

# Conflict resolution in public sector assignment

[Business](#), [Management](#)



CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION 1. 1Background to the Study Conflict is inevitable in organizations because, they function by means of adjustment and compromises among competitive elements in their structure and membership. Conflict also arises when there is change because, it may be seen as a threat to be challenged or resisted, or when there is frustration, this may produce an aggressive reaction, fight rather than flight. Conflict is not to be deplored, it is an inevitable result of progress and change and it can be used constructively.

Conflict between individuals raises fewer problems than conflict between groups. Individuals cannot act independently and resolve their differences; members of group may have to accept the norms, goals and values of their group. The individual's loyalty will usually be to his or her own group if it is in conflict with others. When the climate of the organization is not conducive to the needs of the personnel, conflict can result. In the past this conflict was regarded as inherently bad. Managers believed it was generated by trouble makers trying to disrupt the organization.

Today, this stereotype view is no longer accepted. Conflict is currently regarded as inevitable and, if properly managed, a source of increased organizational effectiveness. The federal civil service commission is an organization of individuals and groups pursuing various goals. The federal civil service commission is established under section 153 (ii) of the 199 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Specifically, part I (d), paragraph II of the third schedule to the constitution vests the commission with power to: (i)Appoint and promote persons to offices in the federal civil service, and. ii)Dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding

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such offices". More so, in discharge of the above functions, the commission works in close operation with the ministries, departments and agencies (MDA's) of the federal government. In area of recruitment and appointment, the commission relies on the MDA to provide it with vacancy positions and make a formal request that the commission should fill the vacancies. The MDA's stipulate what should be the requisite qualifications for particular positions if they are not provided for by the scheme of service.

The commission also invites experts from MDA's, making a request for recruitment to participate in the interview as resource persons. MDA's can also reject any particular selected candidate(s) if they convince the commission that he or she does not have the requisite qualifications. Promotion exercise is carried out only on the basis of vacancies provided by the MDA's and all candidates for promotion must be recommended by the MDA's. Resource persons from the MDA's participate in the conduct of promotion examinations. The commission can dismiss and exercise disciplinary control only on the recommendation of the MDA's.

Section 170 of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria empowers the commission to delegate any of its functions as it deems fit. The commission has therefore delegated the following functions to federal ministries and extra - ministerial departments in order to speed up action on appointment, promotion and disciplinary control of officers in salary grade levels 03-06. However, the disciplinary control of officers on salary grade levels 07-13 after being considered by the senior staff committees (SSC) in the ministries.

In order to monitor the effective utilization of the delegated powers, participation of commissioners from the commission in the meetings of SSCs is mandatory. Indeed, without the participation of members of the commission, decisions reached at such meetings would be null and void. Moreover, returns on all appointments, promotions and disciplinary cases considered in the meetings should be rendered to the commission within two weeks of concluding such matters. In this research conflicts that arises as a result of the discharge of the federal civil service functions and duties and how they are managed will be discussed.

Conflict is a natural and inevitable outcome of the close interaction of people who may have diverse opinions and values, pursue different objectives and have differential access to information and resources within the organization. Individuals and groups will use power and political activity to handle their differences and manage conflict. Too much conflict can be harmful to an organization. However conflict can also be a positive force because it challenges the status quo, encourages new ideas and approaches and leads to change.

Some degree of conflict occurs in all human relationships, between friends, romantic partners and team mates as well as between parents and children, teachers and students and bosses and employees. Conflict is not necessarily a negative force, it results from normal interaction of varying human interests and the goals they wish to achieve through the organization. In any organization that encourages a democratic push and pull of ideas, the forces of conflict, power and politics may be particularly evident.

Managers in all organizations regularly deal with conflict and struggle with decisions about how to get the most out of employees, enhance job satisfaction and team identification and realize high organizational performance. Conflict between individuals and groups is a universal phenomenon. A better understanding of the important areas of conflict will help managers to use the people in the organization more effectively to reach organizational objectives. Failure to be concerned about conflict is very costly since ignoring it will almost guarantee that work and interpersonal relations will deteriorate.

If this occurs, employees will have little motivation to work together and organizational effectiveness will suffer. 1. 2Statement of the Problem Each organization has an objective to achieve and the ability to achieve this objective depends on how integrated the personnel are in the pursuit of this objectives. The civil services of the federation objectives include the following:- i)Appointment of qualified candidates including promotion to man the different ministries/extra-ministerial departments in the federal civil service. i) Recommendations to government on personnel policies aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal civil service and, iii)Ensuring that personnel decisions including discipline are taken objectively, promptly and competently and that such decisions reflect the stated policies and interest of the government. The question to be investigated in the study proposed here will be, does conflict due to the lack of integration of the officer's result to ineffective achievement of the objectives of the federal civil service commission?

The question will be investigated using data already in existence with the addition of data that has accumulated since earlier studies were done and also data gathered during the research will be used. 1. 3Objective of the Study Effectiveness and efficiency can only be achieved in an organization when the various departments that exist in the organization work co-operatively. It is also one thing to argue that conflict can be valuable for an organization.

However, this research work aims at finding out the positive and negative effects of conflict, what happens to an organization without conflict, it will also seek to explain the types of conflict that exist, their sources and how conflict can be managed, that is, how it is controlled, resolved and how it can be stimulated. Also the need for integration as a means for effectiveness and efficiency will be determined. 1. 4Significance of the Study We have come a long way since the days when conflict was believed to be universally destructive.

Unfortunately, With the exception of some lip services given in recent years to the value of conflict in organizations, both practicing managers and management scholars continue to treat conflict management and conflict resolution as synonymous. There are some positive consequences to be gained from conflict, but also that organizations require functional conflict if they are to survive. There will be situations in which conflict levels are too low and as a result, the other side of the conflict management coin; conflict stimulation should not be ignored.

Excessive levels of conflict can, and do hinder organizational effectiveness. Conflict should not be completely written off like in the traditional era, but should be encouraged as it helps to bring out efficiency and effectiveness if properly managed. Mary parker Follet herself said that there is no good or bad conflict, but conflict provides opportunities for good or bad result. 1.

5Research Questions At the end of the study, the following questions shall be answered 1. What are the types of conflict that exists in an organization? 2.

What are the sources of the conflict? 3. What are the Strategies for managing conflict? 4. What are the values of conflicts? 5. What are the transitions in conflict thought? 6. How can conflict be stimulated and why? 7.

How can conflict be controlled and resolved? 8. What are the positive and negative effects of conflicts? 1. 6Research Hypotheses 1. H0: Lack of

integration between groups does not result to conflict in an organization H1: lack of integration between groups results to conflict in the organization 2.

H0: Conflict if properly managed does not improve organizational performance. H1: Conflict if properly managed improves organizational

performance 1. 7Scope and Limitations of the Study The scope of the study covers the departments including the offices of the commissioners of the various states in the federal civil service commission. The scope also covers the relationship between the groups, how integrated they are with one another in other to achieve organizational goals and objectives and how the conflicts that arise as a result of their relationship are managed.

However, the limitations encountered during the course of this research are as a result of the limited time frame available in acquiring information. Being

the Federal Civil Service Commission there are a lot of Bureaucratic bottlenecks, getting required information took a lot of time, the letter of introduction which was addressed to the chairman took about a month, of which I had to rewrite another letter before getting any response. As a result for the duration of time I went to the organization once every week till I got the information I needed.

Most officers were unwilling to give information concerning conflict in the organization, some even refused to admit that conflict existed in the organization; some thought that conflict implies physical combats instead of interference by a person or group on another. Only a few of them seemed to know what conflict is really about. There is also the high cost of printing and photocopying of materials required for the study.

### 1. 8Definition of Terms

**Conflict:** This is the behaviour by a person or group which is purposely designed to inhibit the attainment of goals by another person or group.

**Competition:** Competition takes place when individuals or groups have incompatible goals but do not interfere with each other as they both try to attain their respective goals.

**Organization:** A group of people who form a business club or work together in order to achieve a particular aim.

**Strategy:** A plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose.

**Management:** Is the process of combining and utilizing, or of allocating organizations input (men, material and money) by planning, organizing, directing and controlling for the purpose of producing outputs (goods and services desired by customers so that the organizations objectives are accomplished).

**Value:** Value is how much something is worth in money or



other goods for which it can be exchanged or how much something is worth compared with its price. Structure: The way in which the parts of something are connected together, arranged or organized, a particular arrangement of parts, something that is made of several parts.

Traditional: Being part of the beliefs customs or way of life of a particular group of people that have not changed for a long time. Intra-Individual

Conflict: This refers to conflict within an individual about which work activities to perform. Inter-Individual Conflict: This refers to conflict between two individuals. Inter-Group Conflict: This is conflict between departments in a single firm as well as conflict between different firms. Conflict

Management: Are techniques for controlling conflicting which either is to stimulate conflict or to resolve it.

Conflict Stimulation: This enables groups or individuals in an organization who are too set in their ways or too willing to accept unquestioningly the view of a powerful individual. Conflict Resolution: These are techniques that are used in conflict situations. Smoothing: This is a conflict resolution technique which involves considerable use of tact by the party doing the smoothing. Playing down of differences between individuals and groups while, emphasizing their common interests. Consensus: Consensus requires the conflicting party to work together to find the best solution to their problem, an opinion that all members must agree.

Confrontation: This technique requires the opposing parties to openly state their views to each other. A situation where there is an angry disagreement between people or groups who have different opinions. Integration: This

technique requires the conflicting parties to collaborate in order to resolve the conflict. It requires both parties to have the attitude that, although they may be in conflict they will strive to develop collaboratively a solution that satisfies the needs of both parties. CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 2. 1Definition of Conflict Organizational conflict is inevitable because of the regular and continuing human interactions that must occur. It can be defined as all types of opposition or antagonistic interaction. It is based on scarcity of power, resources or social position, and differing value structures. Conflict occurs, between managers and subordinates, between labour and management, between work groups, and between the organization and its external environment.

Many of the traditional management writers, both classicists and neoclassicists, treated the existence of conflict as an indication of a problem, a disturbance that interfered with the smooth operation of the organization. Current management writers and practicing managers are careful not to assume that all conflict is bad instead, conflict is viewed as a phenomenon that arises in every organization to a certain extent, and in some organizations it is a positive indicator of highly motivated, highly committed organization members.

Conflict can be a highly constructive force, particularly in highly differentiated organizations which utilize a considerable amount of horizontal integration. The challenge to modern management is not to avoid conflict or suppress it; instead, managers must find ways to channel the energy that

conflict represents into activities with positive payoffs for the organization and to keep it within acceptable limits. Conflicts need to be resolved constructively, not hidden from view.

According to Boone and Kortz (1987) conflict is opposition interaction resulting from scarcity of power, resources or social position, and different value structures on the part of the individuals or groups. DuBose (1988) sees conflict as any kind of opposition or antagonistic interaction between two or more parties; it can be conceptualized as existing along continuous range. At one extreme, there is no conflict. At the other extreme is conflicts highest state, described behaviourally as the act of destroying or annihilating the opposing party.

All intensities of interpersonal, intra group and inter group conflicts would fall somewhere along this continuum. Inherent in this definition is the requirement that conflict must be perceived by the involved parties. In other words, if there is opposition but the parties fail to perceive it; then it does not exist. Similarly, if a conflict is perceived, it exists whether or not that perception is accurate. Griffin (2002) also sees conflict as a disagreement between two or more individuals, groups, or organizations. This disagreement may be relatively superficial or very strong.

It may be short-lived or it can exist for months even years, and it may be work-related or personal. Conflict according to Mullins (2007) is seen as behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of some other person's goals. Conflict is based on the incompatibility of goals and arises from opposing behaviours. It can be viewed at the individual, group or

organization level. Management establishes boundaries that distinguish acceptable and non acceptable behaviour from employees. The actions of employees are then judged as falling on one side or the other of these boundaries.

According to Gray and Starke (1980) conflict is behaviour by a person or group which is purposely designed to inhibit the attainment of goals by another person or group. This purposeful inhibition may be active or passive. For example, in a sequential production line, if one group does not do its job and its output is the input for another department, the other department will be blocked from reaching its goals of say, producing at standard.

Alternatively, the blocking behaviour may be active, as in the case of two fighters trying to knock each other out.

The key issue in defining conflict is that of incompatible goals. When one person or group deliberately interferes with another person or group with the purpose of denying the other group goal achievement, conflict exists.

Conflict and Competition Conflict is similar to competition but more severe competition means rivalry among groups in the pursuit of a common prize, while conflict presumes direct interference with goal achievement. The terms of conflict and competition are often mistakenly used interchangeably.

Perhaps the most widely accepted view at present is that competition takes place when individuals or groups have incompatible goals but do not interfere with each other as they both try to attain their respective goals. Conflict on the hand occurs when individuals or groups have incompatible goals and they interfere with each other as they try to attain their respective

goals. These definitions suggests that the key behavioural difference in conflict and competition analogous to the behavioural differences evident in a race and a fight.

In the former, the goals are incompatible (only one runner can win), but the runners do not interfere with one another. In the later the goals are also incompatible (only one fighter can win), but interference is an obvious part of the conflict. Using these two definitions allows us to clearly categorize many of the familiar activities in our society. One of the things that become apparent immediately is that certain activities which are typically viewed as homogenous must be further broken down.

For example, certain sports (boxing, tennis, football, hockey etc) are characterized by obvious blocking behaviour at the resource attainment level. The general public usually refers to what businesses do to each other in the market place as competition, this is an over simplification. At one extreme, business firms vigorously block one another's attempt to achieve goals and this is conflict. For example, in an industry where consumer demand is low and industry production capacity is high conflict is almost certain to result as each firm attempts to reach its goals at the expense of the other firms.

Blocking activity in these cases, often takes place at the activity level. A different situation exists in industries where government's contracts are the rule. Here, competition is more likely. Each firm submits bids and strives to reach its goal of getting the contract. Blocking behaviour is not evident even though there can be only one winner and the goals of the firm are

incompatible. 2. 2Nature of Conflict Conflict may manifest itself in various ways. People may compete with one another, glare at one another, shout, or withdraw.

Groups may band together to protect popular members or oust unpopular members. Organizations may seek legal remedy. Working with diversity discusses how casual dress policies are creating conflict in some organizations. Most people assume that conflict is something to be avoided because it connotes antagonism, hostility, unpleasantness, and dissension. Indeed, managers and management theorists have traditionally viewed conflict as a problem to be avoided. In recent years however, we have come to recognize that, although conflict can be a major problem, certain kinds of conflict may also be beneficial.

For instance, when two members of a site selection committee disagree over the best location for a new plant, each may be forced to study and defend his or her preferred alternative more thoroughly. As a result of more systematic analysis and discussion the committee may make a better decision and be better prepared to justify it to others than if every one had agreed from the outset and accepted an alternative that was perhaps not well analyzed. As long as conflict is being handled in a cordial and constructive manner, it is probably serving a useful purpose in the organization.

On the other hand, when working relationships are being disrupted and the conflict has reached destructive levels, it has likely become dysfunctional and needs to be addressed. According to Mullins (2007) conflict is not

necessarily a bad thing however, it can be seen as a constructive force and in certain circumstances it can be welcomed or even encouraged. For example, it can be seen as an aid to incremental improvement in organization design and functioning and to the decision making process. Conflict can be an agent for evolution, and for internal and external change.

Properly identified and handled, it can help to minimize the destructive influences of the win-lose situation. From a survey of practicing managers who reported that they spend approximately 20 percent of their time dealing with conflict situations a number of both positive and negative outcomes of conflict were recorded positive outcomes include. a. Better ideas produced b. People forced to search for new approaches. c. Long-standing problems brought to the surface and resolved. d. Stimulation of interest and creativity. e. A chance for people to test their capacities Negative outcomes include: a.

Some people felt defeated and demeaned b. The distance between people increased c. A climate of mistrust and suspicion developed d. Resistance developed rather than team work e. An increase in employee turnover.

According to Gray and Starke (1980) the positive outcome of conflict an as follows: a. The energy level of groups or individuals increase with conflict. This increased energy level can be seen when people talk louder, listen more closely to what is being said, or work harder. Two of the benefits organizations get from increased energy levels are increased output and innovative ideas for doing the work better. . Group cohesion increases. Research has shown that, when groups are engaged in a conflict, their internal cohesion increases. The other group is seen as the “ enemy” and

group resources are mobilized to meet the threat from the “ outside”. To do this, disagreements within the group must be suppressed and all energies diverted towards the enemy. This process can be seen in the mid-east; Arab nations have trouble getting along with one another except when a common threat (Israel) dominates their relationship.

The reason that increased cohesion is considered a positive outcome of conflict is that highly cohesive groups can have high productivity, particularly if they support management goals. c. Problems are made known during conflict when conflict develops management can readily see that something is amiss and can embark in a program to resolve the conflict. If two groups are in disagreement about something but never make it known, they may work at a reduced level of effectiveness without management being able to determine why.

This is particularly likely to happen if the problem between the groups is caused by some system of work that management has set up. Group members may be reluctant to criticize management about the system, and the conflict will not be made known. Negative outcomes d. A decline in communication between the conflicting parties, when individuals or groups are upset with each other, a common development is that they stop speaking. As we have seen, this is very dysfunctional because conflict is often worsened when there is little information passing between the conflicting parties. e.

Hostility and aggression develop it is a typical human reaction to feel hostility toward someone who is blocking our attempts to reach a goal.



Aggression (either physical or verbal) is also a common behaviour associated with hostility. While this may satisfy the person's urges to attack the person doing the blocking, from the organizations point of view it is undesirable because it channels behaviour into non productive area. For example if two groups are in conflict about something they may spend much of the work day devising schemes to block the other group's goal attainment.

Obviously a point is reached where the work of each group does not get done. f. Over conformity to group demands. We noted above that conflict could cause groups to become cohesive and this might result in higher productivity. We must also recognize that members of a group faced with an outside threat may over conform to the group demands. This involves blind acceptance of the leaders' interpretation of the opposing group and no thinking about solutions by anyone in the group. This prolongs the conflict and makes it more intense.

As time passes, the group is unable to view its opposition with any objectivity and perceptions become very distorted. Either too much or too little conflict can be dysfunctional for an organization. In either case performance maybe low. However, an optimal level of conflict that sparks motivation, creativity, innovation and initiation can result in higher levels of performance. If there is absolutely no conflict in the group or organization, its members may become complacent and apathetic. As a result group or organizational performance and innovation may begin to suffer.

A moderate level of conflict among groups or organizational members, on the other hand, can spark motivation, creativity, innovation and initiation

and raise performance. Too much conflict though, can produce undesirable results such as hostility and lack of cooperation, which lowers performance. The key for managers is to find and maintain the optimal amount of conflict that fosters performance. Of course, what constitutes optimal conflict varies with both situation and the people involved. 2. 3Types of Conflicts

The first step in learning to deal with organizational conflict is the recognition that all conflicts are not alike; they spring from different sources and must be resolved in different ways. The major categories of organizational conflict are; intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, person group conflict and inter group conflict. Intra personal conflict occurs within the individual that is a single member of the organization and comes primarily from two sources: role conflict and job stress.

Role conflict is the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) role sending such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other. For instance a person's superior may make it clear to him that he is expected to hold his subordinates strictly to company rules. At the same time, his subordinates may indicate in various ways that they would like loose, relaxed supervision, and that they will make things difficult if they are pushed too hard. Such cases are so common that a whole literature has been created on the problem of the first line supervision as the " man in the middle".

In addition, role conflict may occur as the result of different roles an individual has to play. For instance, the role of parent and the role of employee may come into conflict when the employee's child becomes sick.

The wide spread presence of two wage-earner households and societal changes affecting values with respect to work have resulted in individuals being called upon to play a greater number of diverse roles. The result is increased frequency of this type of role conflict. The second primary source of intra personal conflict in modern organization is job stress.

As the pace of change quickens in organizations and throughout society, workers may come to feel lost, unsure of what is expected of them, and unsure of their abilities to cope with what they perceive as ever-mounting pressure. While some stress may even be a positive factor in motivating individuals and in fueling innovation, chronic over stress leads to short-tempered, uncooperative defensive employees who may even indulge in such self destructive activities as alcoholism and drug abuse, the cost of such response to stress maybe the individual's family.

Job stress also results when the individual, on an on going basis, is unable to meet his or her own expectations, either in terms of performance (for example, the social worker who wishes to help people but feels unable to do so because of the nature of the system) or in terms of the nature of the work (for example, the assembling line worker who is bored by the repetitious nature of the job and feels that his skills and abilities are not being utilized). Intrapersonal conflict is a subject of increasing concern to organizations due to its damaging impact in Job performance, absenteeism and turnover.

Employee counseling centers, company-sponsored stress management seminars, and management by objectives programs are just some of the methods currently being used to combat this problem. Interpersonal conflict

is conflict occurring between two or more organizational members as a result of such factors as differences in managerial philosophies, values and problem-solving styles or competition for power or promotion. Traditionally this type of conflict was attributed to personality differences". However, it can result from several factors. . Differences in values. For instance, one manager might place a great emphasis in task accomplishment to the exclusion of all else, while another might stress the need to maintain good employee relations even if performance of the immediate task is slightly affected. b. Differences in problem-Solving styles. One person may prefer to work in groups, for example, while another prefers to work alone. c. Differences in managerial philosophies. One manager may favour decentralization of decision making while another favours centralization.

In addition, interpersonal conflict can occur due to competition between individuals, for power, for promotion, or for other organizational rewards. Because interpersonal conflict interferes with effective communication, and thus problem solving, it is a cause of considerable concern for modern organization. Organization development and communication training are frequently used methods of modifying interpersonal conflicts and channeling them into more constructive paths. a. Person-group conflict. This is conflict resulting from individual opposition to group norms or rules of behaviour that govern group membership.

The classic example of this phenomenon is the "rate breaker" who consistently performs at a level well above that of other group due to fear that higher performance standards will be established based on the

performance of the rate breaker. A more recent example is the treatment sometimes afforded the “ Whistle blower”, the individual who brings to the attention of management or the general public instances of waste, fraud or corruption. Such individual may be ostracized and subject to harassment by other members of the group. On the other hand, person-group conflict can sometimes play a positive role within organizations.

When an individual places his or her own needs for recognition or power ahead of the needs of the group to accomplish it's task, group pressure can exert a powerful influence to bring the individual back into line with over all group norms. Intergroup conflict- This type of conflict occurs between departments or work groups and typically revolves around issue of authority, jurisdiction, control of work flow, or access to scarce organizational resources. It arises directly from the need for differentiation in an organization.

To deal with complexity, we resort to specialization and specialists' people with diverse cognitive and emotional orientations in the various functional areas. Such people frequently experience difficulty in communicating and cooperating. Yet, for an organization to act as a unit there must be integration or collaboration among the various departments. Thus, management frequently faces a problem. Long-run performance requires substantial integration, but efforts to generate collaboration often produce short-run conflict. Intergroup conflict arises from two sources: systems conflict and bargaining conflict.

Systems conflict come about because of the divergence in objectives between work groups. For example, the marketing department may feel that rapid order processing is more important than quality control since replacing a defective unit is likely to produce less customer dissatisfaction than waiting on an unfilled order. The production department, on the other hand, may feel that its reputation depends on the continued high quality of its products and this belief may be supported by the incentive system used to govern rewards for production department personnel.

Strategies for resolving system conflicts include rotation of department members among work units to improve understanding and empathy with the problems of other departments, changes in formal incentive systems to reflect overall organizational objectives related to the issue, and the use of horizontal integrative mechanisms such as task forces. Bargaining conflicts occurs when groups compete for scarce organizational resources or for power and influence within the system. An excellent recent example of such conflicts involved government attempts to reduce budget deficits by reducing expenditures.

Interest groups both inside and outside government have attempted to influence this process to ensure that their programs are not cut. When viewed from the organizational level, conflict can often be categorized into two groups: Institutionalized and emergent. Each presents problem. Institutionalized conflict often results from organizational attempts to structure work assignments. This is clearly seen in the case of

departmentalization, in which organizations group their personnel into major departments such as finance, marketing and production.

Once assigned to such a bailiwick, it is common to find the personnel becoming highly concerned with the needs of their own particular department and relatively unconcerned with those of the others. Budget time finds everyone fighting for increased departmental allocations. Since this is a win lose situation, those who get percentage increases achieve them only at the expense of the other departments. Such a conflict situation, however, is often inevitable, since many people feel greater loyalty to their department in particular than to their organization in general.

A similar type of institutionalized conflict emerges from the organization's creation of a hierarchy. Low level managers have short-run problems related to work schedules and quotas. Top managers have long-run concerns related to the future course of the total organization. Each hierarchical level tends to be in some degree of conflict with the one above. Similarly, line and staff personnel are often at loggerheads. The former is responsible for making action decisions, the latter provides support help. Line-staff conflict is often brought about by the following attitudes and philosophies.

Line officers are highly action-oriented; staff officers are concerned with studying a problem in depth before making recommendation. Line officers are highly intuitive in contrast to being analytical; staff officers are highly analytical, in contrast to being intuitive. Line officers are often short sighted, staff officers are often long-range orientated. Line officers often ask the wrong kinds of questions staff officers have answers and therefore spend

their time looking for questions. Line officers want simple easy-to-use solutions, staff officers complicate situations by providing esoteric data.

Line officers are accustomed to examining some of the available alternatives and choosing one of them, staff officers are interested in examining all of the possible alternatives, weighing them, analyzing them and then choosing the “best” one regardless of time or cost restraints. Line officers are highly protective of the organization, staff are highly critical of the organization. Each of these institutionalized conflicts is caused by the creation of a formal organization. Management cannot sidestep them; they are inherently in a hierarchical structure.

All the organization can do is to try to manage them properly. Emergent conflict arises from personnel and social causes one of the most common is formal-informal organizational conflict. When the goals of these two groups are incompatible, problems can result. The objectives of the formal organization may call for more output than the members of informal organization are willing to give. A second form of emergent conflict arises from status incongruencies. Some people in the organization may feel that they know a great deal more than their supervisors about how to improve efficiency.

However, status is often accorded on the basis of rank. Additionally, line managers often suffer status incongruency when staff advisers have the boss's ear and can convince the latter to implement their recommendations. In such cases the line personnel are reduced to being order-takers, while the staff people call the shots. Additionally, if personnel are highly trained or



well educated and the organization assigns them a job requiring minimum ability, they often feel the work is below them and suffer status conflict.

So, too do personnel who are promoted to higher positions but not given the symbols that accompany the office. For example, a person who is promoted into the top-management ranks but not given a private office and a secretary like the other top managers may well have status problem. These emergent conflict situations are personal and social in nature in that they involve individual and group norms. Whether or not there is a conflict depends upon how the people view the situation. An informal organization that feels management's work quotas are too low may not have any problem accepting an increase in them.

Likewise, a manager who is oblivious to status symbols may not feel status inconsistency if the organization fails to provide a private office and a secretary. In most situations, however, this is not the case. 2. 4Sources of Conflict There are numerous sources of conflict within formal organization. Much has been written about the implications of conflict as a social process. The important point is not so much whether competing sub-groups and conflict are seen as inevitable consequences of organization structure, but how conflict, when found to exist, is handled and managed.

The following are the sources of conflict according to Mullins (2007).

Difference in perception- We all see things in different ways. We all have our own, unique picture or image of how we see the real world. Differences in perception result in different people attaching different meanings to the same stimuli. As perceptions became a person's reality, value judgments can

be a potential major source of conflict. Limited resources- Most organization resources are limited and individuals and groups have to fight for their share, for example at the time of the allocation of the next year's budget or when cutbacks have to be made, the greater the limitation of resources, then usually the greater the potential for conflict. In an organization with reducing profits or revenue the potential for conflict is likely to be intensified.

Departmentalization and specialization- Most work organizations are divided into departments with specialized functions. Because of familiarity with the manner in which they undertake their activities, managers tend to turn inwards and to concentrate on the achievement of their own particular goals.

When departments need to co-operate, this is a frequent source of conflict.

Differing goals and internal environments of departments are also a potential source of conflict. In Woodward's study of management organization of firms in the country she comments on the bad relationships between accountants and other managers. One reason for this hostility was the beginning of two quite separate financial functions. People concerned with works accounting tended to assume responsibility for end results that was not properly theirs; they saw their role as a controlling and sanctioning one rather than a serving and supportive one.

Line managers resented this attitude and retaliated by becoming aggressive and obstructive. The nature of work activities -Where the task of one person is dependent upon the work of others there is potential for conflict. For instance, if a worker is expected to complete the assembly of a given number of components in a week but the person forwarding the part

assembled component does not supply a sufficient number on time. If reward and punishment systems are perceived to be based on keeping up with performance levels, then the potential for conflict is even greater.

If the work of a department is dependent upon the output of another department, a similar situation could arise, especially if this situation is coupled with limited resources for example, where the activities of a department, whose budget reduced below what is believed necessary to run, the department efficiently, are interdependent with those of another department, which appears to have received a more generous budget allocation. Role conflict- A role is the expected pattern of behaviour associated with the members occupying a particular position within the structure of the organization.

In practice, the manner in which people actually behave may not be consistent with their expected pattern of behaviour. Problems of role incompatibility and role ambiguity arise from inadequate or inappropriate role definition and can be a significant source of conflict. Inequitable treatment- A person's perception of unjust treatment such as in the operation of personnel policies and practices, or in reward and punishment systems can lead to tension and conflict.

For instance, according to the equity theory of motivation the perception of inequality will motivate a person to take action to restore equity including change to inputs or outputs. Violation of territory- People tends to become attached to their own territory within work organizations, for example to their own area of work, or kinds of clients to be dealt with, or to their own

room, chair or parking space. Jealously may arise over other people's territory for instance, size of room company car, allocation of an assistant or other perks, through access to information or through membership of groups.

A stranger walking into a place of work can create an immediate feeling of suspicion or even resentment because people do not usually like, ' their' territory entered by someone they do not know and whose motives are probably unclear to them. Ownership of territory may be conferred formally for example by organization charts, job descriptions or management decisions. It may be established through procedures for instance circulation lists or membership of committees. Or it may arise informally, for example, through group norms, tradition or perceived status symbols.

The place where people choose to meet can have a possible, significant symbolic value. For instance if a subordinate is summoned to a meeting in a manager's office this might be taken that the manager is signaling higher status. If the manager chooses to meet at the subordinates place of work, or on neutral territory, this may be a signal that the manager wishes to meet the subordinate as an equal. If a person's territory is violated this can lead to the possibility of retaliation and conflict.

Environment change- Change in an organization's external environment such as shifts in demand, increased competition, government intervention, new technology or changing social values, can cause major areas of conflict. For instance a fall in demand for, or government financial restrictions, on, enrolments for a certain discipline in higher education can result in conflict

for the allocation of resources. If the department concerned is a large and important one and led by a powerful head, there could be even greater potential for conflict.

There are other sources of organizational conflicts, including; Individual; Such as attitudes, personality characteristics or particular personal need, illness or stress. Group, Such as group skills, the informal organization and group norms. An Organization; such as communications, authority structure, leadership style, managerial behaviour. The age gap-relationships between older employees and younger managers, where experience is on one side and power on the other, can lead to conflict. According to Gray and Starke (1980) sources of conflict are as follows. Limited Resource

Perhaps the most fundamental fact of organizational life is that resources are finite. Even the most successful companies have found that they are limited in what they can accomplish. With this realization groups and individuals see that there will be times when they will have to fight for what they want. The most obvious manifestation of this problem comes when the annual budget is set. Each department typically submits a request for its needs during the next fiscal year, and top management adjusts the request based on its knowledge of the total organization.

Department heads often see their requests cut back because the resources for the total organization are limited. When cutbacks occur, however, the potential for conflict increases because the heads of various departments begin making value judgments about why management decided to cut back one department but not another. As a general rule the greater the scarcity of

resources, the greater the potential for conflict. Interdependent work activities Added to the basic problem of finite resources is the problem of organizational units having to work together.

It is bad enough to get less than you wanted for your department because of some other department, but then to have to work with other departments may be more than some managers can take. Suppose you are the head of department A, and in the yearly budget just approved by top management, you received considerably less money for operations than you thought was minimally necessary to run your department. Suppose also that you see that department B got most of what it asked for.

If the work activities of your department are interdependent with those of department B, you might well consider purposely slowing down your departments work in attempt to convince top management that they made a mistake in their allocation of funds. This is a particularly salient cause of conflict because there is so much interdependence of work activities in organizations. On a grander scale, inter organizational conflict is often caused because the activities of many separate organizations must be coordinated. In May, 1979, California motorists found themselves in long lines waiting for gasoline.

The oil companies, the oil producers, consumer groups, and the government spent considerable time arguing about who was to blame. The problem was most likely caused by the tight interdependence of work activities needed to get oil from wellhead to the consumer. Any purposeful disruption by one of the organizations in the system (e. g. Iranian government's decision to

reduce output) would cause conflict among the other parties in the system. As a general rule the more interdependent the work activities, the greater the potential for conflict.

It is important for management to know the nature of work interdependence so system of work can be implemented that will reduce the potentials for dysfunctional conflict. Differentiation of activities We noted above that interdependence of work activities is an important source of conflict in organizations. Backing up a step furthermore, we can see that the mere existence of groups doing different functions created the potential for conflict. As groups become familiar with how they perform their jobs, they may turn inward and become uninterested in, (A) how their work fits in with other groups (B) the importance of other groups work.

As a result, when difficult issues between the groups must be dealt with, each group behaves in a way that increases potential for harmful conflict. This differentiation in work activities leads to differentiation in goals. Production goals may be to have long production runs with few changes in product style because this allows the production facilities to operate at peak efficiency. Marketing's goal, on the other hand maybe to give customers what they want when they want it. This means rush orders, special orders, and other demands that directly conflict with production goals.

#### Communication problems

Both the interdependence and differentiation of work activities demand that communication between individuals and groups be effective. However, this often does not occur. At the broadcast level, communication problems

develop because not all groups have the same information. Each group therefore takes a position based on its view of the world and the information it has. The obvious solution to this problem is to give all groups equal information. However, this is generally not feasible because individuals with important information may want to use it for their own advantage and not share it.

Communication problems are also caused by technical Jargon that is so frequently used in organizations. Overtime, each group develops its own language which may mean nothing to another group. When the two groups must deal with a contentious issue, the “ Us vs. them” mentality more easily develops because of the meanings each group attaches to words.

Differences in perceptions We all see the world slightly differently because we have all had different experiences. These different views of the world can be a major source of conflict in organizations because value judgments flow from these views.

Differences in perceptions involve the value of experience vs. the value of education. Older, more experienced managers often are in conflict with younger, inexperienced managers about the way in which work should be done. The experienced person usually points out how knowledgeable he or she has become over the years, whereas the inexperienced person argues for “ new way” of doing things. Often this conflict is resolved by the older person exercising his or her authority. It is hard to make unequivocal statements about how differences in perception will influence conflict.



It is also difficult to deduce exactly how a person views the world, unless the person is well known to the manager. Nevertheless, a realization that differences in perception (by groups or individuals) is crucial to conflict means that it must be included in any discussion of the sources of conflict. The environment of the organization Thus far, we have been concerned with factors inside organizations which cause conflict. However, changes in the firm's environment (which it usually has no control over) can cause major conflict within the organization.

In the late 1970's, for example, college enrolment in liberal arts declined as students began entering disciplines which were more job-oriented. This shift in demand meant that there were pressures to reallocate resources within universities. These pressures caused real problem as the different faculties were in conflict as to how this reallocation should be done. As another example, consider a conglomerate which finds that the demand for the output of one of its divisions is rapidly declining. The obvious thing to do is to hit back activities in that division and channel corporate resources into more profitable divisions.

However, if the division having difficulties is an important one, and its head is a powerful person, tremendous conflict may develop as other division heads argue for a redistribution of resources within the company. Other sources of conflict exist in organizations. They are; (A) Individual differences (some people enjoy conflict while others don't) (B) Unclear authority structures (conflict develops because people don't know how far their authority extends) (C) Differences in attitudes (members of different groups

have different attitudes). D) Task asymmetries (one group is more powerful than another and the weaker group tries to change the situation).

(E) Difference in time horizons (some departments have a long-run view and others a short-run view).

2.5 Strategies for Managing Conflict Although a certain amount of organizational conflict may be seen as inevitable, there are a number of ways in which management can attempt to avoid the harmful effects of conflict. The strategies adopted will vary according to the nature and sources of conflict outlined above.

- a. Clarification of goals and objectives.

The clarification and continual refinement of goals and objectives, role definitions and performance standards will help to avoid misunderstandings and conflict. Focusing attention on superordinate goals that are shared by the parties in conflict may help to diffuse hostility and lead to more co-operative behaviour.

- b. Resource distribution. Although it may not always be possible for managers to increase their allocated share of resources, they may be able to use imagination and initiative to help overcome conflict situations.

For instance, making a special case to higher management; greater flexibility to transfer funds between budget headings, delaying staff appointments in one area to provide more money for another area.

- c. Human resource management policies and procedures. Careful and detailed attention to just and equitable human resource management policies and procedures may help to reduce areas of conflict. Examples are job analysis, recruitment and selection; systems of reward and punishment; appeals, grievance and

disciplinary procedures; arbitration and mediation, recognition of trade unions and their officials. d. Non-monetary rewards.

Where financial resources are limited, it may be possible to pay greater attention to non monetary rewards. Examples are job design, more interesting challenging or responsible work, increased delegation or empowerment, improved equipment, flexible working hours, attendance at course or conferences, unofficial perks or more relaxed working conditions.

e. Development of interpersonal/group process skills. This may help to encourage a better understanding of ones own behaviour, the other person's point of view, communication processes and problem solving. It may also encourage people to work through conflict situation in a constructive manner. . Group activities. Attention to the composition of groups and to factors which affect group cohesiveness may reduce dysfunctional conflict. Overlapping group membership with a linking pin process, and the careful selection of project teams or task forces for problems affecting more than one group, may also be beneficial. g. Leadership and management. A more participative and supportive style of leadership and managerial behaviour is likely to assist in conflict management for example, showing an attitude of respect and trust, encouraging personal self- development, creating a work environment in which staff can work co-operatively.

A participative approach to leadership and management may also help to create greater employee commitment. h. Organizational process. Conflict situations may be reduced by attention to such features as the nature of the authority structure, work organization, patterns of communication and

sharing of information, democratic functioning of the organization unnecessary adherence to bureaucratic procedures and official rules and regulations. i. Socio-technical approach.

Viewing the organization as a socio-technical system, in which psychological and social factors are developed in keeping with structural and technical requirements, will help in reducing dysfunctional conflict. 2. 6The Value of Conflict The interactionist philosophy does not propose that all conflicts are good for an organization. Excessive levels of conflict can and do hinder organizational effectiveness. It shows itself in reduced job satisfaction by employees, increased absence and turnover rates, and eventually in lower productivity.

What the interactionist approach says is that managers should continue to resolve those conflicts that hinder the organization, but stimulate conflict intensity when the level is below that which is necessary to maintain a responsive and innovative unit. Without some level of constructive conflict, an organization's survival will be in jeopardy. Survival can result only when an organization is able to adapt to constant changes in the environment. Adaptation is possible only through change, and change is stimulated by conflict. Change develops from dissatisfaction, from a desire for improvement, and from creative development of alternatives.

In other words, change do not just happen, they are inspired by conflict. Conflict is the catalyst of change. If we do not adapt our product and services to the changing needs of our customers, actions of our competitors, and new technological development, our organization will be sick and eventually die.

Is it not possible that more organizations fail because of too little conflict rather than too much? Without change, no organization can survive, and conflict spurs change. Opposition to others' ideas, dissatisfaction with the status quo, concern about doing things better, and the desire to improve inadequacies are all seeds of change.

Therefore, the factor that differentiates the interactionist philosophy most from its predecessors is the belief that just as the level of conflict may be too high, requiring resolution, it may also be too low and in need of stimulation. There is a growing body of literature that supports the contention that organizations that have levels of conflict above, zero are more effective, that is functional levels of conflict are conducive to innovation and higher quality decisions. For instance, a review of the relationship between bureaucracy and innovation found that conflict encourages innovative solution.

This relationship was more recently confirmed in a comparison of six major decisions during the administrations of four U. S presidents. The comparison demonstrated that conformity among presidential advisers was related to poor decisions, while an atmosphere of constructive conflict and critical thinking surrounded the well- developed decisions. The bankruptcy of the penn central railroad has been generally attributed to mismanagement and a failure of the company's board of directors to question actions taken by management.

The board was composed of outside directors, who met monthly to oversee the railroad's operations. Few questioned the decisions made by the operating management, though there was wide evidence that several board

members were uncomfortable with many major decisions made by the management. Apathy and a desire to avoid conflict allowed poor decisions to stand unquestioned. It can only be postulated how differently things might have turned out for the penn central had it had an enquiring board which demanded that the company's management discuss and justify key decisions.

In addition to better and more innovative decisions in situations where there is some conflict, there is evidence that indicates that conflict can be positively related to productivity. It was demonstrated that among the high conflict groups was 73 per cent greater than that of those groups characterized by low conflict conditions. Similarly, an investigation of twenty-two teams of system analysts, which the researcher sought to assist the relationship between inter personal compatibility and productivity, achieved results consistent with the previous studies.

The findings strongly suggested that the more incompatible groups were likely to be more productive. 2. 7Transition in Conflict Thought According to Dubose (1980), the development of conflict thought as professed by academic has gone through three distinct stages which he labeled as traditional, behavioural and internationalist. The prescription of the early management theories, the traditionalists, towards conflict was simple. It should be eliminated. All conflicts were seen as destructive and it was management role to rid the organization of them. This philosophy dominated during the nineteenth century and continued to the middle 1940s.

The traditional view was replaced in the late 1940s and early 1950s with a behavioural approach. Those who studied organizations began to recognize that all organizations, by their very nature, had built in contents. Since conflict was inevitable, the behaviouralist prescribed “ acceptance” of conflict. They rationalized its existence. However, as with the traditionalists, the behaviouralist approach to managing conflict was to resolve it. Looking at the behaviours of manager, it seems clear that the traditional philosophy is still the most prevalent in organizations. We live in a society that has been built upon anti-conflict values.

Since our earliest years we have been indoctrinated in the belief that it was important to get along with others and to avoid conflict. Parents in the home, teachers and administrators in school, teachings of the church, and authority figures in social groups all have historically reinforced the belief that disagreement bred discontent, which acted to dissolve common ties and could eventually lead to destruction of the system. Certainly we should not be surprised to find that children raised to view all conflict as destructive would mature into adult managers who would maintain and encourage the same values.

In addition, the senior managers in most organizations praise and reward managers who maintain peace, harmony, and tranquility in their units, while disequilibrium, confrontation, and dissatisfaction are appraised negatively. Given that managers seek to “ look good” on the criteria by which they are evaluated, and since the absence of conflict is frequently used at evaluation time as a proxy for managerial effectiveness, it should not be surprising to

find that most managers are concerned with eliminating or suppressing all conflicts.

According to Gray and Stark (1980) there are two distinct phases of thinking about conflict: the traditional view and the current view. The traditional view of conflict assumes that conflict is bad for organizations. In the view of the traditionalist, organizational conflict was proof that there was something “wrong” with the organization. The Hawthorne studies were probably important in shaping the traditional view because in those studies the dysfunctional consequences of conflict were noted. Another likely factor in the traditional view was the development of labour unions and the often violent conflict between labour and management.

During the early twentieth century labour