are part of the body making the decision, promotes conflict' [Robbins, 1983:297].

### Organisational climate

Organisational climate which comprises an organisation's character and personality can contribute to intergroup conflict [Dubrin, 1974:71]. Rahim [1986:71] qualifies this view by adding that a more positive organisational climate in which problems are

identified and corrective measures taken, is more conducive to constructive conflict resolution.

### Power and authority in the organisation

Power and authority are concepts that are difficult to distinguish in practice [Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983:104].

While authority in a schools context is 'the right to act or to require others to act on behalf of school purposes,' power 'refers to one's ability to influence the decision making process'[Sergiovanni and Starratt:1983].

The exercise of authority is regarded as a source of conflict in organisations [Gray and Starke, [1980:307,312]; Bennett, [1991:130]. Sergiovanni and Starratt [1983:117] comment that:

As power becomes more widely dispersed in schools and political behaviour becomes more manifest, the potential for interpersonal conflict increases accordingly.

Stern and Gorman [in Rahim, 1986:70] comment that 'the exercise of power is a major conflict response as well as a cause of conflict' and Raven and Kruglanski [Rahim:1986] conclude that 'power analysis provided a richer basis for the analysis of dyadic conflict.'

It is the competition for accessibility to the bases of power and the sources of authority that can cause conflict in schools [Rahim, 1986:104]. Raven [quoted in Jamieson and Thomas, 1974:324] lists these bases of power in organisations as :

- a) **Reward power.** Based on the ability to mediate rewards,
- b) **Coercive power.** Based on the ability to mediate punishments,
- c) **Legitimate power.** Based on the legitimate right to prescribe behaviour,
- d) **Referent power.** Based on the desire to maintain a friendly relationship,
- e) **Expert power.** Based on knowledge in a certain domain,
- f) **Informational power.** Based on the content of communication.

Robbins, [1974:47] in commenting on power as a factor that influences the development of conflict, cites studies referring to this phenomenon in organisations. In summarising his comment on the exercise of power in organisations, Robbins [1974:48] concludes that :

low and moderate levels of power, made up of formal and informal authority, can assist in improving co-ordination and, therefore, work to reduce conflict

where power is excessive, as perceived by a less powerful group, one may expect it to be challenged, causing increased conflict

in modern organisations,...professionals whose expertise spells the success or failure of the unit hold considerable power. If this is not recognised....a rapid development of traditional line-staff conflict.

### Bureaucratic qualities

The bureaucratic qualities of standardisation, specialisation, and routinisation have not been clearly identified in research studies as stimulants of organisational conflict [Robbins, 1974:43]. Robbins [1974] reports that the studies conclude the following:

- the likelihood of conflict was greater where there was less routinisation in the design of jobs,
- standardisation, which was significantly correlated with conflict, dropped below statistical significance when controlled for the varying sizes of the schools studied.
- high degrees of specialisation appear to be correlated with conflict, as is the need for both structure and viability in organisation tasks.

Sergiovanni and Starratt [1983:44] consider the following three organisational dilemmas sources of conflict in organisations:

1. **Professional and bureaucratic role dilemma.** In this dilemma, administrators have been observed to hold bureaucratic expectations for behaviour in schools, while teachers hold primarily professional expectations. Glatter et al. [1988:7] comments that when professionals work in a 'tight bureaucracy' a measure of conflict can be expected. Corwin [in Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983:46] has found that :

- a) the higher the professional orientation of teachers, the higher the rates of conflict,

- b) there is a consistent pattern of conflict between teachers and administrators over the control of work,
- c) and professionalisation is a militant process.

2. **The ability-authority dilemma.** This dilemma which is a source of conflict in schools, results from the distinction between the 'right to decide and the power and expertise to do so' [Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983:46]. The conflict that develops here is a consequence of the 'administrator's reaction to increased teacher authority.' [Sergiovanni and Starratt:1983]

3. **The autonomy-coordination dilemma.** The dilemma which acts as a source of conflict develops as a result of teachers, because of greater specialisation, demanding more autonomy in the execution of their duties [Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983: 47]. This specialisation, however, also makes teachers more interdependent as they strive to achieve the goals of the organisation. [Sergiovanni and Starratt:1983]

Related to the increased specialisation in the autonomy - coordination dilemma, [Sergiovanni and Starratt:1983] is the conflict that develops as a result of the need for co-operation between specialist and generalists [Dubrin, 1974:674; Rahim, 1986:105].

Dubrin [1974: 674-675] lists the sources of specialist-generalist conflict as :

- a) Territorial encroachment
- b) Interaction patterns
- c) Conflicting loyalties
- d) Change versus stability
- e) Incompatible styles

### Line-Staff conflict

Line-staff relations and interaction is regarded as an important source of conflict in organisations [Gray and Starke, 1980:307; Stoner and Wankel, 1986:392; Williams, 1978:347]. Gray and Starke [1980] consider the causes of line-staff conflict to be the **ambiguous authority** relations that are generated in parties working together, the recognition that results from the **value of ideas** of staff members, and the **responsibility** that has to be taken for poor performance.

### The size of the school

In appraising the role of the influence of the size of a school on the occurrence of organisational conflict Robbins [1974:41-42] concludes that 'increased size, which results in more supervisory levels, does not reduce conflict and probably acts as a stimulant.' Robbins [1974] generalises further that 'as a structure increases in size,...(this) will impede a smooth and peaceful work environment.' Rahim [1986:88] concurs with Robbins's view [1974] that the size of an organisation affects the occurrence of conflict.

## 4. External factors

### School-Community relations

In discussing community conflict, Coleman's comment [in Schofield, 1977:13] that 'many of these conflicts involved the schools, since,...schools are highly visible institutions' would seem to imply a propensity for the use of schools as a medium to highlight causes other than its own functioning. With regard to community conflict as

it affects schools, Coleman [Schofield:1977] categorised conflict-arousing events into three general areas :

- a) economic events
- b) events centering around local power or authority
- c) events touching on cultural values and belief systems.

De Witt [1990:125] shares the view that schools are at times used by the community to assist with causes other than its own functioning. De Witt [1990] mentions religious, social and political issues as those in which the school is sometimes used to promote causes. Kelly [1979:13] mentions as a source of conflict in schools, the 'increased pluralism in the society' which leads to heightened pluralistic values and expectations in the school. Kelly regards the interests of:

- the civil rights movement,
- the womens' rights movement,
- the teachers' rights movement,
- the students' rights movement and
- parents' and citizens' groups

as a potential source of conflict within schools and between schools and the community.

In the foregoing section a broad overview was given of some of the factors that cause conflict in organisations. While there most probably are many causes not mentioned, but which other authors find important as sources of conflict in organisations, those

that have been analysed would seem to be the ones most commonly referred to. Since social interaction would seem to be the 'fuel' of organisational conflict, it appears that the lack of effective communication is one of the major causes of conflict in organisations. By implication it then diverts attention onto the educational manager as potentially the most well-placed individual to effectively manage conflict in schools.

## **10. THE EFFECTS/CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT**

### Introduction

The consequences of conflict in organisations are analysed from different perspectives in the literature. These effects are analysed from the perspective of :

- a) the **outcomes** of the conflict - **for the organisation** i.e. whether the conflict has constructive/functional or destructive / dysfunctional outcomes for the organisation, [Rahim, 1992:5; Robbins, 1986:303-305; Gray and Starke, 1980: 314; McInerney and Bennett, 1987:45; Owens, 1987:247; Lindelow and Scott, 1989: 338-339; Margolis and Tewel, 1988:2] or - **for the 'protagonists'** i.e. its effect on the behaviour of the winners and losers, [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:209; Schein, 1980:174-5; Stoner, 1978:351]
- b) the **social units**/parties involved in the conflict i.e. the individuals, groups and the organisation itself.

[Schein, 1980:173 Rahim, 1992:80-81, 120-122; Stoner and Wankel, 1986:385; Smith, in Litterer, 1969:381; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982:285; Everard and Morris, 1988:81]

- c) whether the conflict was **resolved** or **unresolved** [Morton and Grace, 1988:889; Owens, 1987:247].

### Consequences according to outcomes for the organisation

#### Introduction

From an analysis of the literature it would seem that the functional or dysfunctional outcomes of organisational conflict depends on the manner in which the conflict is handled or addressed [Margolis and Tewel, 1988:2; Stoner, 1978:351; Smith, in Litterer, 1969:381; Anstey, 1991:7; Nebgen, 1979:27]. Stoner [1978] adds that :

- the level of conflict,
- the organisational climate, and
- the organisational structure

are also factors which determine whether the outcomes of conflict in organisations are functional or dysfunctional. Owens [1987:248] considers the functional and dysfunctional outcomes of organisational conflict best understood in terms of organisational health, adaptability, and stability.

#### Functional outcomes

Rahim [1992:5] lists the functional outcomes of conflict in organisations :

#### **Functional outcomes**

- a) Organisational decision making may be improved.
- b) Alternative solutions to a problem may be found.

- c) People may be forced to search for new approaches.
- d) Conflict may lead to synergistic solutions to common problems.
- e) People may be required to articulate and clarify their positions.
- f) Conflict may stimulate innovation, creativity, and growth.
- g) Individual and group performance may be enhanced.

McInerney and Bennett [1987:45] state that an advantage of conflict is that **organisational health is improved and promoted** because resolving a conflict positively, creates the confidence in employees that future clashes can be successfully resolved.

Lindelov and Scott [1989:339] regard **the elucidation of issues, the strengthening of relationships** and the fact that **conflict is needed for growth**, as positive contributions of conflict to organisational life.

In considering the positive outcomes of organisational conflict, Gray and Starke [1980:314] comment that when people talk louder and listen more closely to what is being said during conflict situations, it is indicative of **raised energy levels which increases with conflict**. Gray and Starke [1980] substantiate their comment that an increase in group cohesion is a positive outcome of organisational conflict, by linking it with increased productivity in the group, particularly if they support management's objectives. The unfolding of a conflict episode **creates an awareness of the existence of a problem** in management and this is also regarded by Gray and Starke [Ibid] and Thomas [in Dunnette, 1983:892] as a positive outcome of organisational conflict.

Robbins [1986:303] regards the **heightened interest and curiosity levels** evident in group members during conflict as a functional outcome of organisational conflict. This interest and curiosity [Robbins:1986] is a medium through which problems could be aired and tensions released, and through which an environment of self evaluation and change could be nourished in the organisation. Robbins [1986] also regards conflict in the organisation as an antidote for 'group think'.

Quoting Thomas, in Dunnette, Owens [1987:248-249] cites the functional outcomes of conflict in organisations as :

- **improved organisational functioning** (for example, cohesiveness, clarified relationships, clearer problem solving procedures)
- **the production of ideas of superior quality.**

In considering the positive effects of organisational conflict, Thomas [in Dunnette, 1983:891-892] refers to recurrent themes and useful side effects :

- a) a moderate degree of conflict may **not necessarily be viewed as a cost by the parties involved.**
- b) aggressive behaviour in conflict situations is **not necessarily irrational or destructive.**
- c) power struggles often **provide the mechanism for determining the balance of power**, and thus for adjusting the terms of a relationship according to the realities.

In commenting upon the effect of organisational conflict, King [1981:15-21] sets out his views on the constructive functions of organisational conflict in categories and propositions :

Category I : maintaining identity and strength

Propositions : conflict can:

- a) establish and maintain individual and group identity
- b) serve as a 'safety valve' to hold a group together
- c) remove dissociating elements within a pair, group
- d) serve to increase cohesion
- e) be a test of strength and power

Category II : enhancing operational effectiveness

Propositions : conflict can :

- a) be a major cause of change
- b) clarify issues and goals
- c) mobilise and bring energy into a system
- d) trigger innovation and creativity
- e) lead to a faster resolution of dysfunctional situation
- f) improve performance
- g) be developmental
- h) lead to the end of an unproductive relationship

Category III : dealing with others

Propositions : conflict can :

- a) be beneficial in dealing with opponents
- b) enhance communication
- c) eventually result in positive associations

The rise of strong, aggressive, articulate, new leadership can also be regarded as a constructive outcome of conflict in organisations [Stoner and Wankel, 1986:385].

### Dysfunctional outcomes

There is a series of recurrent themes which arise in the literature dealing with the potentially dysfunctional effects of conflict in organisations. There is agreement amongst authors about the following effects of intergroup conflict which have dysfunctional outcomes for organisations :

- **There is distrust amongst groups.** [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:207; Reece and Brandt, 1987:319; Rahim, 1992:5; Schein, in Anstey, 1991:58].
- **Groups' perceptions of each other are distorted.** [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:207; Schein, 1980:173; Bennett, 1991:130; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982:286; Rahim, 1986:98; Everard and Morris, 1988:82]
- **Groups perceive each other as the 'enemy.'** [Schein, 1980:173; Huse and Bowditch, 1977:208; McInerney and Bennett, 1987:45; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982:286; Everard and Morris, 1988:82].
- **There is a breakdown in communication.** [Huse and Bowditch, 1977:208; Gray and Starke, 1980:314; Hampton, Summer and Webber, 1973:673; Robbins, 1986:305; Deutsch, in Anstey, 1991:54; Rahim, 1992:5].
- **Hostile feelings develop toward each other.** [Gray and Starke, 1980:314; Likert and Likert, 1976:218; McInerney and Bennett, 1987:45; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982:286; Schein, 1980:173].
- **Each group becomes more cohesive, allowing less deviation from group norms.** [Huse and Bowditch, 1977: 207; Stoner, 1978:350; Robbins, 1986:305].

- **Negative stereotyping of individuals in the other group is likely to occur.**

[Bennett, 1991:130; Hampton, Summer and Webber, 1973:673; Everard and Morris, 1988: 82; Stoner and Wankel, 1986:385; Rahim, 1986:98].

In encouraging leaders to recognise the destructive effects of organisational conflict, Gordon Lippitt [1982:68] mentions that conflict in organisations :

- a) Diverts energy from the real task;
- b) Destroys morale;
- c) Polarises individuals and groups;
- d) Deepens differences;
- e) Obstructs cooperative action;
- f) Produces irresponsible behaviour;
- g) Creates suspicion and distrust;
- h) Decreases productivity.

Robbins [1986:305] comments that dysfunctional conflict leads to discontent which threatens relationships amongst employees and negatively affects the effectiveness of the group thereby intimidating the continued survival of the organisation.

In considering the benefits of conflict for the social system, Rahim [1992:5] states that for these benefits to take effect, the negative consequences of conflict should be reduced. Rahim [1992:5; 1986:3] regarded conflict in organisations as having the following potentially dysfunctional outcomes :

- a) Conflict may cause stress and job burnout.

- b) Job satisfaction and performance may be reduced.
- c) Resistance to change can increase.
- d) Organisational commitment and loyalty may be affected.
- e) Some people may feel defeated.
- f) Distance between people can be increased.
- g) Where cooperation is needed, there may be introspective withdrawal.
- h) People may leave because of turmoil.

When organisational conflict goes unresolved or there is an absence of conflict regulation mechanisms, conflict escalation or the growth in intensity and size of the conflict takes place [Anstey:1991:51]. This escalation results in :

- changes in perceptions that parties hold of themselves and each other,
- changes in tactics,
- modifications in the nature of demands,
- the fundamental alteration of the internal dynamics of each side.

The changes evidenced in wake of the escalation of conflict is accompanied by a shift in tactics which bears dysfunctional and destructive outcomes for the organisation or group. Deutsch [in Anstey, 1991:56] comments on this shift in tactics and notes that as the conflict escalates:

there is a shift away from the problem solving, persuasion and conciliation toward an increased reliance on strategies of power and the utilisation of tactics of coercion, threat and deception.

The consequences of intragroup conflict can result in dysfunctional outcomes for the organisation. The effects of intragroup competition have been listed by Schein [1980:173]; Hersey and Blanchard [1982:286]; and Everard and Morris [1988: 82] as follows :

1. Each group becomes more closely knit and elicits greater loyalty from its members; members close ranks and bury some of their internal differences.
2. The group climate changes from informal, casual, playful to work and task oriented; concern for member's psychological needs declines while concern for task accomplishment increases.
3. Leadership patterns tend to change from more democratic toward more autocratic; the group becomes more willing to tolerate autocratic leadership.
4. Each group becomes more highly structured and organised.
5. Each group demands more loyalty and conformity from its members in order to be able to present a 'solid front'.

In an enhancement of the idea of a group's demanding conformity from its members [Schein:1980], Schein describes the term 'group think' which is the 'active suppression of minority views and dissent' [Schein, 1980:169]. Some of the symptoms of group think include that :

- the group develops a belief in the inherent morality of what it wants to do,
- group members censor their own thoughts, especially doubts about the wisdom of proposed courses of action,
- some members of the group come to function in the role of 'mindguards,'

- the group develops stereotypes of other groups and of dissenters which protect it from accurate analysis.

In commenting on the effective or ineffective management of conflict, and its outcomes for organisations, Owens [1987: 247] focuses on the behaviour of people during conflict. Owens [1987] notes that these 'behavioural consequences of conflict in educational organisations can be ... undesirable,' and lists them [Owens:1987] as :

- a) Psychological withdrawal from the hostility associated with conflict - such as alienation, apathy and indifference.
- b) Physical withdrawal - such as absence, tardiness, and turnover.
- c) Outright hostile or aggressive behaviour - including job actions, property damage, and minor theft of property.

#### Outcomes for winners and losers

Many intra-organisational, intergroup and interpersonal conflicts in organisations become win-lose affairs. Schein, [1980:174-175] Huse and Bowditch, [1977:209] Hersey and Blanchard, [1982:286] and Stoner [1978:351] have noted what happens to these winners and losers in the aftermath of conflict episodes in organisations.

#### The winners

1. retain cohesion and may become even more cohesive,
2. release tension, lose fighting spirit, become more complacent, casual, playful,
3. tend toward high intragroup cooperation and concern for members' needs, and low concern for work and task accomplishment,

4. tend to feel that the positive outcome has confirmed their favourable stereotype of themselves and the negative stereotype of the 'enemy.'

### The losers

1. if the outcome is not clear cut, there is a strong tendency for the loser to deny or distort the reality of losing,
2. if the loss is psychologically accepted, the losing group tends to seek someone or something to blame,
3. loser is more tense, ready to work hard, and desperate,
4. loser tends towards low intragroup cooperation, low concern for members' needs, and high concern for regrouping by working harder,
5. loser tends to learn a lot about himself in a group because stereotypes are confirmed by the loss, forcing a re-evaluation.

In summarising, one needs to point out that an analysis of the effects of conflict on organisations impresses upon one the necessity of managing conflict effectively at the opportune moment so that it does not cause irreparable damage to the organisation. The mark of a good leader and an effective organisation would seem to lie in the constructive management of conflict so that it enhances the performance of the organisation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY AND DATA PRESENTATION

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#### 1. THE AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation was undertaken to gather information regarding the following aspects:

- demographic factors with regard to the staff in order to establish what effect these have on the conflict at the school,
- the staff's views of organisational conflict,
  - \* to ascertain whether the views of conflict are positive or negative,
  - \* to establish how they think it should be handled at the school,
- the nature and extent of the conflict at the school,
  - \* to ascertain with whom staff members are having the most conflict
  - \* to establish what percent of time is being spent on conflict at the school,
  - \* to establish with whom the conflict is most difficult to deal with,
  - \* to gather opinions with regard to the time being spent by the staff on conflict,
- the causes of conflict at the school,
- staff members' views regarding signs or indicators of conflict,
- the effects of the conflict on the staff and the school as a whole,
- conflict resolution strategies currently being used at the school.

## 2. THE INFORMATION GATHERING METHOD

A questionnaire was devised [Appendix C: p.143-153] containing the aspects mentioned above. The questionnaire was conducted personally. There are 63 staff members and 55 (87,3%) returned the questionnaire. Although there were no spoilt questionnaires, a very small number of responses were invalid due to incorrect filling in. These have not been used in statistical analysis.

The necessary permission was applied for and granted by the relevant authorities for the questionnaire to be used in the school. This permission is attached [Appendix B]

## 3. THE RESULTS

### General, biographical and professional details

#### Gender

The staff (63) is made up of 35 males and 28 females. 88,2% (30) of the males and 92,6% (25) of the females on the staff returned the questionnaire [Appendix A, Table 1: p.134].

#### Age group

Of the 55 respondents, 80% sorted into the age group 25-34. [Ibid, Table 2: p.134]

This bears out comments in the Introduction that the majority of the staff are young people. The figures for the age groups also correlate with those of the years of experience.

### Highest qualifications

67,3% of the respondents have tertiary academic qualifications (e.g. B.A.; B.A. (Hons); while 23,6% of them have graduate professional qualifications (e.g. B.ED.) [Appendix A, Table 3: p.134].

### Teaching experience

In correlating the age groups with the years of experience, one could infer that most (76,4%) [Ibid, Tables 2 and 4 :p.134] of the staff members who responded to the questionnaire are young and relatively inexperienced (i.e. have less than 10 years teaching experience) teachers. There thus seems to be an imbalance on the staff with regard to the number of years of teaching experience.

### Professional status

The 16,4% of respondents who are temporary [Appendix A, Table 5: p.135] is an indication of the fact that the school is nearing staff stability as it takes a while before all permanent posts are filled. Of the 9 temporary teachers in the survey, 6 (66,7%) are members of the teachers union which in recent months has protested against unilateral restructuring of the education system in general and retrenchment of teachers in particular.

### Professional rank

81,8% of responding teachers are in 'teacher, secondary' posts whereas 18,2% are in senior positions [Appendix A, Table 6: p.135].

### Dominant teaching departments

The respondents are evenly spread across the departments in which subjects are taught. [Appendix A, Table 7: p.135] The languages would seem to have a higher proportion of teachers but it must be borne in mind that two official languages (compulsory) are taught at the school. Mathematics is not taken up by many post standard seven students because of its perceived difficulty and therefore there are fewer teachers in this department.

### Religion

The dominant religion amongst the respondents is Christianity (this categorisation includes Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and Evangelicals), with 18,2% of teachers adhering to Islam. [Appendix A, Table 8: p.135]

### Support for teachers organisation

43,6% of the respondents belong to or support the teachers union, SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers Union) [Appendix A, Table 9: p.135]. Support for taking up issues (which lead to conflict) which SADTU teachers feel strongly about, has also come from the Non aligned teacher group (e.g. the lack of a democratic leadership style and the exercise of authority).

### Membership of informal groups

There would seem to be a correlation between support for or membership of SADTU (43,6%) and the reasons for this membership or support. Whereas 43,6% of the respondents indicated that they supported or belonged to the teachers union SADTU,

48,1% indicated that their membership of an informal organisation was motivated by the membership of and support for the 'same organisation.' [Appendix A, Table 10: p.136] One could thus infer that the reasons for the ties that bind the respondents together in informal groups are mainly membership of an organisation e.g. SADTU.

### Views of conflict

Respondents were asked to place an X nearest to the term which describes their views of conflict. These terms described conflict in positive as well as negative connotations. A scale of seven was used and responses placed in the middle of the scale, at four, were regarded as neutral.

#### **Positive Indicators : Conflict is...**

Necessary, Constructive, Cooperation, Friendliness, Should be encouraged, Acceptable, Productive, Usual, Trust, Pleasant, Unavoidable, Peace of mind.

#### **Negative Indicators : Conflict is...**

Unnecessary, Destructive, Competition, Hostility, Should be eliminated, Unacceptable, Unproductive, Unusual, Mistrust, Unpleasant, Avoidable, Anxiety.

There would seem to be little difference between the percentage of positive and negative indications of the views of the respondents towards organisational conflict. Whereas 39,4% of the indications were positive, 36,1% of them were negative [Appendix A, Table 11, p.136].

### How conflict should be handled in organisations

It is apparent that most (81,8%) of the respondents accept conflict as a natural part of the school's functioning. They, however also feel that methods should be found to resolve the conflict [Appendix A, Table 12: p.136]. A noticeable percentage of the respondents (18,2%) [Appendix A, Table 12] view conflict in the school as destructive and in need of rapid resolution whereas none of the respondents felt that conflict is necessary for the school and that it should be encouraged to some extent.

### The nature and extent of conflict

Statistics indicate [Appendix A, Table 13: p.137] that the four individuals or groups (in descending order) with whom respondents have the most conflict are : the principal (27,9%), the school committee (22,1%), Senior staff members individually (13,2%), and other teachers individually (10,3%) on the staff. The group or individuals with whom respondents find conflict most difficult to resolve, correlates with that mentioned above although the order of importance differs slightly viz. the principal (33,8%), the school committee (18,3%), teachers individually (14,1%) and senior staff members individually (9,8%) [Appendix A, Table 14:p.137].

Respondents (8,5%) also find conflict with the department heads of their subject difficult to deal with although they (4,4%) do not necessarily regard conflict with these individuals as taking up a large slice of their time [Appendix A, Table 14: p.137].

Respondents were also asked to indicate the percentage of time they spent on conflict with a specific individual or group with whom they had the most conflict. The responses to these questions were confusing and apparently not fully understood by the respondents, even after careful explanation. It is for this reason that an interpretation of these percentages is not being done although the statistics were analysed.

#### Amount of time spent on conflict

It is evident from the statistics that more than half of the respondents (54,7%) [Appendix A, Table 15:p.138] believe that too little time is being spent on attempts to resolve the conflict at the school. In contrast, 22,2% of the respondents feel that too much time is being spent on conflict.

#### Causes of conflict

Respondents were asked to grade their opinions as to the importance of the stipulated causes of conflict. A scale of 1 to 8 was provided and values were attached to each calibration on the scale [Appendix B].

An analysis of the statistics indicates that there is not a large percentage of respondents (32,6%) who regard emotional problems as a serious (7,7%), very serious (17,3%) or major (7,6%) cause of conflict in the school [Appendix A, Table 16:138]. A larger percentage (46,2%) regard emotional conflict as a very small (13,5%), minimal (19,2%) or small (13,5%) cause of conflict in the school.

It would seem that poor communications and misunderstandings are regarded by the majority of respondents (81,4%) as a serious (14,8%), very serious (29,6%) or major (37,0%) cause of conflict in the school. [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138] This correlates positively with the views of the authors consulted in the literature survey who refer to poor communications as the 'most cited and major cause of organisational conflict' [Stoner:1978; Robbins:1983; Nebgen:1979; Lindelow and Scott:1989; Reece and Brandt:1987; Robbins:1974].

Conflicting personalities or personality traits would seem to be regarded by a large percentage of the respondents (71,6%) as an important (22,6%), serious (26,4%) or very serious (22,6%) cause of conflict in the school [Appendix A, Table 16: 138]. The literature survey seems to confirm statistical findings that there is a correlation between personality traits and increased conflict in organisations [vide supra, p.74 paragraph 1].

Statistics [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138] regarding different values or aims as a cause of conflict in the school indicates that there are two small groups (12 and 14 individuals respectively) who consider this a 'quite noticeable' (22,6%) and 'very serious' (26,4%) cause of conflict in the school. As indicated in the literature survey, goal divergence is recognised as a cause of organisational conflict [Robbins:1974] and is given as a reason for the view that conflict in organisations is inevitable. [Robbins:1974]

A large group of respondents (92,6%) accord 'differing views on methods/ways of doing things or tasks and responsibilities' relative importance as a cause of conflict in the school [Appendix A, Table 16:p. 138]. These views range from important (18,5%), serious (16,7%), very serious (29,6%) to major (27,8%). [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138]. Because of the interdependence that exists in the functioning of the school, different methods/ ways of doing things would seem to be a source of organisational conflict.

A group of 75% of the respondents [Appendix A, Table 16:p.138] regard limited resources as a 'quite noticeable' cause of conflict in the school. Furthermore the relative number of respondents who consider limited resources a cause of conflict in the school are evenly spread. [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138] This would seem to correlate with views expressed by various authors [Huse and Bowditch:1977; Litterer, in Huse and Bowditch:1977; Owens:1987; Lindelow and Scott:1989; Stoner:1978; Plunkett and Attner:1989; Rahim:1986; Hodge and Anthony:1991; Robbins:1983] who regard limited resources as an important cause of organisational conflict.

For 69,2% of the respondents [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138], compliance with rules or policy or unacceptable behaviour is considered an important (23,1%), serious (17,3%), very serious (19,2%) or major (9,6%) [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138]. There would seem to be a correlation between compliance with rules and leadership style since the level of compliance required for organisational effectiveness would seem to be an outflow of the role of the educational leader.

There is an even spread of respondents who regard problems associated with unsatisfactory work or low productivity as a source of conflict in the school. Four categories of respondents fall under and four categories over the average percentage of 12,5% who regard low productivity as a cause of conflict in the school. [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138]

Only 40,2% of respondents accord socio-political matters a grading of 'quite noticeable' to 'major' as a cause of conflict in the school [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138]. For the rest of the respondents it would appear to be not an important source of conflict.

Staff members depending on others to 'do the work' does not seem to be a cause of conflict considered too seriously by the respondents. 35,3% of the respondents [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138] regard it as more than 'quite noticeable,' whereas 48,2% of them consider it a less than 'small' cause of conflict [Appendix A, Table 16:p.138].

An analysis of the statistics indicates that there is an even spread of respondents who consider teacher evaluation a source of conflict in the school. 48,9% of the respondents regard teacher evaluation an important, serious, very serious or major source of conflict in the school whereas 51,1% consider it a less than important source [Appendix A, Table 16:p.138].

Pupil evaluation is regarded by only 7,7% of the respondents as a cause of conflict that is important [Appendix A, Table 16:p.138]. The rest of the respondents (92,3%) consider pupil evaluation a less than important source of conflict in the school. This correlates somewhat with the respondents' response as to the individuals with whom they have the most conflict (4,4%) [Appendix A, Table 13:p.137].

It seems evident that a smaller percentage of the respondents (38,9%) regard the lack of promotion posts as an important or greater source of conflict in the school than those (61,1%) who consider it a 'quite noticeable' to very small cause [Appendix A, Table 16:p.138].

Leadership and the exercise of authority is regarded by a large percentage (82,9%) of the respondents as an important (9,4%), serious (15,1%), very serious (24,5%) or major (33,9) source of conflict in the school [Appendix A, Table 16:p.138]. This correlates with the statistics of the individual(s) with whom the respondents have the most conflict in that it is regarded in this case as the largest single factor (27,9%) with whom respondents have the most conflict. It would also seem to be related to the preliminary investigation launched in the staff room to ascertain the task or relationship orientatedness of the principal [vide supra, p.15-16] where the principal was regarded as more task than relationship orientated.

The percentage of respondents who regard the exercise of majority rule on decisions as a cause of conflict, ranges from 5,7% (for those who consider it a 'quite noticeable' cause) to 20,7% (for those who regard it as a small cause of conflict) [Appendix A,

Table 16: p.138]. There is an even spread of respondents who accord it an important or greater cause (47,1%) and those who regard it as a less than important cause (52,9%).

### Conflict indicators

Heightened tension would seem to be the 'sign of conflict' that is considered by respondents to be the most important indicator of a conflict episode, whether the respondents are directly involved or not [Appendix A, Table 17: p.139]. The observation made in the Statement of the Problem with regard to the heightened tension in the staff room as a result of the conflict [vide supra, Introduction: p.17] is thus substantiated by the statistics obtained from the questionnaire. Where respondents are not directly involved, heightened tension (28,8%), anger or open hostility (17,3%), refusal to carry out commands (11,5%) and threats (9,6%) would appear to be the main signs that conflict is occurring. When respondents are directly involved in the conflict, silence and withdrawal (13,2%), and anger or open hostility (13,2%) would seem to be the main, recognisable signs of conflict [Appendix A, Table 17:p.139].

In the analysis of the statistics of the responses to the indicators of conflict, respondents were asked to indicate two important indicators, a first and a second. There seems to have been a misunderstanding though, as many of the respondents did not respond to the request for a second sign or indicator. It is for this reason that the second indicators, whether the respondents were directly involved or not, is not being interpreted, although the results were analysed.

### Effects of the conflict

Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale (of 1 to 8) how they rate the effects of the conflict on the school, its staff, pupils and functioning [Appendix B].

An analysis of the effects of the conflict in the school would seem to indicate an 'across the board' above average percentage of respondents indicating the effects as more than important. [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139] An average of 27,7% of the respondents regard all the stipulated effects as of major proportion ie. the maximum of eight on the scale provided [Appendix A, Table 18:p.139]. An average of 22,3% consider the stipulated effects as being of important (5), serious (6), very serious (7) or major (8) proportions [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139].

One could infer from these indications (above) that, to a certain extent, staff members considered the effects independently ie. in some instances, without regard for the 'official' view of the group to which they belong.

With regard to the conflict in the school having effected the disintegration of the cohesiveness of the staff, 96,3% of the respondents consider this effect to be of serious (14,8%), very serious (31,5%) or major (50%) proportions. The extent of the respondents' reaction is indicative of the pervasiveness of the actual effect of the conflict. The statistics of the effects of the conflict on the school and its functioning would seem to support the observation [vide supra, Introduction: p.17] that a gradual disintegration of the cohesiveness of the staff is evident. The disintegration of the

cohesiveness of the staff as an effect of organisational conflict is also alluded to in the literature on conflict in organisations. Lippitt's comment [1982:68] that conflict 'deepens differences' and Rahim's [1992] statement that 'Distance between people can be increased' point towards a disintegration of cohesiveness on the staff.

The demotivation of staff members as a result of the conflict in the school is an effect which is regarded in the extreme by most of the respondents. 83,7% of the respondents consider the demotivation of staff members as a serious (25,5%), very serious (27,3%), or major (30,9%) effect of the conflict. This effect is referred to in the literature survey by Owens [1987:247] who mentions indifference, tardiness and absence as consequences of organisational conflict.

An analysis of the statistics [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139] indicates that 94,1% of the respondents consider the polarisation of staff members an important (11,1%), serious (18,5%), very serious (12,9%) or major (51,9%) effect of the conflict taking place in the school. This high percentage would seem to support the observation made in the Introduction [p.18: paragraph 1] that there is a polarisation to be found in the staff room. This polarisation is also referred to in the literature survey by Lippitt [1982:68] who points out that conflict in organisations 'polarises individuals and groups'.

All the respondents consider damaged relationships as a more than important effect of the conflict in the school. [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139] The strength of the respondents reaction is evidenced by the large percentage (61,1%) who regard the damage to relationships on the staff as a major effect of the conflict [Appendix A,

Table 18: p.139] Some authors [Gray and Starke:1980; Likert and Likert:1976; McInerney and Bennett;1987; Hersey and Blanchard:1982; Schein:1980] cited in the literature survey allude to this damage to relations when they refer to the hostile feelings and negative stereotyping [Bennett:1991; Hampton, Summer and Webber:1973; Everard and Morris:1988; Stoner and Wankel:1986; Rahim:1986] which develop between staff members and groups.

An increase in creative problem solving is evenly regarded as an effect of the conflict occurring in the school. Whereas 46,3% consider creative problem solving a more than important effect, 53,3% regard it as a less than 'quite noticeable' effect [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139].

It is evident, from an analysis of the statistics emanating from the responses to the questionnaire that relatively little organisational growth has taken place as an effect of the conflict occurring in the school. 73,5% of the respondents consider organisational growth as a small (13,2%), minimal (24,5%) or very slight (35,8%) effect of the conflict at the school [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139].

78,2% of the respondents regard an increase in the formation of informal groups as a more than important effect of the conflict in the school.[Ibid] Statistics point towards membership of the same organisation (48,1%) and friendship (44,4%) as the main reasons respondents have for belonging to informal groups [Appendix A, Table 10: p.136].

The adverse effect of the conflict on the school's administration is regarded by 72,3% of the respondents as an important (16,7%), serious (25,9%), very serious (20,4%) or major (9,3%) consequence of the conflict [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139]. This adverse effect on the administration is referred to by Rahim [1992:5; 1986:3] when he mentions the reduction in organisational performance and commitment that results from conflict in organisations.

The statistics show that 64,9% of the respondents consider deteriorating relations with the community as a more than important effect of the conflict occurring in the school. [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139] A testimony to this is the acrimonious parent-teachers meetings that were held to discuss problems like teacher retrenchments and strike action in education and its effects on the school, in which heated exchanges took place between teachers and the community.

The deterioration of staff discipline has been cited by 85,2% of the respondents as a more than important effect of the conflict on the school's functioning [Appendix A, Table 18:p.139]. This figure confirms observations made in the Introduction [p.17: paragraph 3] with regard to the deteriorating staff discipline. In the literature survey, Lippitt [1982:68] refers to irresponsible behaviour, in an allusion to deteriorating staff discipline, as a destructive consequence of organisational conflict.

An analysis of the statistics pertaining to the effects of the conflict in the school reveals that suspicions amongst staff members has increased during conflict [Appendix A, Table 18:p.139]. 94,6% of the respondents regard the increase in

suspicion as a serious (20%), very serious (27,3%) or major (47,3%) effect of the conflict occurring in the school. This high percentage serves to confirm the observation made in the Introduction [vide supra, p18: paragraph 1] that there is a high level of suspicion amongst staff members. Authors [Huse and Bowditch:1977; Reece and Brandt:1987; Rahim:1992; Schein, in Anstey:1991] would seem to agree with the observation of an increase in suspicion on the staff. Gordon Lippitt [1982:68] refers to the creation of suspicion and distrust and Huse and Bowditch [1977] refer to distrust amongst groups.

An analysis of the statistics referring to : the role of the principal as a party to conflict; leadership style as a cause of conflict in the school and the lack of confidence in the school's leadership as an effect of the conflict in the school, [Appendix A, Tables 13,14,16 and 18: pp.137-139] would seem to indicate the noticeable role that the school's leadership plays in the conflict. 88,8% of the respondents consider the lack of confidence in the school's leadership to be a more than important effect of the conflict in the school. [Appendix A, Table 18:p.139] 64,8% consider the lack of confidence in the leadership as a very serious or major effect of the conflict [Appendix A, Table 18:p.139].

A large percentage (79,5%) of the respondents consider the conflict to have had a 'quite noticeable' to major effect on the performance and discipline of pupils [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139].

### Current resolution strategies

There are negative connotations to the respondents' reactions regarding the strategies currently being used to resolve or manage the conflict occurring in the school. 79,6% of the respondents state [Appendix A, Table 19: p.140] that the strategies currently being used are : avoidance by postponement (28,8%); direct confrontation (19,6%); withdrawal e.g. pretending the conflict doesn't exist anymore (15,9%); and the use of authority e.g. threats and punishment (15,3%). The absence, in the responses of the participants in the survey, of views that organisational restructuring and expansion, i.e. the creation of more resources and seeking common aims, are being used to manage the conflict would seem to indicate that parties are not fully prepared to move nearer to each other in an attempt to find strategies to resolve the conflict.

### Null Hypothesis with regard to groups on the staff

#### Hypothesis 1 : Views of conflict

There is no significant difference between 20-29 year old staff members and 30-39 year old staff members with regard to their views of conflict and how it should be dealt with at school.

When the chi square test for a R-by-2 arrangement [Mulder, 1982:172] is applied to the statistics [Appendix A, Table 11: p.136] relating to hypothesis 1 above, the following results were obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{degree of freedom (df)} &= R - 1 \quad [\text{Mulder, 1982:173}] \\ &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

**O** = Observed frequency, **E** = Expected frequency, **X** = frequency [Mulder:1982]

$$\begin{aligned} \chi^2 &= \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E} \quad [\text{Mulder:1982}] \\ &= 3,00 \end{aligned}$$

The Null hypothesis has thus to be accepted at the 5% (5,99) [Mulder, 1982:240] level of significance. The researcher can thus with 95% confidence state that there is no significant difference between the 20-29 year old staff members and the 30-39 year old staff members with regard to positive, neutral or negative views of conflict as it occurs in the school.

The above analysis relating to the difference between age groups with regard to views of conflict, is borne out by an analysis of the staff's response (number 25) to the questionnaire which relates to the staff's views of conflict at the school and the way in which staff members think it should be handled. Of the staff members who responded (to number 25), 81,8% [Appendix A, Table 12: p.136] felt that conflict is a natural, inborn part of an organisation and should be accepted as such but that methods should be found to resolve it. The 81,8% mentioned above comprises the average of 85,19% for 20-29 year olds, and 76% for 30-39 year olds. It is thus apparent that most staff members have the same view of conflict and how it should be handled at school.

Hypothesis 2 : Causes of conflict in the school

There is no significant difference between SADTU teachers and the rest of the staff with regard to limited resources and their allocation and control being a cause of conflict in the school.

When the chi square test for a R-by-2 arrangement [Mulder, 1982:172] is applied to the statistics [Appendix A, Table 20: p.140] relating to hypothesis 2 above, the following results were obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{degree of freedom (df)} &= R - 1 \text{ [Mulder, 1983:172]} \\ &= 7 \end{aligned}$$

**O = Observed frequency and E = Expected frequency [Mulder:1982]**

$$\begin{aligned} \chi^2 &= \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E} \text{ [Mulder:1982]} \\ &= 12,587 \end{aligned}$$

The Null hypothesis could thus be accepted at the 5% (14,07) [Mulder, 1982:240] level and the researcher can therefore with 95% confidence assert that there is no significant difference between the views of the SADTU teachers and the rest of the staff with regard to limited resources and their allocation and control as a cause of conflict in the school.

The implication of the above finding is that the struggle over limited resources, of which strikes are an aspect does not only fall into the domain of the SADTU teachers (since they are the ones who went on strike) as a cause of conflict in the school. It is

more likely that the strike is but one of the aspects of limited resources that is the source of conflict in the school and that the struggle for limited resources is more pervasive as a cause of conflict.

Hypothesis 3 : Causes of conflict in the school

There is no significant difference between the SADTU teachers and the rest of the staff with regard to leadership and the exercise of authority being a cause of conflict in the school.

When the chi square test for a R-by-2 arrangement [Mulder, 1982:173] is applied to the statistics [Appendix A, Table 16, p.138] relating to the hypothesis, the following results are obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{degree of freedom (df)} &= R - 1 \quad [\text{Mulder, 1983:172}] \\ &= 7 \end{aligned}$$

**O = Observed frequency and E = Expected frequency [Mulder:1982]**

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 &= \frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E} \quad [\text{Mulder:1982}] \\ &= 24,246 \end{aligned}$$

The Null hypothesis can thus be rejected at the 1% (18,48) [Mulder, 1982:240] level of significance. The researcher can thus with 99% confidence assert that there is a significant difference between the SADTU teachers and the rest of the staff with regard to leadership and the exercise of authority being a source of conflict in the school.

The implication of the above finding is that the SADTU group differs with the rest of the staff in their thinking that leadership and the exercise of authority is causing conflict in the school. When one considers, in the light of the above implication, that the non aligned teachers, (who form a very large percentage of the 'Rest of the staff') indicated (28,1%) that they had the most conflict with the teachers organisation (SADTU) branch at school, then the polarisation in the staff becomes apparent.

#### Hypothesis 4 : Causes of conflict

There is no significant difference between SADTU teachers and the Rest of the staff with regard to the exercise of 'majority rule' on decisions in the staff room as a cause of conflict in the school.

When the chi square test for a R-by-2 arrangement [Mulder, 1982:173] is applied to the statistics [Appendix A, Table 16: p.138] relating to the hypothesis, the following results are obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{degree of freedom (df)} &= R - 1 \quad [\text{Mulder, 1983:172}] \\ &= 7 \end{aligned}$$

**O** = Observed frequency and **E** = Expected frequency [Mulder:1982]

$$\begin{aligned} \chi^2 &= \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E} \quad [\text{Mulder:1982}] \\ &= 15,928 \end{aligned}$$

The Null hypothesis can therefore be rejected at the 5% (14,07) [Mulder:1982:240] level of significance. The researcher can thus assert, with 95% confidence, that there

is a significant difference between the views of SADTU teachers and the Rest of the staff with regard to the exercise of 'majority rule' on decisions taken in the staff room.

The implications of the above finding is that it presents further evidence [see hypothesis 2, above] that there is polarisation on the staff and that the SADTU teachers are grouped in one camp.

#### Hypothesis 5 : The nature and extent of the conflict

##### The amount of time spent on conflict

There is no significant difference between teachers with 0-9 years' teaching experience and those with 10-19 years' teaching experience with regard to the amount of time spent by the staff on conflict.

When the chi square test for a R-by-2 arrangement [Mulder, 1983:172] is applied to the statistics [Appendix A, Table 15: p.139] relating to the hypothesis, the following results are obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{degree of freedom (df)} &= R - 1 \quad [\text{Mulder, 1983:172}] \\ &= 3 \end{aligned}$$

**O** = Observed frequency and **E** = Expected frequency

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 &= \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E} \quad [\text{Mulder:1982}] \\ &= 0,617 \end{aligned}$$

The Null hypothesis can thus be accepted at the 5% (7,82) [Mulder, 1983:240] level of significance. The researcher can therefore with 95% confidence assert that there is no significant difference between teachers with 0-9 years' teaching experience and those with 10-19 years' teaching experience with regard to the amount of time the staff spends on conflict.

The implication of the above finding is that the view that too little time is being spent on conflict and conflict management in the school, which was expressed by the majority of respondents (54,7%), [Appendix A, Table 15: p.138] is one which transcends group boundaries and is perhaps an indication of the concern of teachers that too little is being done to manage the conflict and the need to manage and resolve the conflict.

#### Hypothesis 6 : Effects of the conflict

There is no significant difference between the SADTU teachers and the non aligned teachers with regard to the view that the disintegration of the cohesiveness of the staff is an effect of the conflict.

The chi square test for a R-by-2 arrangement, [Mulder, 1983:172] when applied to the statistics [Appendix A, Table18: p.139] relating to the hypothesis, indicates the following results:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{degree of freedom (df)} &= R - 1 \quad [\text{Mulder, 1983:172}] \\ &= 7 \end{aligned}$$

**O** = Observed frequency and **E** = Expected frequency [Mulder:1983]

$$\begin{aligned} \chi^2 &= \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E} \quad [\text{Mulder:1982}] \\ &= 2,087 \end{aligned}$$

The Null hypothesis can therefore be accepted at the 5% (14,07) [Mulder, 1983:240] level of significance. The researcher can thus with 95% confidence assert that there is no significant difference between SADTU teachers and non aligned teachers on the staff with regard to the view that the disintegration of the cohesiveness of the staff is an effect of the conflict in the school.

The above findings imply that there is a consensus amongst the staff, which transcends group parameters, that the cohesiveness of the staff is disintegrating as a consequence of the conflict. The observation made in the Introduction [p.17: paragraph 2] is thus confirmed. In the literature review Rahim [1992:5] refers to the increase in the distance between people when alluding to the disintegration of the cohesiveness of the staff.

#### Hypothesis 7 : Effects of the conflict

There is no significant difference between the SADTU teachers and the Non aligned teachers with regard to the view that the conflict has led to the lack of confidence in the school's leadership.

When the chi square test for an R-by-2 arrangement [Mulder, 1983:172] is applied to the statistics [Appendix A, Table 18: p.139] relating to the hypothesis, the following results are obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{degree of freedom (df)} &= R - 1 \quad [\text{Mulder, 1983:172}] \\ &= 7 \end{aligned}$$

**O** = Observed frequency and **E** = Expected frequency [Mulder:1983]

$$\begin{aligned} \chi^2 &= \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E} \quad [\text{Mulder:1982}] \\ &= 30,270 \end{aligned}$$

The Null hypothesis can therefore be rejected at the 1% (18,48) [Mulder, 1983:240] level. The researcher can thus with 99% confidence assert that there is a significant difference between the SADTU teachers and the Non aligned teachers with regard to the view that the conflict has led to a lack of confidence in the school's leadership.

The above finding correlates with the one that indicates that leadership and the exercise of authority is a cause of conflict in the school [vide supra, p.119]. The above finding also confirms the polarisation that has taken place on the staff. This polarisation is referred to by Lippitt [1982:86] when he discusses the destructive effects of organisational conflict.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of organisational conflict in educational settings, although relatively overlooked by researchers, forms part of a broader discourse about conflict as it occurs in organisations and society. It is thus to be expected that there would be a large degree of similarity with regard to the study of the processes, causes and effects of the phenomenon in academic institutions and other organisations.

Organisational behaviour theorists, in discussing conflict in organisations, have drawn statistics to be analysed and interpreted from predominantly business orientated settings. Social theorists have treated the study of the phenomenon from a societal perspective and have outlined it as it occurs in the broader society e.g. conflict between nations and in, and between communities. Researchers who study conflict in schools and other educational organisations have had to draw mainly from these studies in order to frame the phenomenon of conflict as it occurs in these sites.

One can detect a noticeable shift in the attitudes to and the management of conflict in schools. The predominantly orderly way that conflicts in South African society and politics have been managed has precipitated a desire for the orderly and empowering management and resolution of conflict in organisations and particularly schools.

The intention with this study is to contribute, albeit in a small way, to the study of conflict in schools in order to broaden the discourse and to increase the quantity of research in this specific area so that there can be more to draw from. It is also hoped, (with humility), that the findings, ideas and conclusions of this study, will in some modest way contribute to the functional management of conflict in schools and ultimately improve the standards of education and educating.

## 2. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY

It has been acknowledged in the literature survey, that schools are complex, distinctive organisations. They exhibit the behavioural tendencies and are composed of the structures that are prevalent in most organisations. It is for these reasons that scholars of behaviour in schools and specifically of conflict behaviour, draw upon the literature available on general organisational theory and behaviour.

The treatment of organisational conflict in the literature reviewed portrays a consistent tendency away from the traditionalist, 'conflict-is-evil-and-needs-to-be-eliminated' approach, towards an acceptance of the existence and occasional necessity of the phenomenon in organisations. The current, interactionist approach, which advocates the harnessing of conflict for organisational growth, accentuates the role of the manager in ensuring that the conflict is functional for the organisation. The interconnectedness between conflict and change is noted in the literature. The

persistence of a generally negative view of conflict is attributed in the literature to social interaction and societal norms and values which reinforce anticonflict values.

The difficulties of defining conflict would seem to be related to the fact that conflict occurs so pervasively in society and its structures and interactions. A comprehensive definition would seem illusive, maybe even doubtful, at this stage if such a definition needs to span the spectrum of the phenomenon's occurrence in society. Certain aspects of the term conflict have nevertheless been identified. It is apparent, from the literature reviewed, that the term describes antecedent conditions which leads to inconsistent, dissenting behaviour.

Conflict has been variously classified in the literature and this classification is based on different perspectives. The classification of conflict which is used in this study is based on the social interaction levels of the school, i.e. interpersonal, intergroup and intragroup conflict.

The nature and processes of conflict have been described in models to circumscribe its occurrence. The models depicted in the literature survey are the process and structural models. These models have been developed with a view to the more effective management of organisational conflict.

As a prelude to the discussion of the causes of conflict in organisations, the role of informal groups - with specific reference to conflict, has been described. It would seem, from a review of the literature, that individuals join groups precisely also

because of the need for 'protection' in the event of conflict between their interests and those of the organisation. Group functioning and interaction play an important role in intergroup conflict. The impact of the actions of the group on the organisation in times of conflict, is pivotal.

Many sources of conflict in organisations are identified in the literature. In this literature survey the causes have been grouped under the sub-headings of communications, personal behaviour factors, the organisational structure, and external causes. It would seem apparent, from a review of the literature, that many of the conflict episodes in organisations stem from poor and inadequate communication. Organisational conflict caused by personality traits, which originate from differences in values and perceptions of roles and status, would appear to be difficult to manage because of its subjective nature. The organisational structure presents the widest arena from which conflict arises. The role of the educational manager in this domain is crucial if dysfunctional conflict is to be prevented. The occurrence of conflicts which originate from external sources appears to be relevant in a South African society undergoing social upheaval due to political changes taking place in the country. As communities experience democracy, its questioning nature often leads them to discord and conflict with organisations.

A survey of the literature reveals that the effects of conflict are measured according to its functional or dysfunctional outcomes for the organisation. Included in these functional and dysfunctional outcomes are the effects that the conflict has on the individuals and groups in the organisation. It would appear from the review of the

literature that the utilisation of an interactionist approach to conflict in the school could more readily lead to functional outcomes for the school.

### 3. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The school has a relatively large pupil population of 1200 and the staff would appear to be typical of those in the area of Mitchell's Plain - young and largely inexperienced - due to the fact that the school has only been in existence for 12 years. With regard to the demographic factors of the staff, it is apparent that they are a relatively heterogeneous group. The empirical study revealed the staff's predominantly behavioural view of conflict in organisations. Although this is indicative of a shift from the traditionalist view of old, it is an indication that conflict is still viewed as something that needs to be resolved. The Rubicon - of the acceptance of conflict as absolutely necessary for the school and needing to be purposefully initiated - has yet to be crossed.

Analyses of the statistics portray the pervasive problems being experienced with leadership in the school. Respondents have consistently pointed to conflict with the leadership of the school as taking up a large percentage of their time, and being the most difficult to deal with. The lack of confidence in the school's leadership is accorded a large (64,8%), 'very serious' to 'major' proportion as an effect of the conflict in the school. The amount and manner of conflict being experienced by the principal has in fact resulted in him deciding to leave the school.

The empirical study revealed that poor communications, personality clashes, differing views on ways of doing things, limited resources and leadership and the exercise of authority are regarded by respondents as the more important causes of conflict in the school. These findings on the causes of conflict in the empirical study correlate positively with aspects of the literature survey dealing with the sources of conflict in organisations.

An analysis of the indicators of conflict and current resolution strategies, would seem to indicate that there is in fact an escalation of the conflict in the school. It appears that management strategies currently being used are not inclined to induce a resolution of the conflict. This is borne out by the fact that the majority of the respondents experience only small to minimal organisational growth and creative problem solving as an effect of the conflict.

A close inspection of the statistics relating to the effects of the conflict reveals a relatively large average percentage (27,7%) of respondents indicating the highest calibration on the scale ie. "major," for all the effects stipulated. This is perhaps an indication of the staff's concern at, and the realisation of the strength and pervasiveness of the effects of the conflict. When one considers the relationship between pupils' performance and the outcomes of the school in the light of the effects of the conflict, it might be valid to comment that the conflict has been largely dysfunctional for the school. The indication of the strength of the respondents' opinion regarding the effect of the conflict on relations with the community, points to the pervasiveness of the conflict.

The hypotheses used to ascertain the frequencies of certain aspects of the conflict in the school would seem to indicate the widespread nature of conflict, and the high level of polarisation in the staff because of it.

#### 4. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR POLICY MAKERS

It is apparent that not enough research is being conducted about conflict as it occurs in schools. Policy research on an institutional level should be encouraged if schools are to develop solutions for their own, often unique problems. More research needs to be done at the site level, involving the staff and pupils so that an awareness of the need for constructive management of conflict is encouraged. These policies, if developed on an all-inclusive basis, could go a long way to managing conflicts constructively in schools.

The school going population in South Africa is large and with democratic changes under way in the country, these numbers are set to rise, making it imperative that the level of understanding and tolerance amongst different groups is raised. The current penchant for disruption as a means of voicing protest in the schools of certain communities, would seem to place added pressure on the need for effective conflict management policies.

The dissemination of knowledge about conflict and its ramifications and effective ways of resolving it for the better of the school would seem to be in the interests of

education in the country. Practitioners need to be made aware of the nature, causes, processes and effects of organisational conflict.

The training of teachers and especially aspirant principals should, as a matter of policy, include conflict and its management as well as the value of effective communication which is at the root of good relations. This training should continue and be updated in the professional life of teachers and principals.

The amount and level of conflict in some communities' schools and the far reaching effects of conflict on these communities, necessitates the establishment of institutionalised mechanisms like grievance committees or conflict handling groups to ensure the constructive management of conflict. School based policies should include such mechanisms in order to deal speedily and constructively with conflict in schools.

The amount and level of conflict with the leadership of schools points towards problems with participation and decision making in the functioning of schools. Teachers have in the past been alienated from involvement in the running of the school through top-down management strategies. The democratisation process in South African is cutting a swathe through organisations and creating a desire by individuals and groups to be involved in the running of their organisations. Schools are no exception to this and the conflict in schools, of which Rocklands Secondary is a typical example, is an example of what the lack of effective communication and sound conflict management can spawn. There is therefore an urgent need to democratise schools, to make their administration transparent, so that employees can 'own' the

process of effective education. Policies should be developed with all those involved in the school concerning this democratisation.

A perennial problem of organisations, to which schools also fall prey, is the increase in bureaucratic methods of operating. In schools, where the level of professional collegiality seems to be the dominant ideal, this is particularly problematic and could generate conflict. There is thus a constant need to limit the effects of bureaucratic tendencies.

The greater participation of communities in the functioning of schools is an aspect which is part of the general democratising of the country. An implication of the study is that communities should be allowed to become more involved in the affairs of the school.

An implication of the study which has the potential of wide spread disruption of education, but, because it was not the focus of this investigation, was not accentuated, is the unionisation of the teaching profession. There is a dire need to communicate the role of unions in education to all concerned so that a better working relationship than is at present in operation, can be attained. The power of unions, in creating 'another master' for the teacher has the potential, if not harnessed to deliver effective education, to lead to the disintegration of academic standards. Aside from the development of central or regional policies to deal with the unionisation of teachers, site based policies should be developed amongst teachers and the management of the

school, including parents and the broader school community, to ensure that the interests of all concerned are considered.

Policy making and policy proposals are influenced, increasingly - because of the state of the country's economy - by economic considerations. Financing of education will always be a problem because of the divergent demands from different groups. An understanding needs to be created amongst all involved in education, of the financial needs of education and the ability of the economy to deliver. The struggle over limited resources, which creates much conflict in schools needs to take place in an environment where all involved know and accept the limitations.

The aforementioned factors and implications need to be considered by administrators, business people, communities, principals, teachers and in some cases pupils when policies are developed to guide the affairs of schools. Policy making on an institutional level should be sensitive to the needs, desires, fears and aspirations of all those involved in the process of school-based education.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Schools should be required to develop site based policies for the management of conflict.
2. The training of principals, aspirant principals and teachers should include conflict management, not only where it occurs in classrooms, but in schools generally.

3. Schools should be encouraged to set up institutionalised mechanisms, like grievance committees, to deal with conflict occurring in the school.
4. The effects of the unionisation of teachers on the the functioning of schools should be discussed with a view to developing greater understanding between unions, parents, communities, the administration, teachers, principals and pupils.
5. Training and in-service workshops should be provided to assist principals with educational management especially with a view to empowering them to democratise schools and in so doing raise the level of involvement of teachers and the community in the functioning of the school. This initiative should be taken by education authorities and should be clearly spelt out in policy documents as part of INSET (in service training) on the part of educational authorities. Schools should decide, with the assistance of regional education heads, what INSET programmes its staff members ought to attend in order to raise the effectiveness of the school's functioning.

**APPENDIX A****Table 1 : Gender (response 1)**

1. Male	30	(54,5%)
2. Female	25	(45,5%)

**Table 2 : Age groups in years (response 2)**

1. 20-24	1	(1,8%)
2. 25-29	26	(47,3%)
3. 30-34	18	(32,7%)
4. 35-39	7	(12,7%)
5. 40+	3	(5,5%)

**Table 3 : Highest qualifications (response 3 , 4)**

Academic : (response 3)

1. Matric	15	(28,8%)
2. Bachelors degree	32	(61,5%)
3. Honours degree	5	(9,6%)

Professional : (response 4)

1. Primary Teaching Certificate/Diploma	6	(11,1%)
2. Secondary Teaching Cert/Diploma	35	(64,8%)
3. Bachelor of Education	12	(22,2%)
4. Technical teaching	1	(1,9%)

**Table 4 : Teaching experience in years (response 5)**

1. 0-4	14	(25,5%)
2. 5-9	28	(50,9%)
3. 10-14	8	(14,5%)
4. 15-19	3	(5,5%)
5. 20+	2	(3,6%)

**Table 5 : Professional status (response 6)**

1. Permanent	46	(83,6%)
2. Temporary	9	(16,4%)

**Table 6 : Professional Rank (response 7)**

1. Teacher secondary	45	(81,8%)
2. Head of department	8	(14,5%)
3. Deputy principal	1	(1,8%)
4. Principal	1	(1,8%)

**Table 7 : Dominant teaching department (response 8)**

1. Languages	15	(27,8%)
2. Sciences	10	(18,5%)
3. Mathematics	5	(9,3%)
4. Humanities	9	(16,7%)
5. Practical	7	(12,9%)
6. Commercial	8	(14,8%)

**Table 8 : Religion (response 9)**

1. Christianity	42	(76,4%)
2. Islam	10	(18,2%)
3. Agnostic	0	
4. Other	3	(5,5%)

**Table 9 : Support for teachers organisations (response 10)**

1. SADTU	24	(43,6)
2. CTPA	8	(14,5)
3. Non Aligned	23	(41,8)

**Table 10 : Membership of informal groups (response 11)**

1. Yes	31	(56,4%)
2. No	24	(43,6%)

**Reasons for membership (response 12)**

1. Friendship	24	(44,4%)
2. Same religion	0	
3. Same department	2	(3,7%)
4. Travelling arrangement	2	(3,7%)
5. Same rank	0	
6. Same organisation	26	(48,1)

**Table 11 : Views of conflict (responses 13-24)**

Response Numbers	Positive Indications	Neutral Indications	Negative Indications
13 to 24	225	108	246
%	36.06	17.31	39.42

**Table 12 : How conflict should be dealt with (response 25)**

1. Conflict is absolutely necessary for any organisation and should at times be started deliberately	0
2. Conflict is usually destructive and should be resolved as soon as it occurs	10 (18,2%)
3. Conflict is a natural, inborn part of an organisation and should be accepted as such. However methods should be found to resolve it.	45 (81,8%)

**Table 13: Individuals or groups you have the the most conflict with  
(responses 26,29,32)**

1. Education department officials	7	(4,9%)
2. School committee	12	(8,4%)
3. People & groups in the community	3	(2,1%)
4. Pupils' parents	5	(3,5%)
5. Senior staff members generally	10	(6,9%)
6. Department head (of your subject)	3	(2,1%)
7. Teachers (generally) on the staff	27	(18,9%)
8. Non academic staff members	0	
9. Pupils	22	(15,4%)
10.The principal	22	(15,4%)
11.Teachers organisation branch at school	22	(15,4%)
12.A different religious group	3	(2,1%)
13.Political party support group	1	(0,7%)
14.Opposing sport organisation group	3	(2,1%)
15.Teachers in your department	3	(2,1%)
<b>Tot.</b>	<b>143</b>	

**Table 14: Groups or individuals you find the conflict most difficult to deal  
with (responses 35,36,37)**

1. Non academic staff members	1	(0,7%)
2. Department head (of your subject)	5	(3,4%)
3. Pupils parents	6	(4,1%)
4. School committee	13	(8,9%)
5. The principal	33	(22,6%)
6. A different religious group	4	(2,7%)
7. Opposing sport organisation group	1	(0,7%)
8. Education department officials	12	(8,2%)
9. People and groups in the community	4	(2,7%)
10.Teachers (individually) on the staff	22	(15,2%)

11. Teachers organisation branch at school	23	(15,7%)
12. Teachers in your department	3	(2,1%)
13. Political party support group	5	(3,4%)
14. Senior staff members generally	9	(6,2%)
15. Pupils	5	(3,4%)

**Tot. 146**

**Table 15 : Amount of time spent on conflict (response 38)**

1. Too much	12	(22,6%)
2. Too little	29	(54,7%)
3. Normal	2	(3,8%)
4. Not sure	10	(18,9%)

**Table 16 : Causes of conflict in the school (in percentage) (responses 39-53)**

Causes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Emotional problems	13.5	19.2	13.5	11.5	9.6	7.7	17.3	7.6
2. Communications	0	1.9	1.9	5.6	9.3	14.8	29.6	37.0
3. Personality clash	0	0	9.4	11.3	22.6	26.4	22.6	7.5
4. Differing values	3.8	0	15.1	22.6	13.2	7.5	26.4	11.3
5. Differing methods	0	1.9	3.7	1.9	18.5	16.7	29.6	27.8
6. Limited resources	1.9	11.5	11.5	25.0	3.8	13.5	15.4	17.3
7. Compliance: rules	0	3.8	13.5	13.5	23.1	17.3	19.2	9.6
8. Unsatisfactory work	13.2	7.5	11.3	16.9	20.8	7.5	16.9	5.7
9. Socio-political	13.5	9.6	21.2	15.4	19.2	7.7	13.5	0
10. Dependence	9.3	14.8	24.1	16.7	20.4	9.3	3.7	1.9
11. Teacher Evaluation	3.9	7.8	13.7	25.5	7.8	19.6	7.8	13.7
12. Pupil Evaluation	25.0	21.2	28.8	17.3	7.7	0	0	0
13. Lack of promotion	11.1	16.7	22.2	11.1	11.1	11.1	14.8	1.9
14. Leadership style	0	0	7.5	9.4	9.4	15.1	24.5	33.9
15. "majority rule"	16.9	9.4	20.7	5.7	15.1	13.2	11.3	7.5

**Table 17 : Indicators of conflict (in percentages) (responses 54-57)**

	Not Directly Involved	Directly Involved
1. Heightened tension	28.8	33.9
2. Declining productivity	1.9	1.9
3. Threats	9.6	7.5
4. Silence or withdrawal	7.6	13.2
5. Arbitrary decisions	3.8	5.7
6. Anger or open hostility	17.3	13.2
7. Arguments	5.8	5.7
8. Refusal to carry out commands	11.5	3.7
9. Disciplinary problems	0	3.7
10. Negative attitude	3.8	7.5
11. Increase in complaints	1.9	0
12. Increasing staff turnover	0	1.9
13. Increasing absenteeism	3.8	1.9
14. Disruption of activities	3.8	0
15. Assault or fighting	0	0
16. Physical damage	0	0

**Table 18 : Effects of conflict (in percentages) (responses 58-70)**

Effects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Disintegrated the cohesiveness	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	03.7	14.8	31.5	50.0
2. Demotivated staff	1.8	3.6	0	5.5	5.5	25.5	27.3	30.9
3. Polarised staff	1.8	3.7	0	0	11.1	18.5	12.9	51.9
4. Damaged relations	0	0	0	0	1.8	11.1	25.9	61.1
5. Increased creative problem solving	22.2	20.4	9.3	1.8	5.6	12.9	18.5	9.3
6. Organisation growth	35.8	24.5	13.2	5.7	3.8	7.5	5.7	3.8
7. Formal groups	1.8	7.3	1.8	3.7	7.3	21.8	36.4	20.0
8. Adversely affected administration	3.7	3.7	9.3	11.1	16.7	25.9	20.4	9.3
9. Deteriorating community relations	5.6	0	16.7	12.9	24.1	20.4	9.3	11.1
10. Deteriorating staff discipline	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	9.3	27.8	29.6	18.5
11. Increased suspicion	0	0	0	0	5.5	20.0	27.3	47.3
12. Lack of confidence in leadership	1.8	5.6	0	9.3	12.9	11.1	31.5	33.3
13. Adverse pupil performance	5.6	9.3	5.6	12.9	16.7	24.1	12.9	12.9

**Table 19 : Current resolution strategies (responses 71-73)**

1. Use of authority e.g. threats, punishment	25	(15,3%)
2. Avoidance by postponement	47	(28,8%)
3. Withdrawal e.g. pretending it doesn't exist	26	(15,9%)
4. Direct confrontation	32	(19,6%)
5. Shared problem solving	2	(1,2%)
6. Seeking common aims	0	
7. Use of outside authority	21	(12,9%)
8. Reasonableness e.g. discuss, hold talks	10	(6,1%)
9. Restructure the organisation	0	
10. Expand e.g. create more resources	0	

**Table 20: Causes of conflict : response number 44 : limited resources and their allocation and control.**

<u>SADTU</u>	<u>Rest of staff</u>
1 0	1 1
2 3	2 3
3 0	3 6
4 5	4 8
5 0	5 2
6 3	6 4
7 5	7 3
8 7	8 2
<b>Tot. 23</b>	<b>Tot. 29</b>

**Table 21:** Causes of conflict : response number 52 : Leadership and the exercise of authority

<u>SADTU</u>	<u>Rest of staff</u>
1 0	1 0
2 0	2 0
3 0	3 4
4 0	4 5
5 0	5 5
6 1	6 7
7 8	7 5
8 14	8 4
<b>Tot. 23</b>	<b>Tot. 30</b>

**Table 22:** Causes of conflict : response number 53 : the exercise of 'majority rule' on decisions

<u>SADTU</u>	<u>Rest of staff</u>
1 8	1 1
2 4	2 1
3 4	3 7
4 0	4 3
5 3	5 5
6 1	6 6
7 2	7 4
8 1	8 3
<b>Tot. 23</b>	<b>Tot. 30</b>

**Table 23:** Effects of conflict : response number 58 : disintegrated the cohesiveness of the staff

<u>SADTU</u>	<u>Non aligned teachers</u>
1 0	1 0
2 0	2 0
3 0	3 0
4 0	4 0
5 0	5 1
6 4	6 2
7 8	7 6
8 12	8 14
<b>Tot. 24</b>	<b>Tot.23</b>

**Table 24:** Effects of conflict : response number 69 : led to a lack of confidence in the schools leadership

<u>SADTU</u>	<u>Non aligned teachers</u>
1 0	1 1
2 0	2 3
3 0	3 0
4 0	4 5
5 0	5 3
6 0	6 5
7 11	7 3
8 13	8 3
<b>Tot.24</b>	<b>Tot. 23</b>

**Table 25:** Nature and extent of conflict : response number 38: amount of time the staff spends on conflict and conflict management.

<u>20-29 yr olds</u>		<u>30-39 yr olds</u>	
1	10	1	2
2	23	2	6
3	2	3	0
4	7	4	2
<b>Tot.</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>Tot.</b>	<b>10</b>

**APPENDIX B:**



ADMINISTRASIE: RAAD VAN VERTEENWOORDIGERS  
ADMINISTRATION: HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

☎ 32-3111  
⚡  
✉

Navrae Enquiries Mr. J.R. Liedeman Verwysingsno. Reference No. 50232070

Republiek van Suid-Afrika  
Republic of South Africa

Mr. M.W. Gasant  
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7764

Kantoor van die Office of the REGIONAL CHIEF INSPECTOR

Departement van Department of EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Privaatsak Private Bag

MITCHELLS PLAIN

7785

1993-09-14

Dear Sir

PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH AT ROCKLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Receipt of your letter dated 7 May 1993 is acknowledged.

I am pleased to inform you that approval has been granted for research to be conducted at the above-mentioned school in order to assist you in your studies.

I would like to wish you success in your course which could only have positive effects on relationships in schools.

Yours faithfully

  
REGIONAL CHIEF INSPECTOR OF EDUCATION

**APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE****PART ONE****The aims and general guidelines of the questionnaire****Aims**

The questionnaire sets out to gather information on conflict in the school where it affects the staff and the functioning of the school as an organisation.

It attempts to gather information about the...

- \* staffs views on conflict,
- \* nature and extent of conflict,
- \* causes of conflict,
- \* indicators of conflict,
- \* effects of conflict and
- \* the ways that conflict is currently being managed or resolved at the school

**Guidelines**

1. It is VERY important for the research that the questionnaire be completed fully, correctly and candidly.
2. It is important that your responses reflect YOUR PERSONAL views and experiences.
3. The assurance is given that the responses will be consolidated so that individuals cannot be identified.
4. The responses will thus be dealt with in the strictest confidence.
5. Please follow the instructions very carefully as the collation and analysis of the data requires relative accuracy.
6. Please DO NOT USE THE COLUMN MEANT FOR THE COMPUTER.
7. It should take roughly 20 min. to complete

I trust you will find the exercise meaningful and worthwhile and that the indications emerging from the research will benefit not only Rocklands but other institutions as well.

M. W. Gasant  
Education Faculty  
University of Cape Town  
RONDEBOSCH  
7700

**PART TWO****GENERAL, BIOGRAPHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL DETAILS**

MAKE A CROSS IN THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK

2.1 Gender

male	1
female	2

1

2.2. Age group in years

20 - 24	1
25 - 29	2
30 - 34	3
35 - 39	4
40 +	5

2

2.3. Highest Qualifications

2.3.1. Academic

Matric	1
Bachelors degree	2
Honours degree	3

3

2.3.2. Professional

Primary Teaching Certificate/Diploma	1
Secondary Teaching Certificate/Diploma	2
Bachelor of Education	3
Technical Teaching	4

4

## 2.4. Teaching Experience (years)

0 - 4	1
5 - 9	2
10 - 14	3
15 - 19	4
20 +	5

5

## 2.5. Professional Status

Permanent	1
Temporary	2

6

## 2.6. Professional Rank

Teacher Secondary	1
Head of Department	2
Deputy Principal	3
Principal	4

7

## 2.7. Dominant Teaching Department

Languages	1
Sciences	2
Mathematics	3
Humanities	4
Practical	5
Commercial	6

8

## 2.8. Religion

Christianity	1
Islam	2
Agnostic	3
Other	4

9

2.9. Formal or Informal support for Teachers' Organisations if applicable

SADTU	1
CTPA	2
Non Aligned	3

10

2.10 Are you part of an Informal group on the staff

Yes	1
No	2

11

2.11. If you answered yes to no.10, what is the main reason

for belonging to an informal group?

If you answered no to no.10 or the reasons do not apply, then make a cross in the block numbered 6.

Friendship	1
Same religion	2
Same department	3
Travelling arrangements	4
Same rank	5
Same organisation	6

12

**THANK YOU!!**

**THE EXTENT, CAUSES AND NATURE OF CONFLICT AT ROCKLANDS  
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

3.1. Views of conflict

How do you view conflict ? Listed below are some contrasting views associated with conflict. Indicate your view of it by making an **X** nearest to the word which most closely reflects your perception on the line between the words. Respond to **ALL** views on the line.

CONFLICT IS...

For computer

Necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unnecessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	13
Constructive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Destructive	<input type="checkbox"/>	14
Competition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Co-operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	15
Hostility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friendliness	<input type="checkbox"/>	16
Should be eliminated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Should be encouraged	<input type="checkbox"/>	17
Acceptable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unacceptable	<input type="checkbox"/>	18
Unproductive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Productive	<input type="checkbox"/>	19
Usual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unusual	<input type="checkbox"/>	20
Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mistrust	<input type="checkbox"/>	21
Pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unpleasant	<input type="checkbox"/>	22
Avoidable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unavoidable	<input type="checkbox"/>	23
Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peace of mind	<input type="checkbox"/>	24

3.2. How do you think conflict should be dealt with at school? Mark only the **one** which you feel most committed about.

For computer

Conflict is absolutely necessary for any organisation and should at times be started deliberately	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	25
Conflict is usually destructive and should be resolved as soon as it occurs	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Conflict is a natural, inborn part of an organisation and should be accepted as such. However methods should be found to resolve it.	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3.3. Nature and extent of conflict

## 3.3.1.

- A. With which of the following groups or individuals do you normally have the most conflict? (mark THREE at most)
- B. What percentage of your time (approximately) is spent on conflict / conflict management with the particular group / persons in an average working week?

MAKE A CROSS OVER THE APPLICABLE NUMBER

- A. MOST CONFLICT
- B. % OF TIME SPENT ON THE CONFLICT

For Computer

	A	B	
		%	
Education department officials	1		
School committee	2		
People & groups in the community	3		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Pupils' parents	4		26 27 28
Senior staff members generally	5		
Department head (of your subject)	6		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Teachers ( generally) on the staff	7		29 30 31
Non-academic staff members	8		
Pupils	9		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
The Principal	10		32 33 34
Teachers organisation branch at school	11		
A different religious group	12		
Political party support group	13		
Opposing sport organisation group	14		
Teachers in your department	15		

## 3.3.2.

With which of the following groups or individuals do you usually find conflict **most difficult to deal with?** Mark three.

MAKE A CROSS OVER THE APPLICABLE NUMBER

For computer

Non-academic staff members	1
Department head (of your subject)	2
Pupils' parents	3
School committee	4
The Principal	5
A different religious group	6
Opposing sport organisation group	7
Education department officials	8
People and groups in the community	9
Teachers (individually) on the staff	10
Teachers organisation branch at school	11
Teachers in your department	12
Political party support group	13
Senior staff members generally	14
Pupils	15

<input type="checkbox"/>	35
<input type="checkbox"/>	36
<input type="checkbox"/>	37

## 3.3.3.

Do you regard the amount of the time the staff spends on conflict and conflict management as ...

Too much	1
Too little	2
Normal	3
Not sure	4

<input type="checkbox"/>	38
--------------------------	----



3.5. Conflict Indicators

What do you regard as the TWO most important indicators or signs of a conflict situation between individuals or groups in the school...

A... where you are NOT directly involved, and

B... where you ARE directly involved

PLEASE BE SURE TO MARK TWO INDICATORS FOR EACH, A and B

	A Not directly Involved		B Directly Involved		
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	
Heightened, perceptible tension	1	1	1	1	
Declining productivity and quality of work	2	2	2	2	
Threats	3	3	3	3	
Silence or withdrawal	4	4	4	4	
Arbitrary decisions	5	5	5	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 54
Anger or open hostility	6	6	6	6	<input type="checkbox"/> 55
Arguments	7	7	7	7	<input type="checkbox"/> 56
Refusal to carry out commands or instructions	8	8	8	8	<input type="checkbox"/> 57
Increase in disciplinary problems	9	9	9	9	
Negative attitude (unwilling)	10	10	10	10	
Increase in complaints, objections	11	11	11	11	
Increasing staff turnover	12	12	12	12	
Increasing absenteeism	13	13	13	13	
Disruption of school activities	14	14	14	14	
Assault or fighting	15	15	15	15	
Damage to school property	16	16	16	16	



3.7. Current resolution strategies

Which strategies are MAINLY being used currently to deal with conflict. Mark three main strategies being used.

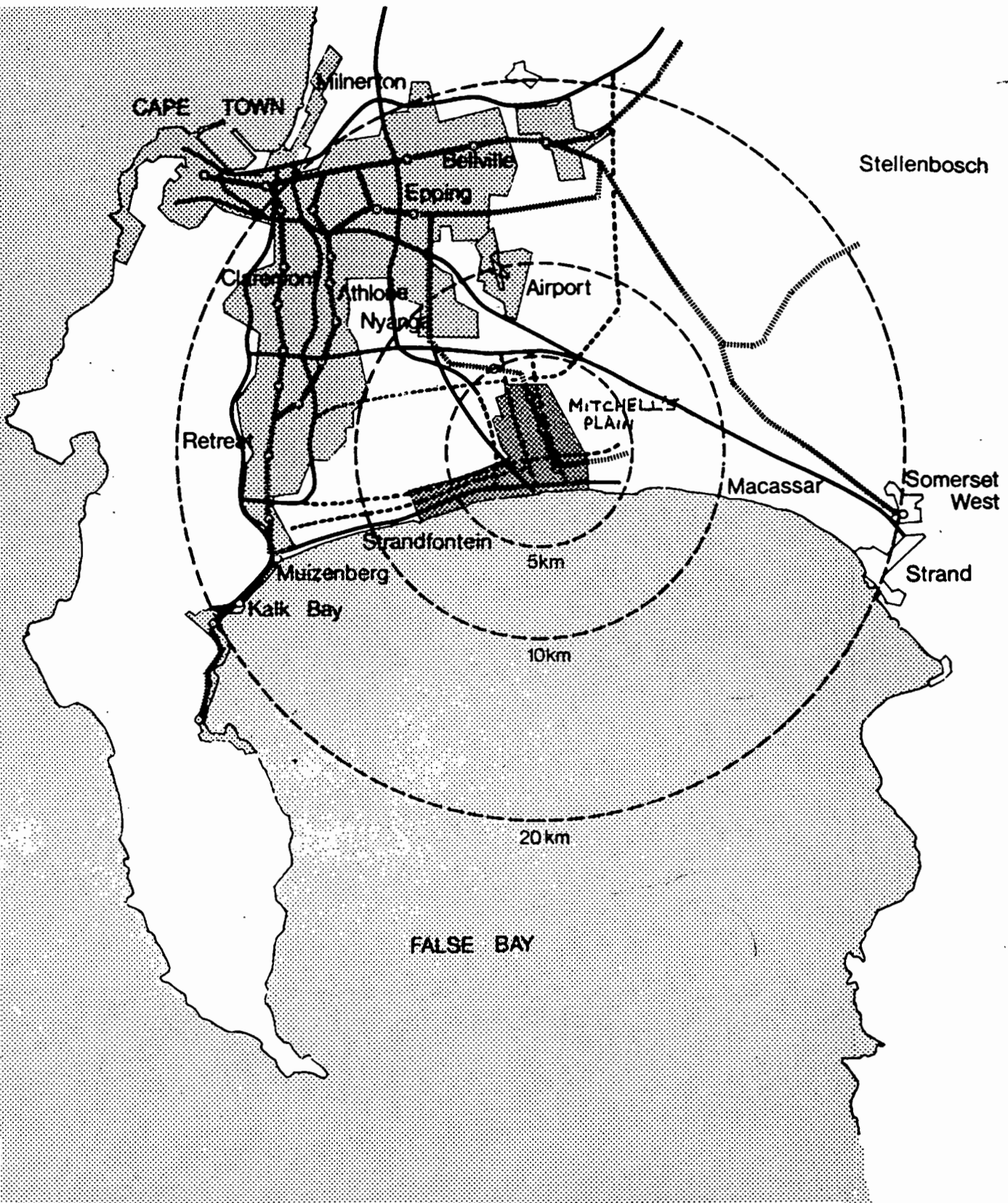
MAKE A CROSS OVER THE THREE STRATEGIES BEING USED MAINLY

Use of authority, e.g. threats, punishment, reward	1	
Avoidance by postponement	2	
Withdrawal, e.g. pretending it does not exist	3	<input type="checkbox"/> 71
Direct confrontation	4	
Shared problem solving	5	
Seeking common aims	6	
Use of outside authority, e.g. facilitator or school committee	7	<input type="checkbox"/> 72
Reasonableness e.g. discuss, hold talks, declare points of view, negotiate, compromise	8	
Use a committee to investigate and make recommendations	9	
Restructure the organisation	10	<input type="checkbox"/> 73
Expand e.g. create more resources	11	

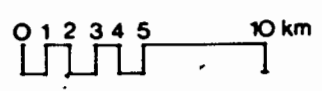
**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME IN RESPONDING TO  
THE QUESTIONNAIRE !**

**THE STATISTICS AND THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF WILL BE  
MADE AVAILABLE TO YOU**

**APPENDIX D:**



**Mitchell's Plain**  
**Metropolitan Context**



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### **(C) Indices**

A. Tables 1 to 25.

B. Permission to do research at Rocklands Secondary.

C. Questionnaire distributed at Rocklands Secondary School.

D. Map of Cape Peninsula