

**COMMUNICATION APPROACHES USED IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN  
SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS IN NORTH RIFT  
REGION OF KENYA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

### Declaration by the candidate

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**DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my Dear late parents: mother Grace Khakasa and father Solomon Kisiangani Wakweika (RIP) for taking me to school.

## ABSTRACT

Most studies done, have blamed unhealthy relationships and conflict in schools on poor communication. Communication is the life blood, the righteous vein that conveys directions with distinction in schools. Kenyan government has communication policies ensuring quality education, but schools are still plagued with conflict. Communication strategies like consultation and negotiation have always been suggested as the panacea for the incessant conflict as teachers inform and engage students on school goals. This study aims at investigating communication approaches used in conflict management in schools. The study answers four questions: What are the main causes of conflict between teachers and students resulting from poor communication in schools? What are the possible barriers to communication encountered by teachers and students in conflict management in schools? What are the communication approaches used by teachers to manage conflict in schools? How can communication be utilized to create a conflict-free teaching and learning environment at school? Empathic listening theory was incorporated in thematic data analysis, which involved: transcription, coding and final report writing. Qualitative approach, case study design and multiple case study method were used with purposive sampling of twelve teachers and twelve students from six national schools in three North Rift Counties of Kenya. Interviews, observation and document review generated data. Findings reveal that teachers are the school spokespersons in conflict management yet they lack training to handle communication during crises. Most teachers do not listen empathically to students' issues so as to provide objective judgment in conflict management in schools. Frequent teacher-student interaction and feedback lacks in most schools creating a tension-filled learning environment. In conclusion, teachers should be empathic listeners as students are taught to be assertive speakers for effective school communication. It is recommended that teachers be trained on the best ways to interact with students in managing conflict in schools. Teachers should involve students in decision making by listening to their suggestions as this will make them feel satisfied leading to achievement of the set school goals and objectives. Frequent and free communication between teachers and students should be encouraged through the former listening empathically to understand the concerns raised by the latter so as to create conducive teaching and learning environment.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BOM – Board of Management

CBC – Competency Based Curriculum

CRE – Christian Religious Education

DOS – Director of Studies

FSE – Free Secondary Education

HBR – Harvard Business Review

HOD – Head of Department

HOS – Head of Subject

ICT - Information Communication and Technology

JSE – Junior Secondary Education

KCB – Kenya Commercial Bank

KCSE – Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

KESSHA – Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association

KPLC – Kenya Power and Lighting Company

MOE – Ministry of Education

NACOSTI – National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation

PAA – Principal’s Academic Award

PAT – Principal’s Achievement Tea

OPC – Ontario Principals’ Council

OWP – Operational Work Plan

SGC – Students Governing Council

SMS – Short Message Service

SNE – Special Needs Education

TSC – Teachers’ Service Commission

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Approaches:** These are ways or communication strategies used in dealing with a situation or problem.

**Conflict:** Conflict is perceived or experienced incompatible differences within or between two or more individuals, groups or organizations which may result in tension or all forms of opposition. In this study, conflict has been operationalized as a miscommunication, disagreement between teachers and students due to differing thoughts, views and principles in national high schools.

**Management;** Management is defined in this study as the process of coordinating all resources by planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling to achieve given organizational objectives. Management is an important part of this study as it deals with how conflicts are controlled in national high schools.

**Conflict management:** Ability to identify and respond fairly and appropriately to prevent, control or manage the miscommunication, disagreement between teachers and students in national high schools.

**Principals:** Heads of secondary schools appointed by the teachers' employer, Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) as chief supervisors or agents of all matters in the schools. The heads of the schools link the schools to the Ministry of Education (MOE). In national high schools they are called chief principals.

**High Schools:** Centers of education excellence established for purposes of stimulating education standards and fostering national unity and social cohesion.

**Communication:** In the context of this study communication refers to exchanging and sharing information between teachers and students with a view of understanding the communication intentions and meanings of each other for better school management.

**Nature of the communication:** Channels, media, messages, effect and feedback in communication

**Perception:** Manner in which individuals make sense of communication in national high schools

**School manager:** Principal or head of the school

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter is the foundation of the study. It gives the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study, research questions, assumptions, justification and significance of the study.

### **1.2 Background to the study**

What follows is a brief background to the study which gives an insight on communication approaches in conflict management in national high schools.

#### **1.2.1 Communication**

Communication is derived from the Latin word ‘communicare’ which means ‘to put in common’ and ‘to share’. It is the sharing of ideas, facts, thoughts and feelings for easy coexistence. The goals of a national high school as an educational organization hinges on effective communication among the various operating personnel. The basic function of education itself relies almost entirely on communication. It helps build relationships and facilitates achievement of goals. The need for effective communication approaches cannot be overemphasized. Everyone participates in communication on a daily basis as it is about people speaking and listening to each other in order to get meaning.

Communication is the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver, and the inference (perception) of meaning between the individuals involved. Analysis of this exchange reveals that communication is a two-way process consisting of consecutively linked elements. Teachers who understand this process can analyze their own communication patterns as well as design communication programs that fit school needs. Communication is the core of our humanness and how we communicate with each other

shapes our lives and our world, Gamble and Gamble (2002). Communication skills help humans to reach out to one another or to confront events that challenge our flexibility, integrity, expressiveness and critical thinking skills.

In organizations, like national high schools, it is through communication that attitudes, feelings, insights and facts to others are transmitted. Communication involves at least two persons, the sender and receiver of information. The sender with a purpose in mind sends out a message in the form of symbols and signs, through a channel or a medium to the receiver. This message evokes a thought process or impression in the receiver who in turn makes a response if this response of the communication is deemed effective. Communication in this sense, means keeping others informed of what is happening, with regard to policy programs, plans and problems of the organization and being made aware of what is happening in different areas and units as well as make suggestions for possible improvement. When teachers work cooperatively with students and other education stakeholders, harmony and productivity will be maximized in national high schools.

### **1.2.2 Organizational communication**

Accordingly, Weihrich and Koontz (2013), a study done in Kenya in its broadest sense stated that: the purpose of communication in an organization is to effect change and to influence action toward the welfare of the organization. Communication is essential for the internal functioning of schools because it integrates the managerial functions. It is especially needed to establish and disseminate the goals of a school; develop plans for their achievement, organize human (teachers) and other resources in the most effective and

efficient way, select, develop and appraise school stakeholders; lead, direct, motivate and create a climate in which they want to contribute and control performance.

The interaction between teachers and students can be determined by the communication system in the school. Communication system in any school is very vital to the survival, smooth running and its success. The transfer of information from one person to another within a school relies on communication. All school administrative functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting cannot be effectively carried out without effective communication.

Mckinney, Barker, Smith and Davis (2004) submitted that communication is essential to effective team performance and communication for any organization is its lifeblood. This corroborates the fact that no school can exist without communication. Communication is a critical factor in directing and mobilizing teachers towards the accomplishment of the school's goals or objectives. It is the vehicle through which the basic management and administrative functions are carried out. Teachers direct, co-ordinate, staff, plan and control students and fellow teachers through communication. It is a give and take method involving the sender and the receiver.

Communication in schools takes place between teachers and students as well as other stakeholders. National high school goals and objectives are shared by chief principals (main managers) with relevant individuals within the school system through communication. It could therefore be said that without good and effective communication, the achievement of educational goals in a school may not materialize.

In national high schools, communication happens at all times and in many ways. However, teachers have certain communication styles or patterns when sharing their ideas and thoughts and these styles or patterns to a great extent could determine the effectiveness of communication within a school system. The communication styles that a teacher decides to adopt in coordinating the affairs of a school could go a long way in either increasing or decreasing the morale of other members which contributes to the school productivity or performance.

Communication is an indispensable aspect of administration involving sharing of information between two or more individuals or groups to reach a common understanding for school success. Without effective communication in schools, teachers and students will not know what duties they are expected to perform.

### **1.2.3 Conflict in Secondary Schools**

The simplest definition of conflict is the clash that arises when people act against expectations set by others or they disagree over ideas that are incompatible. According to Spaho (2013), conflict arises in an organization when individuals participate in behaviors that are not in agreement with those of their colleagues within their sphere of influence. However, he notes that conflict is inevitable because it is a feature of human existence. Nevertheless, conflict can be made constructive and used to achieve better outcomes if people can recognize its effects on productivity. Many factors prevent employees from communicating directly and openly, which increases the risk of conflict situations. Spaho (2013) recommends that all levels of management should be responsible for good communication and conflict management in an organization. It is safe to conclude, then,

that an unresolved conflict at work can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, including low teamwork, suspicion among coworkers, and a negative impact on employee performance and productivity. Therefore, in order to reduce conflict or lessen its effects, managers must use direct communication when necessary (Spaho 2013).

Similar to a body, each organ is essential to the growth and day-to-day operation of the body, serving a complementary role. In addition to being distinct from one another, each organ's function is significant to the body as a whole. Kenyan law is unambiguous when it comes to the complementary roles that the community and the government play in managing and providing the material, moral and spiritual support of education. As a result, issues with management in national high schools have been vital, particularly with regard to the chief principals' and education officials' use of conflict management approaches.

Different laws provide guidelines for the management and administration of schools in Kenya's educational system. Nonetheless, it seems that most educational establishments have had less success in handling disputes (Government of Kenya, 2002). Despite government policies, Kenyan schools have reported an increase in conflict cases, according to a Ministry of Education report. Concerns have recently shifted to the growing frequency and evolving nature of organizational conflicts. The majority of these conflicts take place in middle and upper level colleges, as well as secondary schools (Government of Kenya, 2002). Violence and the willful destruction of institutional property are common characteristics of many of the conflicts.

According to Government of Kenya (2001), conflicts in Kenya's secondary schools have grown to be a serious issue that should worry everyone involved in education. It has a

direct or indirect impact on the government, the school system and the citizenry. It will destroy schools and education itself if allowed to go on.

For instance, according to a paper Misoi (2009) submitted to the District Secondary Schools Heads Association, Uasin Gishu, a significant number of the head teachers there transferred, and few of them completely resigned from their positions due to conflicts. Either the teachers or the Board of Management (BoM) had experienced frequent disruptions in their schools, or they had rejected the principals who were being transferred. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) transferred other principals to defer conflicts in their schools in an effort to avoid and manage future disputes. Consequently these conflicts could impact teachers' job satisfaction levels and students' academic achievements.

#### **1.2.4 National High Schools in North Rift Counties of Kenya**

Kapsabet High School popularly known as Kapsabet Boys (KB) is a public national high school located in Kapsabet town in Nandi County about forty kilometers from Eldoret City. Kapsabet Boys High School was founded in 1925 as the Government African School (GAS). It was established to cater for African students at a time when schools were still segregated by the British colonialists. The school has undergone many transformations over the past century. The old school buildings are now Kapsabet High Primary and Junior Secondary School. The school celebrates its Founders' Day on 4<sup>th</sup> February annually. The school emphasizes a holistic approach to education, encouraging students to engage in a variety of co-curricular activities, including sports, arts, music and various clubs and societies.

St. Joseph's Girls High School – Chepterit is a girls' national level secondary school, located in Chesumei Sub-County, Nandi County, North Rift, Rift-Valley region of Kenya. It was started in 1951 as a primary school with a sister Headmistress called Sister Saint Albert Langton, who left six years later in 1957. The school is named after St. Joseph in memory of the pioneer missionary, who was a Mill Hill priest, by the name Fr. Joseph Khun who was the founder of Chepterit Catholic Parish.

Chewoyet High School is also notable as one of two premier government high schools in the North-Rift Region in company with Kapsabet High School in Nandi County. Originally known as Rift-Valley Junior School, Chewoyet High School was set up as an agricultural college in the 1940s. The school sits on four hundred acres of land. In the 1950s selected students from across the country converged at the current Kitale Huduma Centre/Kitale Post Office. Here, a lorry waited for a forty kilometer rough ride on the Kitale-Kapenguria Road, to the school that later became famous as the colonial court where Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and the Kapenguria six were tried on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1953. The old courtroom buildings have been converted into a staffroom, an administration block and a classroom for form three students. The school was elevated to a National Boys School in 2012.

St. Theresa's Tartar Girls High School is a boarding Girls National level secondary school located in West-Pokot Sub-County, West-Pokot County, North-Rift, Rift-Valley Region. It is a Catholic Diocese of Kitale sponsored school. St. Theresa's Tartar Girls High School was categorized by the Ministry of Education as a National level Boarding Girls Secondary School with an enrolment of about one thousand six hundred and forty students in 2013.

St. Brigid's Girls High School is located in Kiminini town of Trans-Nzoia County, North-Rift-Valley region of Kenya. The school is along Kitale – Webuye Highway. It is a national girls' school which traces its history to 1926 when it started as a mixed gender day primary school with standard one to four and thereafter it became a mixed gender intermediate day school. In 1952, the boys moved to St. Joseph's Intermediate School near Kitale town, while the girls became boarders under the leadership of Miss Fair Bank.

St. Joseph's Boys High School is located in Kitale town in Trans-Nzoia County, North-Rift of Rift-Valley region in Kenya. It is along the Kitale-Webuye Highway before the Kitale airstrip. The St. Joseph's community ie an institution of this community was established at this current site in 1952. The first institution to be established here was an intermediate primary school for boys after splitting from St. Brigid's Primary Kiminini that remained to be Girls Boarding Intermediate School. The other intermediate schools in this region being managed by the Roman Catholic Church were the current Sikhendu Primary School, Nzoia Centre Primary School in Moiben area, then Waterbuck now Ndalul Primary School in Bungoma County. All these schools were boarding. However, St. Joseph's Boys Intermediate was being administered by the Catholic Brothers while St. Brigid's Girls was under the Catholic nuns. At the eve of Kenya attaining self-independence in 1963, all the intermediate schools were gradually faced off creating room for establishment of full primary schools from standard one to eight. In the case of St. Joseph's community, a primary school was established at the site of the current St. Joseph's Girls School. What was majorly the Intermediate boarding School was then replaced with the St. Joseph's Teacher Training College and was being administered by the Catholic Brothers. In 1965 a secondary school wing was started under the administration of Catholic Priests. However,

the secondary school was later in May 1966, moved to Gramton's Inn and renamed Trans-Nzoia Secondary School at the other side of the current St. James Mabonde Secondary School. This left the Teachers Training College to establish itself here. The headship of the Teachers Training College was under the administration of the Catholic Brothers who by then occupied the current priests' house. The current Principal's house was by then being used by the Catholic priests. In 1972, the national government embarked on merging TTCs in the country which affected St. Joseph's Teachers Training College that moved to Mosoriot Teachers Training College in Nandi County. There was no admission of trainees to this college in 1972 therefore leaving the 2<sup>nd</sup> year trainees complete their course in 1973. An African tutor Mr Owino was appointed the Principal to see the winding of the college that finally closed its doors by end of April 1973. In 3<sup>rd</sup> term, 1972, the current St. Anthony's Boys – Kitale Day Secondary School got some buildings burnt and this resulted into some students being moved to St. Joseph's Teachers Training College to start the secondary school. In 1973, the secondary school now admitted form one but still retained those who were moved from Kitale Day to the upper classes. This was the start of St. Joseph's Secondary School – Kitale as a mixed gender school. By establishing a secondary school and by the exit of the Catholic Brothers from this institution, the priests moved to the Brothers' house leaving their house to the principal of the secondary school. Because the Teachers Training College had female trainees, the church established a convent where the Catholic Nuns stayed at the site where the dormitories for the female trainees were. When the secondary school was established, the girls then occupied this section of the school that was being used by the female trainees. The school moved on and was elevated to provincial status. In 1993, St. Joseph's Mixed Secondary was split to create the boys

section and the girls section. At the time of separating the school, all the classrooms and the kitchen plus dining hall remained at the boys section. Therefore, this resulted in moving the Primary School, to its current site and vacated their classrooms to the girls. Therefore, from 1993, the school remained a provincial boys boarding school till 2012, when it was elevated to a National School status.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Communication maintains healthy teacher-student relationships and most studies done have blamed conflict in schools on poor communication. Communication is the life blood, the righteous vein that conveys directions with distinction in organizations like schools. Academically, Griffin (2012) says poor communication is a major source of student turbulence (conflict) and most studies done have shifted this blame on teachers. According to the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), students' verbal communication abilities are evaluated through oral exams where teachers teach students, good decision-making skills, listening to one another and selecting the appropriate communication approach at the right time.

The critical teaching skills and life-long learning competencies of professional teachers are being well-spoken and having good communication skills. In addition, teachers communicate and collaborate with the home and community for the benefit of students while also being knowledgeable about the teaching content Kihumba Kamotho (TSC Teachers' Image Magazine, September – December, 2019). Communication has always been suggested as the panacea to school conflict as teachers develop, facilitate decisions and deliver messages that inform, engage and unite students behind common school goals. Teachers are usually instructed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to use dialogue or

communication to manage students' conflict. However, from research there is scanty record or media report indicating that communication has always been used successfully by teachers in addressing students' conflict.

Politically, the Kenyan government has set up policies to ensure quality education, but learning institutions are still plagued with teacher-student conflict. Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education guidelines on Junior Secondary Education (JSE) 2023, Chapter 3, states that a robust communication strategy shall be developed and operationalized. Chapter 8 adds that a culture of open communication should be encouraged, to allow learners voice their opinions on matters that affect them, without resorting to violence. Teachers shall establish a communication structure, designate area for suggestion boxes and a mechanism for student barazas.

During the 46<sup>th</sup> KCB/KESSHA Annual National Conference 2023 in Mombasa Kenya themed 'enhancing effectiveness and efficiency of education in Kenya,' the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Education said that teachers must engage learners through communication. He added that teachers have to communicate well, clearly and be good listeners. This is to enhance both teachers' and students' understanding of each other's messages and manage any conflict. At school principals' meeting in Nakuru in 2021, the County Executive Committee Member said that communication between teachers and students had broken down resulting to student indiscipline (conflict) especially arson cases.

In the Republic of Kenya 2021, the Ministry of Education (MOE) issued guidelines on managing conflict in basic learning institutions which included: maintaining open communication channels with the students through frequent discussion forums where

student suggestion boxes issues are addressed. Despite these policies, school teacher-student conflicts still exist and communication is cited as the viable approach of management.

Contextually, the school system allows for representatives in communication like the Students' Governing Councils (SGCs) which facilitate students' views to teachers. The six national high schools targeted in this study, like the rest in Kenya have adequate human and financial resources, the best physical infrastructure, admit academically top performing students nationally and are assumed to have excellent communication approaches in conflict management and handling emerging issues. However, there exist communication challenges that need to be explored for effective school operation. The communication challenges have made students to resort to violence resulting to property destruction and in extreme cases loss of lives. Against this backdrop, this study sets out to investigate teacher-student communication approaches in conflict management and handling emerging issues in six national high schools in three North Rift Counties of Kenya.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

This study aims at investigating communication approaches used in managing conflict in national high schools in order to identify good communication practices that can be replicated in handling emerging issues.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

- (i) What are the main causes of conflict between teachers and students resulting from poor communication in national high schools?
- (ii) What are the possible barriers to communication encountered by teachers and students in conflict management in schools?

(iii) What are the communication approaches used by teachers to manage conflict in national high schools?

(iv) How can communication be utilized to create a conflict-free teaching and learning environment at school?

### **1.6 Assumptions of the study**

Communication approaches to conflict management in schools impacts teaching and learning. Effective communication practices have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Leithwood et al (2004) identify the teachers as the key individuals in effecting student achievement. Communication is a key practice that affects student learning and this can be achieved without conflict interference.

Communication approach that encourages group cohesiveness, promotes good school management practices, manages conflict. Communication approach that is coercive and does not take into consideration stakeholders' inputs does not yield good school management as it leads to conflict.

### **1.7 Justification of the study**

Nasibi (2003) opines that the Kenyan educator must appreciate the fact that in the last two decades there have been societal changes precipitated by effect of techno-scientific developments. These changes call for corresponding changes in communication flow from the traditional bureaucratic to the modern participatory engagement. Despite these changes, most teachers cling to the outdated traditions. However, not many known studies have focused on teachers' communication approaches as a determinant of students' conflict management in a school set up. There is therefore a need for this study on communication approaches used in conflict management for better school management practices.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

This research is important because it will support national high school teachers in their interactions with students and in reducing conflict within the schools. The study provides important information about communication approaches that would suit the national high schools to ensure less conflict and more productivity in terms of academics and co-curricular activities. The findings from this study benefits teachers and students as both will communicate effectively to meet the schools' goals and objectives. The schools can develop communication policies that enhance effective communication.

Based on the study's findings, national high school chief principals can better understand the value of communication and use it to implement strategies that foster positive teacher-student relationships and reduce conflict while working toward shared goals. Teachers can also benefit from understanding the significance of good communication in accomplishing organizational objectives, since communication styles have a positive or negative influence in life. Put differently, it teaches them how to communicate effectively in order to manage conflict. A clear chain of command, acknowledging the values of the other person, using approved channels of communication and other factors can all support effective communication and conflict management. In order to accomplish their goals with the least amount of conflict, stakeholders in the education sector will also benefit from embracing effective communication.

### **1.9 Scope and limitations of the study**

The study covered six national schools spread in three counties of North-Rift Region in Kenya. Time constraint did not allow for coverage of all the national high schools in all

counties in Kenya and also there could be no space for the data that could have been generated. However, I undertook a qualitative approach to research that generated in-depth data to ameliorate the limitations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter will explore the literature on definition of communication, communication functions in organizations (schools), concept of conflict, communication approaches used in conflict management in schools, benefits and barriers of effective communication, theoretical framework, empirical studies in the world, Africa and Kenya and the research gaps found in this study.

### **2.2 Communication**

The Latin word "communicare," meaning "to put in common" and "to share," is the source of the English term "communication." For simple coexistence, it is the exchange of concepts, information, beliefs and emotions. A secondary school's educational objectives depend on the teachers and students being able to communicate effectively with one another. Nearly all of education's fundamental purposes depend on communication. It promotes goal achievement and interpersonal development. It is imperative to use efficient communication approaches since communication involves people speaking and listening to each other, everyone engages in it on a day to day basis.

Communication is a crucial component of administration and involves the exchange of information between two or more people or groups in order to come to a mutual understanding and achieve organizational (school) success. Teachers and students will not be aware of their responsibilities if there is no efficient communication.

In organizations, like schools, attitudes, sentiments, insights, and facts are communicated to others through communication. According to Lin (2010), communication always involves

two people: the sender and the recipient. Through a channel or medium, the sender sends a message to the recipient with a specific goal in mind using symbols and signs. If the recipient's response to the message is regarded to be effective, he or she will next act on that concept or impression. In this context, communication refers to sharing of information with others about organizational problems, policies, strategies and programs. It also refers to sharing information on how things are going on in various departments and units and offering suggestions for potential improvements (Leung, 2005). Harmony and productivity will be increased under teachers who collaborate with students and other education stakeholders.

### **2.2.1 Communication structures within an organization**

The choice of the appropriate communication structure is vital since the format of a message determines both its acceptance and its impact. There are three distinct communication structures to distinguish when discussing communication systems inside organizations (schools). These are vertical, horizontal and diagonal communication.

A communication system's main purpose is to process information and link various departments and hierarchy ranks. Structure plays a big role in organizational communication issues. Thus, the communication structure serves as the framework for effective communication inside businesses (Mast, 2006).

### **2.2.2 Vertical (downwards) communication**

Top-down or top-bottom communication is another name for this. In this situation, information is sent from management or supervisors to subordinates and typically takes the form of updates or orders. In a school set up the management are teachers whereas students are like subordinates. It is frequently linked with hierarchically structured, centrally led

companies where decisions are made without much engagement at the lower working levels within the hierarchy. It is used to instruct, govern, and direct impersonally. Although team briefings are typically handled by middle managers (Sayed, 2011), feedback is not a requirement.

According to Mast (2006), downward communication is the transfer of information from a leader to a subordinate just like information being transferred from teachers to students.

Downward communication aims to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) School directives to teachers
- (ii) Details regarding the initiatives, advancements and future goals of schools.
- (iii) Justification of managerial (principals') choices.
- (iv) Plans for post-secondary education.

Top-down communication will be demonstrated clearly in this study. It entails communication between teachers and students as well as the school administration. In order to implement top-down communication, school administrations provide directives to teachers, support staff and students as well as communicate matters for which no immediate or total lack of feedback is required.

This kind of communication is unable to come up with a workable solution that can be accepted by everyone. Stakeholders, particularly students, may turn to violent behavior, such as arson and strikes, to express their concerns since they frequently feel as though their interests are not taken into account when the school administration takes final

decisions. In terms of costs, this has undoubtedly been challenging for the school administrators.

### **2.2.3 Vertical (upwards) communication**

Another vertical communication structure is upward communication, which is top-down and occurs between employees and leaders. This can be applicable in school between students and teachers. According to Mast (2006), it pursues the following objectives:

- (i) Knowledge of the teachers' present work processes and workflows.
- (ii) Sharing of unresolved issues in school
- (iii) Teachers suggestions for innovations and advancements.
- (iv) Teacher expertise, experience and perspectives are included into goal definition and problem-solving.

### **2.2.4 Horizontal communication**

The exchange of information between individuals, departments or divisions is known as horizontal communication, often referred to as peer communication. All communications between groups at the same level of an organizational hierarchy are referred to as horizontal communication. Teachers in the English department can speak with their Kiswahili departmental colleagues. Peer to peer communication among staff members reduces miscommunication across departments working on the same project, promotes teamwork and aids in the implementation of solutions to issues.

### **2.2.5 Diagonal Communication**

Diagonal communication helps to coordinate cross-functional task-related independencies and the flow of information between departments and hierarchies (Hoffmann 2001). Therefore, the manner of communication affects the atmosphere at work and employee happiness.

### **2.3 Communication functions in organizations**

Effective communication is essential to schools' operation. It serves as the cornerstone for all forms of psychologically sound behavior. She identifies the four primary purposes of communication.

In the beginning, it offers the data that people and groups need to make decisions. Information within a company is crucial because it gives employees the data and knowledge they need to do their jobs well. As they are completely informed, it removes doubt and helps members of the organization understand the rules of the organization. Written or verbal communication is used to spread information throughout an organization.

The second way it promotes motivation is by making it clear to members of an organization - such as students, teachers and other stakeholders in education - what needs to be done, how they are doing it and what they can do to improve. National high school chief principals utilize communication to inspire teachers to deliver better work by outlining what is expected of them and offering rewards for meeting or surpassing expectations.

Thirdly, communication can be used to communicate emotions or meet a person's needs. It serves as a vehicle for emotional expression and the fulfillment of social needs and allows members of an organization (school) to express their frustration and sense of satisfaction.

Finally, communication regulates how members of an organization behave so that they respect formal rules and the hierarchy of authority. An organization uses communication to keep tabs on its workforce and working conditions. Employees (teachers) are expected to follow official norms and authority hierarchies inside organizations (schools) when communicating information, such as to the immediate manager (chief principal).

In order to understand specific roles and assignments, plan and carry out learning activities, coordinate approaches with students, inform teachers of students' progress and behavior, and foster positive relationships with students, teachers and administrators, communication is crucial in schools as organizations.

As they support and mainstream the communication activities of education stakeholders in schools, these fundamental components of communication are pertinent to the study (Sonam, 2013). In order to motivate staff and students, provide emotional fulfillment for their individual needs and control their behavior to comply with school rules, regulations and policies, communication between stakeholders is essential. This communication can come from students and teachers to the school administration or vice versa.

### **2.3.1 Communication in schools**

According to the Harvard Business Review (HBR), which is cited by Maxwell (2010), good communication is key to career advancement and promotion. The necessity for effective communication skills is noted by Kinrick and Parton (2005); employers view

these abilities as essential to managerial success. Maxwell (2010) argues persuasively that excellent communication skills are essential for success in life. According to Pomroy (2005), communication must be understood, believed and accepted for it to be effective. The capacity for communication is essential to success in any national high school.

Any executive role requires excellent communication skills. According to Thomas et al. (2013), a true leader must communicate often and persistently with people to convey their vision and promote involvement inside a company. When it comes to one-on-one conversations with employees, Lopp (2012) says; "listen carefully, repeat everything and make no assumptions." Additionally, Maxwell (2010) stresses the need for effective communication for any leader. Organizational growth depends on communication from the top down and the leader can promote growth by establishing and sustaining multidirectional channels of communication.

Due to an increase in technical breakthroughs over the last few decades, communication has undergone significant shift. With technological improvements, social media has the ability to complement the current modes of communication and offer many new opportunities, which leaders may now incorporate into the traditional face-to-face conversations (Carr 2012 as cited in Cox 2012). It is nevertheless vital to keep in mind the ability of interpersonal communication and face-to-face interactions to forge bonds of trust and demonstrate transparency. According to Lencioni (2012), word-of-mouth is the most efficient form of communication, not technology. Therefore, even though using technology tools is more effective, the finest messages from teachers to students are direct ones. Employees have been acclimated to manufactured electronic communication over the previous fifteen to twenty years. This habit can alter how employees interpret the message

since they begin to doubt the truth of what they are hearing or reading. Formal communication at the top of a company will be more effective if it is unified and clear.

When discussing how to lead during difficult circumstances, Brown (2009) claims that telling staff members what is happening and eliminating paralyzing rumors aid with establishing transparency, gives the leader credibility, and fosters trust. Giving employees a forum to "clear the air" is recommended by Cornish and Seabrook (2012) in order to avoid rumors or tension building up. According to Lencioni (2002), trust is the cornerstone of any successful team or organization. A major component of a team's functions is trust and that the leader must act to generate trust by displaying vulnerability.

Communication tasks for a leader go beyond establishing rapport and speaking directly to followers. Although leaders connect with many different stakeholders, their primary line of contact should always be with their team members. Hord and Sommers (2008) contend that if a national high school principal establishes direction at the start of the year by opening discussions about high performing schools and their characteristics, it communicates to the teachers a clear vision of what is required to increase student performance. Instructional leadership is defined as providing resources, supporting collaboration, modeling instruction and creating a shared vision (Christy 2009). According to York-Bar, Sommers, Ghore and Monte (2001), professionals now prioritize face-to-face time for learning because they recognize its value.

According to McEwan (2003), effective instructional leaders are confident in their ability to get along with just about anyone. As stated by Lovely in 2006, good communication provides encouragement and gives an organization a positive sense of direction. Leaders

can communicate in a variety of ways, according to Kaser et al. (2002), including body language, physical presence, ability and willingness to listen, written and spoken words and behaviors. McEwan (2003), states that effective instructional leaders rarely or never close their doors.

Learners with disabilities in the Special Needs Education (SNE) route following the stage-based SNE pathway at the foundation level shall be monitored using particular tools in communication, social and pre-literacy according to the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) on monitoring frequency.

The teacher must administer oral exams as part of the instruments for tracking student progress in order to evaluate the student's verbal communication abilities. We must therefore, teach students skills that enable them to work cooperatively and sensitively in teams, develop as good decision-makers, plan and manage their time effectively, listen to one another and select the appropriate communication approach at the appropriate time. These skills are essential for the 21st century. New communication technology offers opportunities for critical thinking and conflict management.

Therefore, as a teacher performing complex pedagogical duties, being well-spoken, being in good mental and physical health, being stable and tolerant, having a propensity to work with students, having good communication and observational skills, tact, a vivid imagination and leadership skills are among the critical teaching skills and life-long learning competencies of professional teachers. In addition, teachers must communicate and collaborate with the home, community, and other relevant adults for the benefit of kids

while also being knowledgeable about the subject matter they teach (TSC Teachers' Image Magazine, Sep - Dec 2019).

### **2.3.2 Importance of communication in the school**

Sonam (2013) asserts that effective communication is essential to schools' operation. It serves as the cornerstone for all forms of psychologically sound behavior. Dialogue, mediation, negotiation, adjudication and arbitration of disputes all require effective communication. As Barrett (2006) notes, communication uses the full range of skills to overcome challenges and to create and deliver messages that guide, motivate, inspire, or direct others to action. Communication is therefore essential in promoting, preventing and managing conflict situations.

In order to understand specific roles and responsibilities, plan and carry out learning activities, coordinate approaches with students, inform teachers of students' progress and behavior and foster positive relationships with students, teachers and other staff, communication is crucial in national high schools as organizations. As they support and mainstream the communication activities of education stakeholders in schools, these fundamental components of communication are important to this study.

It offers the data that people and groups require to make decisions. Information within a school is crucial because it gives teachers the data and knowledge they need to do their jobs well. As they are completely informed, it removes doubt and helps them understand school rules and regulations. Written or verbal communication is used to spread information in national high schools.

Communication creates conducive teaching and learning environment in school to implement change. Aside from the interaction between teachers and students, the main relationships in most schools are those between school administrators and parents. Without established connections and efficient communication, these stakeholders' voices are lost when new programs or initiatives are launched. Change needs to be welcomed by students, teachers and the school administration in order for it to be successful and it becomes strange to seasoned teachers when it is implemented without their input. Motivating conversations can create a positive workplace culture.

In implementing changes that enable school improvement, it is crucial to engage in difficult talks while using excellent communication and listening skills. Communication and relationships with stakeholders are more successful ways to improve schools than new rules and regulations, according to Safir, 2017.

By making it clear to students, teachers and other education stakeholders, what needs to be done, how they are performing it and what can be done to improve the performance, it helps to motivate them. National school chief principals use communication to inspire teachers to deliver better work by outlining what is expected of them and offering rewards for meeting or surpassing expectations.

Based on the description of the three-dimensional communication flow, which includes horizontal communication or communication between fellow teachers and departments, upward communication from students to teachers and downward communication from teachers to students; tasks that primarily concerned educational objectives, tactics and outcomes were typically transmitted using computer-mediated channels in national high

schools. These activities included gathering information about the national high school's general objective, coordinating interdepartmental tasks and maintaining a two-way dialogue between teachers and school administration. This is consistent with Welch's 2009 findings that management must communicate well with employees (teachers) in order for them to grasp how their own roles fit within the organization's (school's) overall vision.

For a school to grow and succeed, communication is essential. Students and teachers all want and value knowing the school's goals and objectives. Teachers also need school administration's clear communication in order to comprehend how their personal roles fit within the school's overall goal.

Communication can also be used to communicate emotions or meet personal needs. It serves as a transit for emotional expression and the fulfillment of social needs and allows teachers and students to express their frustration and sense of satisfaction.

Communication is the process by which people exchange ideas and thoughts with one another, which is the source of innovations and ideas. Students can freely exchange ideas and opinions thanks to the benefits of developing close relationships with teachers, which also encourage an environment where questions can be raised without fear of being judged. One of the biggest causes of students' lack of enthusiasm at school is poor communication. Teachers, students and other stakeholders all communicate with one another at schools. Principals (school managers) communicate about the goals and objectives of the school. Therefore, it may be claimed that without clear and effective communication, academic success in a school may only be an illusion leading to unnecessary conflict.

Teamwork encourages communication, cooperation and collaborations as well as good or better results, helps students talk more and express themselves clearly with fellow students or teachers, as emphasized by Mckinney, Barker, Smith and Davis (2004) who claimed that communication is crucial to effective team performance and that it is the lifeblood of any organization (school).

Students' academic success depends greatly on friendly learning environment that encourages them to openly express themselves in asking for assistance. It is critical for teachers to realize that in order to foster a sense of community among all of the students, a nonjudgmental environment is required at every stage of the process.

Ineffective communication between teachers and the students, will greatly affect the output of both. This is because, in order for the teacher to clearly understand a question raised by the students, he or she must empathically listen, while the students must actively listen and assertively speak in order to comprehend what the teacher is teaching them.

Active listening will be counterproductive in an atmosphere where communication is weak because students may respond to the teacher without understanding what the teacher is teaching. Developing a strong management structure will help the school move forward because teachers can now relate to the administration more directly regarding the needs or observations they are currently experiencing within school. Additionally the administration will have a better means of informing, inspiring and managing teachers and students.

As stressed by Stephen (2011), communication is a crucial component in guiding and mobilizing the workforce toward the fulfillment of the organizational goals or objectives. This includes meeting the requirements of teachers and students. It serves as the means

through which the fundamental managerial and administrative tasks are carried out. This is consistent with Ekwue's (2008) argument that teachers and students will not be aware of their responsibilities if there is no adequate communication in school.

The importance of communication in fostering social relevance cannot be overstated. The more relationships the school develops with outside parties, such as parents and non-teaching staff, the more it promotes strong and long-lasting ties with the community. Another strategy to remain relevant to the larger community is to make the world aware of the reasons for and current events in the school.

For better school enrolment, the chief principal must ensure good communication flow, as poor communication with the general public, parents or qualified teachers outside of the school will slow or affect the rate at which they are informed.

Sensibility to responsibility since everyone can now reach one another without a communication breakdown, appreciating a good and robust communication culture implies some level of responsibility for parents, students and teachers. A little follow-up on a parent-student relationship can make the parent pleased. The greater the communication in school, the greater the parental faith in the school

Teachers and students must follow the formal rules and power hierarchy and communication influences this behavior. A school uses communication to keep tabs on its teachers and their working conditions. Teachers are expected to follow official norms and authority hierarchies inside schools when communicating information, such as to the chief principal.

### **2.3.3 Effective communication within school**

Each individual relationship in education has its own communicative demands and qualities. In a classroom, relationships are mostly formed. This degree of communication serves two purposes: it helps the teacher fulfill the learning objectives and it helps students get to know one another (Fashiku, 2017). Participants must feel safe and comfortable being vulnerable in school, according to Brown (2018). It is important to establish relationships with students, but those relationships must be built on ideas rather than on making friends (Safir, 2017). The responsibilities and levels of teachers and students are distinct.

Even with open communication and established connections, of standing in the school, honest feedback and difficult dialogues with students frequently start with the student interpreting the message negatively (Judkins, 2019). The discussion's goal is to motivate the learner to grow beyond their perception of what is achievable. In order to understand students' ideas and feelings, teachers must be aware of nonverbal communication from students. For detecting and understanding students who have suffered trauma, active listening and emotional intelligence are important. Implementing and maintaining a communication-rich school helps teachers achieve the objective of learning goals while fostering connections.

A school has people with different personalities and communication preferences and they have to cooperate in order to achieve a common objective. In order to effectively communicate ideas, one must do so without arguing with others whose opinions differ from one's own. It is fine for one to request more discussion later on when a colleague disagrees with them during a presentation or staff meeting. Teachers with more experience could perceive colleagues who promote academic programs or initiatives as undermining their expertise and teaching strategies (Steen, 2017). Teachers should still practice excellent

communication skills to encourage a pleasant relationship even when colleagues do not require the same reverence as administrators or parents (Bender, 2005).

It is easy to avoid tough conversations if everyone in the group is aware of their job and the reason it serves. Apathetic fellow teachers require established deadlines and clear guidelines. Dominating fellow teachers cannot understand distinct communication they demand reactions with clear boundaries. Knowing the facts, keeping your attention on the task at hand, looking for common ground and being composed are necessary components of remaining assertive. Communication fosters efficient teamwork, which is essential for growth.

The foundation for growth is open dialogue between teachers and students. Reflection fosters growth and excellent communication can highlight practice differences in a teacher's direction (Safir, 2017). Teachers and students must both develop their listening skills and their ability to reflect on both good and negative comments (Hollingworth et al., 2017). Chief Principals need to have interactions with uncooperative or underperforming teachers.

In active listening and message clarification during discussion, participants should paraphrase the concerns (Tyler, 2016). Additionally, this method encourages participants to maintain awareness and prevents them from becoming defensive when receiving criticism (Brown, 2018). Teachers should avoid communicating their grievances to fellow teachers or encouraging a hostile environment because unpleasant dialogues are a necessary part of the chief principal's role. If the relationship with the chief principal is good and students and teachers feel comfortable and heard throughout the talk, they are more likely to implement the suggested adjustments (Hollingworth et al., 2017). When students and

teachers feel appreciated and their abilities are recognized, positive staff connections develop. Students, teachers and chief principals must have open discussions as preserving the good relationship depends on excellent communication skills.

#### **2.3.4 Essential components of effective communication**

The first of three necessary components for creating a partnership that can successfully engage in difficult conversations is trust. People do not gain trust by great gestures, but rather through everyday communication that show they listened and cared (Brown, 2018; Tyler, 2016). Building trust takes effort and time, much like earning money on a savings account (Safir, 2017). Every encounter is an attempt to get recognition; if the experience is positive, trust increases, but if it is negative, the previous state of physical balance is erased. To have challenging conversations, teachers need to feel like they are in a friendly environment where they will not be made fun of if they make errors.

It is much simpler to have difficult conversations when cooperation, respect and trust in leadership are already the norm. Retracting the comment if the other person becomes defensive is not necessary once a trusting relationship has been established (Safir, 2017). The participants can assess their response and communicate their thoughts in a good relationship-created environment. Critical discussions can restore previously broken school cultures while utilizing the fundamental elements of effective communication (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The first essential component for creating the kind of connection needed for effective communication is trust because it makes the stakeholder's purpose, objectives and values clear, transparency serves as the foundation for trust. When teachers' emphasis is better aligned with the chief principal's goals, transparent leadership increases productivity in national high schools (Lavoie, 2015). Due to previous experiences with

excessive change and lack of concentration, stakeholders are looking for transparency in the school's policies and mission (Llopis, 2012). Teachers and students find chief principals more relevant when they are honest and forthright about their difficulties. Honesty promotes stakeholder confidence in future decisions during conflict. When all participants have a clear vision and are honest about their intentions, challenging talks are more likely to succeed. Changes feel forced at national high schools without clear teacher communication.

(Wieczorek & Manard, 2018) Lately, because people can interpret indirect communication when it occurs in person, communication is more transparent and results in fewer misunderstandings (Llopis, 2012). Building the earned trust necessary for effective communication requires transparency from all stakeholders.

Listening is the last crucial element of successful communication. There are two forms of listening: strategic listening, which includes guiding questions and suggestions and deep listening, which aims to hear issues but not address them (Safir, 2017). Strategic listening is active; it calls for the listener to clarify the information and pose pertinent questions (Bender, 2005). The judgment, giving unwanted advice, breaking confidentiality and interrupting the speaker, are among behaviors that prevent efficient communication (Brown, 2018). When asking whether there are any questions, ineffective communicators (teachers) frequently do not give students enough time to react. It is also important to be aware of indirect communication because gestures or body language can indicate to the other person to stop talking. During tough conversations, listening is the cornerstone of effective solutions (Ontario Principals' Council, 2011). It is crucial to fight the impulse to speak before listening when having a conflict. Listening to criticism or feedback, especially

when it is challenging to hear, is another element of good communication (Brown, 2018). The objective should be to establish a climate in the classroom and school where participation in collaborative conversations and active listening are expected. To create a collaborative culture at a national high school, the three key elements of effective communication - truthfulness, listening and openness must be present.

### **2.3.5 Listening teacher**

Teachers in national high schools must understand the value of speaking and listening in order to effectively lead students. Hearing and listening are sometimes confused, yet hearing does not necessarily imply listening. While listening, calls for a combination of non-verbal and verbal answers, hearing entails the reception of sounds. Despite being a crucial ability in the communication process, listening is a set of abilities that is assumed rather than studied. According to Zugaro (2017), becoming a listening teacher requires five different accomplishments:

- (a) Credibility - In order to be credible, the listening teacher must have knowledge.
- (b) Managing dialogue - The listening teacher must be able to use communication to manage the discourse with students and other education stakeholders.
- (c) Enabling the education stakeholders through learning and teaching to learn
- (d) Deploy power - get ready for action as the teacher transfers authority and encourages meaningful empowerment among his or her students.
- (e) Set the agenda and anticipate changes by actively involving education stakeholders and convincing them to accept the change.

## 2.4 Concept of Conflict

Several scholars have defined conflict differently and these definitions can vary depending on the context, intervention process and study area. Valente et al. (2020) define conflict as an incompatibility phenomenon between individuals or groups who have irreconcilable differences and values. In this study, conflict has been operationalized as a miscommunication, disagreement between teachers and students due to differing thoughts, views and principles in school. Salleh and Adulpakdee (2012), assert that the term conflict is derived from the Latin word 'configure,' meaning 'to strike together.' Initially conflict was expected to occur in a physical sense when two or more different things moved into the same space at the same time, resulting in logical inconsistency and an identical management process. When disagreements occur in a social setting (school) over substantive issues, or when emotional antagonisms cause friction between individuals or groups, conflict occurs. The agreement is made that conflict arises when either side is simply intolerable to the other.

In all conflicts, four elements must be looked into: the causes of the conflict, the conflict participants, the process and manner in which those involved face conflict and the context in which it occurs (Valente et al., 2020). The emphasis according to Valente, for conflict to occur, there must be differing opinions, interests or a distinct way of looking at issues. Byrne and Senehi (2009) see the existence of conflict due to people's different needs, ideas, points of view and values. Thakore (2013), on the other hand, stated that hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry and misunderstanding are all forms of conflict and that conflict is the resultant behavior. It is also associated with situations in which the interests of two opposing groups collide. It is defined as a disagreement between

two or more individuals or groups, with each attempting to gain acceptance of its point of view over the views of others.

The idea of conflict is now so commonplace that it practically defines existence. Different scholars have given conflict different definitions. According to Chukwu (2018), conflict is defined as behavior by an individual, a group, or an organization that prevents another party from achieving its objectives. He continued by saying that although conflict can prevent one from achieving their goals, the results can be positive if they lead to new information that improves decision-making, protracted delays over issues that do not significantly affect the project's outcome, or the efforts of the team falling apart.

Conflict, according to Adeyemi and Ademilua (2016), is any resistance, disagreement, or friction between two or more parties. It might be in form of fights, protests, violent outbursts or school strikes. In the same spirit, conflict was defined by Mboya, Kiplagat and Yego (2017) as an argument, opposition or disagreement between two or more individuals, in this case between teachers and students in national high schools.

They went on to say that conflict arises when people hold different views on a subject and express their views verbally or physically. This shows that a conflict arises when the interests and suggestions of one party are opposed by those of another party. I describe conflict as an argument or opposition between two or more parties brought about by differences in values, interests and preferred roles.

Onyedike (2018) went a step further and defined conflict as opposition of people or forces that cause tension. As a result, it is a form of conflict or opposition between individuals,

groups or between an organization and a person or group of people. Conflict is characterized by Ohwnon, Omotor and Atubi (2018) as a variety of disagreements, tensions and violent acts that take place both within and between states. They went on to say that conflict arises when two or more parties regard their interests as being incompatible, display hostile behavior or act to foster their own interests at the expense of the other parties. Individuals, small or large groups and nations make up these parties.

Conflict is often caused by a confrontation of interests, values, acts or directions, according to Ositoye, Adebayo, Alade, and Omolade (2019). Conflict therefore arises when one driving signal is reduced while another is increased, necessitating a new adjustment. The failure of one of these parties, i.e. teachers and students, to come to an agreement on any matter relating to their contact also constitutes conflict, regardless of whether this inability leads to strikes or other kinds of protests.

Conflict is equally a mental or spiritual struggle within, often unconscious, resulting from the opposition, clashing or variance of opposed principles, statements, arguments or the simultaneous functioning of mutual exclusive impulses, desires or tendencies. Onoyase (2010) defined conflict as the violent collision, a struggle or context, a battle or a mental struggle which can be destructive in any national high school.

Conflict is not always bad, according to Oresajo (2016), but how it is handled might have negative effects. He also emphasized how, with effective management, conflict may be used constructively. For instance, everyone thinks and behaves differently in our environment, which means that we all have various world views. As a result, there will inevitably be disagreements from time to time on a variety of subjects that are

communicated in a variety of ways. When a conflict situation emerges and differences are being acknowledged, it must always be addressed in order to manage it. A crisis and bad outcomes will eventually result from failing to manage differences.

Crisis situations do not happen overnight in a national high school. Differences must typically have been ongoing for some time, overlooked or ignored, building up negative emotions that will finally explode. Those who are accountable are shocked when it occurs, and questions like "how could this have happened?" will follow. In fact, one should be surprised as to why such a situation, which has grown into a catastrophe of such proportions, was simply overlooked and neglected all along. (Sudhakar I. Prabu. <http://www.tpmc.in/lew.html>) All social existence is prone to conflict. It is a necessary component of life due to its connection to situations with limited resources, functional separation, power dynamics and role differentiation.

Conflicts can arise in a national high school when students disobey school rules and regulations, refuse to do manual work, show disrespect for teachers, engage in vices like theft, fights, bullying, skip lessons, teachers disregard the chief principal or fail to complete the curriculum and the chief principal's leadership style demeans teachers while disregarding students, among other things (Mboya, Kiplagat, & Yego, 2017). According to Okorji and Nzekwe (2019), these disagreements have a negative impact on school administration, reducing teacher morale, compromising student behavior and impairing interpersonal interactions generally.

It was emphasized by Bano, Ashraf and Sumita (2013) that disputes are not necessarily negative. How they are managed is a source of concern. In contrast to poorly managed

conflicts, which become harmful, productively managed disputes contribute value to the national high school.

#### **2.4.1 The nature of conflict in school**

Conflict is inevitable whenever people must share resources for example money as a resource when it is scarce than the purchase power of a school then conflict is bound to occur. Your body might compete with other basic human needs for example clothes. Conflict will occur where there is debate on whether to buy clothes or pay school fees. In a school economic status where some teachers are ranked higher than others, conflict is inevitable.

Conflict is healthy in a school if it is managed well. Chief Principals, teachers and students should keep off from the negative tag associated with conflict. Differences are essential to change and if there was no urge to compete or disagree, then schools will be complacent. Conflict has to be recognized and managed otherwise it will turn out to be negative in an organization.

There are three possible outcomes of any conflict. One being a win-lose situation where one side emerges stronger than the other side. For example in a national high school, students may demand for change of school diet to a better one from the Chief Principal, then due to scarcity of finances it is not possible and they are denied the demand. Here the Chief Principal shall have won yet the students shall have lost. The second outcome in a conflict is a lose-lose situation. For example on the above incident, students decide to become violent and destroy school property. This leads to them being send home for two weeks and they have to come with their parents who will pay for the damage. Here, the

students shall have wasted a lot of valuable time for studies and the Chief Principal and teachers will also lag behind in syllabus coverage. The third outcome of conflict using the same scenario is a win-win situation. This is where the students demand for a better diet is accomplished when there is agreement between the school administration and parents during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for parents to pay more fees so that money is available for the school administration to provide a better diet.

Conflict is manifested in multiple varieties. Usually what we perceive as conflict is a symptom of conflict. If one finds oneself in a situation dealing with conflict, ask oneself what is underlying. There are several indications of conflict for example frequent and unwarranted arguments among members. In a school set up, this can clearly be seen during announcements by the school administration on school assembly, where unpopular policies are met by boos from the students. During meetings between students and teachers, there could obviously be lack of concentration on what is being talked about.

When there is communication barrier, a situation where students and teachers do not seem to understand or share meaning of what they are talking about. There could be a new school policy which has been introduced at the start of an academic term but few students and teachers have understood it. This leads to misunderstanding meaning which is a great communication barrier that can trigger conflict.

Destructive competition in a school is another indicator of conflict. When competition either for resources or space reaches unhealthy levels, conflict is bound to occur. Exhibition of inflexible and insensitive attitudes towards others like when it comes to changing the master time-table, lessons shifting, stereotyping and generalizations creates

conflict among teachers in school. When information is withheld from one group it can lead to conflict creating a situation of Us versus Them. Unfair criticisms of individuals or groups may also be an indicator of conflict. For example a teacher might have a negative attitude towards students who participate in co-curricular activities and will always be criticizing their academic performance as being dismal. When there is excessive formal interpersonal relationships between the chief principal, teachers and students in a school set it indicates brewing conflict. Responses like Sir, Madam, Your Honor, Your Lord et cetera in as much as they can be an expression of etiquette, they also point to an icy relationship in the school set up which can lead to conflict.

#### **2.4.2 Conflicts in school**

National high schools as communities are susceptible to many conflicts. Valente et al. (2020) called school a society of microsystem and defined school conflict as a disagreement between teachers and students or groups within the school community about ideas, interests, principles and values, with the parties perceiving their interests as excluded, even though they may not be the case. Mostly, national high school conflicts occur between students and teachers.

#### **2.4.3 Levels of Conflicts**

These are the typical forms of conflicts that arise in national high schools, thus school administration need to be aware of them and develop appropriate management approaches. When two or more people are emotionally opposed to one another or disagree about matters of school substance, conflicts like the following might arise (Ignace, 2014).

(a) Level I: Difference

The objective at this stage is to end the conflict. Information is freely exchanged and is not distorted. The expectation and faith in the parties' capacity to come to an amicable agreement set the emotional tone.

(b) Level II: Conflict

At this point, the objective is to lose as little weight as possible. Information sharing has since become cautious. The parties in conflict frequently plan, deliberate, practice or communicate in a planned manner as opposed to unplanned. The emotional tone has changed to one of compelled politeness and impatient anxiety.

(c) Level III: Contention

The objective here is to win rather than find a mutually agreeable amount of gain or loss. The parties share information to support a claim rather than to manage a conflict. The mood is tense emotionally. The sides' fear of losing causes discussions to become tense. In the later stages, the parties become frustrated and vent their anger at one another.

(d) Level IV: Limited welfare

Now the objective here is to weaken the opponent's strength such that the threat is removed. The conflict's two sides start aggressively looking for political partners. Whatever facts were in question initially are completely hidden. The conflict has developed a life of its own and the dominant emotions are hurt, rage and dislike.

#### **2.4.4 Types of conflicts**

Conflicts have been classified into clear groups by various scholars. According to Imazai and Ohbuch (2002), as cited in (Towo, 2013), there are two major types of conflicts in organizations like schools: vertical and horizontal conflicts. Vertical conflict occurs between people at different levels of the hierarchy like students and teachers whereas horizontal conflict occurs between people at the same level like students and fellow students or teachers and fellow teachers. In general, differences in status and power between groups are greater in vertical conflict than in horizontal conflict. Conflicts are classified by other researchers as intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group, inter-group, intra-organizational and inter-organizational. Nnam (2013) outlined five categories of conflict, including the following:

##### **(a) Intrapersonal conflict**

This is conflict inside the individual resulting from uncertainty regarding organizational expectations or from a circumstance in which work conflicts with other needs that are internal to the individual. Intrapersonal conflict can arise as a result of internal burden when an individual is assigned to perform a task that is mismatched with his or her goals or values, orientation differences among members of a group. Intrapersonal conflict arises inside a person as a result of role conflict and job stress Khan R and Qadir M, (2016). The various roles that people play in each community or organization are referred to as role conflict. When confronted with two or more mismatched points of view or ideas, a person finds it difficult to choose between them.

When a student fails end year examinations and is dropped from national high school, there is a conflict between the student's individual efforts and school policy: poor class attendance and unexpected emotions can grow to unbearable levels. This conflict frequently leads to tensions and frustrations, which have an impact on individual performance and, as a result, can easily have an impact on school functioning. In national high schools, this conflict may arise when a teacher fails to perform his or her duties due to an internal concern about the school administration that he or she is unwilling to expose. Normally, this conflict may unknowingly impede academic progress.

This inner conflict can be managed by identifying the actual source of the conflict and distinguishing between what one wishes to do and what should be done. Wishing leads to daydreaming and continued conflict, while authentic wanting leads directly to a specific behavior. When there is a follow-through behavior a student or teacher feels stronger and more confident; he or she has risen to a personal challenge and brought about positive personal change.

#### (b) Interpersonal conflict

This is frequently brought on by personality differences, as in the case of conflict between a principal and the teachers. Interpersonal conflict, according to Valente et.al (2020) in their book *School Conflicts: Causes and Management Strategies in Classroom Relationships* are inherent in human relationships and can be found in a variety of social organizations, including national high schools. Disagreements, incompatible interests about goals, policies and rules, as well as discordant behavior that cause anger, mistrust, fear, rejection or resentment, are examples. In schools, this is the most common and visible type

of divergence. In national high schools, interpersonal conflicts are based on various types of role conflict, in which a student perceives as incompatible messages and pressures on academic performance from teachers.

Warioba (2008) defines interpersonal conflict as a natural conflict that can foster creativity and performance in those who participate. Personal beliefs and value differences are common causes of this level of conflict and role ambiguity as a result of lack of clarity is a common phenomenon as a result of poor employee selection. This may result in many teachers experiencing role ambiguity in national high schools in Kenya because they misunderstand their job and as a result, lack competence in performing it effectively and efficiently. This could result in absenteeism from school of both teachers and students. Learning to make proper adjustments is an important factor in managing interpersonal conflict.

#### (c) Intra-group conflict

Individual-group conflict results from a person's attempts to fit in with the group's norms. Khan and Qadir (2016) define it as an interpersonal conflict among group members because of differences in values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, interpersonal conflict is unavoidable in groups. When people's underlying relationships are strong, they can collaborate more easily. Collaboration encourages the spirit of good human relations, which include mutual respect, care and love. This suggests that there is an intra-group conflict amongst members of the group. When teachers and students in national high schools are in group with norms and values that are incompatible with their expectations

and values, a conflict arises. As a result, the group's performance and teamwork, in general may suffer.

(d) Intergroup conflict

This is conflict between groups inside the same national high school caused by a number of variables, including power struggles, role conflicts and more. Conflicts between chief principals and teachers for instance, or between labor unions and management are intergroup conflict. When members of a department work together, intergroup conflict arises. It arises from issues with authority, work flow control and access to limited resources (Khan & Qadir 2016). When different groups within the school, such as different departments, compete for limited resources such as the number of educators, time allotted for co-curricular activities, textbooks and other learning materials and teaching aids, this type of conflict occurs. Intergroup conflict sources are classified as follows: bargaining conflict which occurs when groups within an organization compete for power, influence and even limited resources. When different departments in an organization work toward objectives that are opposed to the overall organizational goals, a system conflict occurs.

(e) Intra-organizational conflict

Conflict arises when management and employees disagree about working conditions, goals, authority and decisions (Molla et al 2020). When more than one person is involved in an interest group, coalitions form. According to Garriga and Melle (2004), the conflict between schools occurs when a school's goals and objectives are incompatible with social values.

#### **2.4.5 Causes of conflicts in national high schools**

Onyedike (2011) identified various causes of conflict in national high schools. These include lack of motivation as for employees to stay on the job and become effective members of a workforce they have to be motivated so as to derive the required job satisfaction from their jobs. He further stressed that, it is recognized that the success of any school depends on the performance of teachers.

Anti-authority may result to conflict in national high schools. Thus, in every school, there are some students and teachers who are always anti-authority. They always complain and feel oppressed by the school administration. Any impersonal bureaucratic behavior is perceived negatively and subsequently highly resented. For example some teachers will frown at any little demand such as signing the staff attendance register as repressive. Such chronic deviants easily become the convenient rallying point for growing dissatisfaction in others.

Conflict has many root causes and many theories try to explain its origins and its major sources. There is no single explanation of the causes of conflict because their occurrence is determined by multiple factors that happen in a particular locality. Every society views the cause of conflict from their angles that is their socio-cultural inclinations, perceptions, values, interests and varied backgrounds. Mhehe (1997) explained that communication or lack of it causes conflict. Most conflicts as observed could be linked to problems in communication.

Dependence has also been associated with the occurrence of conflicts. According to Gikungu and Karanja (2014), communication is a method of informing people (staff,

parents, learners and educational offices) about what is happening. It is the lifeblood of a school because it is impossible to carry out any of a school's activities without communication. Communication should be regarded as a fundamental requirement for any conflict management activity because it is the only way teachers guide students towards achievement of their goals and objectives. One of the most effective approaches for ensuring teacher and student participation in managing conflict between and amongst themselves is the teacher's ability to communicate effectively.

Personality differences have also been shown as causes of conflict in schools. Personality among people, which result in doing things differently, may also lead to conflicts. This conflict has the potential to arise as a result of these disparate personalities. People differ in socio-economic background, values, attitudes and expectations and because there is usually little respect for each other's differences, the potential for conflict is increased (Femi, 2014). Differences in perception can also be explained as a factor that can lead to conflict. Perception is the specific way in which each person experiences the world around him or her. Groups can come into conflict because of different objectives. If there is no co-ordination between the chief principal, teachers and students or between various departments in the school resulting to different perceptions of duties, roles or objectives causing conflict. This in most cases leads to breakdown of communication so that individuals are not fully aware of what is expected of them.

Poor teamwork or not pulling in the same direction as a school or department leads to conflict. Some teachers may not be willing to cooperate in team teaching and they prefer

owning classes. When such teachers are absent from duty and a member from the same department engages students, there is bound to be conflict when they come back.

It is important for every member of the school to know the goals and objectives of the school especially on curricular and co-curricular activities. Imprecise definition of goals and standards not knowing goals and standards yet pretending to stress on them leads to conflict. Each member of the academic staff must know the school goals and objectives so that they all walk in the same direction.

When there are excessively complicated relationships between functions and sections like the Head of Department (HoD) and the procurement department conflict is bound to occur. The procurement department might require the Head of Sciences department to go through several sections before the purchase of sciences laboratory chemicals and equipment. This will cause conflict between the individuals involved.

When there is autocratic management style or dictatorship from the chief principal in the national high school, it will lead to conflict. Whenever a teacher requests for service there will be denial or severe reduction of the resources which in turn will lead to looking down upon the established authority.

Disruption of established groups or routines may also cause conflict. For example if students are used to doing personal study from 7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. then they wake up at 5.00 a.m. once you disrupt this routine and add or subtract one hour, it will obviously cause conflict. It is just like inject into a group new members with diverse backgrounds instead of gelling with the older members, conflict will occur. It should be noted that causes of

conflict will always differ from one national high school to the other because each school has unique students, teachers and administrators (chief principals).

#### **2.4.6 Sources and functions of conflict in schools**

Competition for scarce resources for example money, personnel or manpower, time, materials and equipment lead to conflict. Allocating the above to groups produce conflict for some groups will certainly get less than they need or want. Inherent conflict is where standardized procedures, rules and policies that regulate behavior tend to reduce the likelihood of conflict. However, at the same time, resistance to the control that they may impose is fostered. Moreover, in a complex organization like a national high school, the number of levels of authority may create problems that escalate the potential for conflict.

The differences of the task responsibilities of line and academic staff members(teachers) in national high schools while enabling them accomplish their respective tasks also increases the likelihood of conflict between them. Groups within the school often find it difficult to agree on action plans because they usually develop different goals and objectives. Similarly many conflicts arise because some teachers, students and chief principals believe that a popular value should be applied to all situations, thus exceeding those whose values are different.

Conflict may occur when goals are questionable and roles are not clearly defined. Adequate standing operating procedure or operation work plan (OWP) from the chief principal in a national high school or nonsystematic approaches to mission planning and problem solving may increase conflict.

Conflict establishes identity as teachers and students clearly establish their positions on issues. Conflict can also serve as a safety valve to hold teachers and students together. They will “let off steam” which in turn enhances the communication process leading to better understanding of the issues within the group. When there is a higher level of communication brought about by conflict, groups strengthen and become closer.

Power struggles are inevitable in a national high school setting. Through conflict the question of “who has the real power in the school?” is resolved. The commencement and resolution of conflict issues identify weak areas in a school which then hastens resolution or elimination of those problems which might not have been considered if it were not for the conflict. Most of the times teachers in a school set up have been heard saying “I work best under pressure.” When there is conflict in the school the pressure teachers feel causes them to work at greater efficiency especially during marking of examinations where there could be a conflict between the examination department and other departments on meeting the marks submission deadline.

Conflict in national high schools causes competition to improve performance. Some schools, groups and teachers “try to out-do others” or demonstrate competence. This also enhances communication in that the higher level of information exchange leads to a higher understanding of meaning. When differences of opinion or ideas are not addressed or resolved the resulting association is distant and useless to the national high school. The unresolved situation actually causes the school to be considerably less than its ultimate potential. Through conflict resolution, these issues can be addressed to increase communication and understanding of each other.

### **2.4.7 Conflict management**

Management is defined in this study as the process of coordinating all resources by planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling to achieve given organizational objectives. Management is an important part of this study as it deals with how conflicts are controlled in national high schools. Conflict management is the ability to identify and respond fairly and appropriately to prevent or control the miscommunication, disagreement between teachers and students in national high schools.

A research on conflict management in secondary schools in Osun state, Nigeria, was conducted by Oladitan, et al (2014). The study found that lack of understanding of conflict management negatively impact school administration since many school principals managed disputes through trial and error approach but there were no clear conflict management approaches used.

In a South African research on conflict management and school administration, Bush and Glover (2016) observed that conflict was not just a dimension required in schools because it appears to delay. He also thought that because of the efforts that were typically targeted at stopping these conflicts, schools that witnessed conflict advancement would never succeed in achieving their aims, mission and vision statements. Concerning conflict management approaches and administrative efficiency in Nigerian universities, Ajewole (2014) observed that conflict management approaches were key variables in effective governance and creating competent graduates in Nigerian universities.

Bayat Louw and Rena (2014) undertook a research on conflict management tactics and techniques of high school educational administrators in South Africa, which revealed that the use of tactics and techniques for conflict management based on a number of factors. At

Bondo University in Kenya a research done by Makori and Onderi (2013) in Nyamira County concerned with the study of the awareness, expectations and influences of managing conflicts processes, reported that conflict management approaches differ according to their causes.

#### **2.4.8 Communication approaches used in managing conflicts in schools**

Isabu (2017) says that conflict is an important and unavoidable human phenomenon as it is neither constructive nor disruptive, but how it is handled in school determines whether it is positive or negative. As a result, teachers should be aware of various approaches to conflict management to ensure peace, effective performance of daily school routine, academic excellence, teamwork, teachers and students retention in schools. According to Arop et al. (2018), conflict management approaches are important in any school because they allow the negative consequences of conflict to be managed or controlled. Like any other institution in the world, conflicts in national high schools in Kenya have been frequently witnessed.

According to Isabu (2017), the causes of conflict include, among other things, perception differences, limited resources and overlapping authority. Conflict management approaches include accommodation, avoidance, competition and collaboration. National high school teachers should not rely on a single conflict management approach, rather they should learn how to use a variety of conflict management approaches and apply them based on the nature of the conflict in their specific schools.

Arop et al (2018) hold the view that teachers' effectiveness in communication is important in schools and reveal among other things that the three conflict management approaches - arbitration, dialogue and effective communication be used. They also suggested that

secondary school teachers learn how to use a variety of conflict management approaches and apply them based on the nature of the conflict to reduce their negative impact. The three approaches are further emphasized by Ghaffar (2019) in his study of conflicts in schools. However, both (Arop et al 2018 and Ghaffar 2019) stressed the issue of dialogue approach because it has the greatest influence on teachers' job effects than other approaches.

Isabu (2017), argued that regular staff meetings, an effective communication network and teachers' and students' code of conduct should be made available to all staff and students so that they are aware of limits and avoid conflict. In his research on the causes and management of school-related conflict in Nigeria, he investigated the causes of these conflicts and how to deal with them. He concludes that conflict is an important and unavoidable human phenomenon. Conflicts are neither constructive nor disruptive, but how they are handled in school determines whether they are positive or negative, (Isabu, 2017, Dady, 2015, Ghaffar, 2019). Furthermore, they consider the staff meeting to be one of the most important activities for ensuring smooth operation of the school because it serves as a forum for teachers to exchange ideas which relate to dialogue as a significant approach for conflict management.

Ghaffar (2019), highlights conflict management approaches that are mostly used include; mediation, negotiation, avoidance and cooperation. Ghaffar discovered that most teachers take authoritative approach, for example they pressurize students to ensure that school co-curricular activities and academics run smoothly. According to him, conflict between students and teachers is still a factor in academics today; schools frequently appear to be conflict hotspots; on occasion, they may be a manifestation of community problems

because teachers have to deal with these conflicts as an unavoidable occurrence. In his research, there is still a long way to go before conflict management and peer mediation training especially in schools are successful. It should be noted however, that a conflict-free environment promotes productive and innovative work. Genuine efforts should be made to manage conflicts and foster a healthy teaching and learning environment. He emphasized that conflict in school is unavoidable and often beneficial, for example, all good teams go through a “form, storm, norm and perform” phase. Making the most of diversity necessitates values, perspectives and behaviors that are frequently contradictory, as well as points of view. Ghaffar’s research will most likely be useful to teachers in appreciating conflicts and implementing appropriate conflict management mechanisms.

According to the study done by Akinyi (2011), one of the most striking characteristics of human beings is the differences. Different ways of being, thinking and existing, different needs, world views, ethical positions mark the relationships between students and teachers. In this sense, interpersonal conflicts are understood as tension that involves different interests or positions, are inherent to human relationships and are present in various social organizations, among them, the national high schools.

The school as a microcosm of society that brings together different world views, different ways of being, thinking and living, thus becoming a space for representing social differences and being a place where different conflicts occur on a daily basis. Dealing with this situation type requires learning and that is why teachers need training in conflict management so that they can correctly manage school conflicts and educate students also on managing the same (Armstrong, 2018)

School is an organization that brings together social diversity and interpersonal conflicts that are inherent to human relationships. Due to its intrinsic characteristics, school is a fertile ground for conflict development. So, the conflict in the education system can be seen from the viewpoint between the macrostructure of the education system, the general government policies oriented towards it and the management processes that prevail in each school.

The conflict presents formative possibilities, since the perception of the differences existing between people or groups and their needs, values, ideas and different ways of living are essential in society. In this sense, it is important to promote positive conflict characteristics and reduce the negative ones. So, the difficulty in managing conflicts is largely due to the difficulties existing between those involved in the conflict to be able to communicate effectively. Therefore, the constructive and educational potential of conflicts depends largely on the management skills of those involved (the students and teachers). Thus, knowing how to communicate and respecting the rights of others and existing differences are essential for conflicts to revert to social and human development benefits (Bwiruka 2019).

The concern with improving coexistence in schools, centered on the conflict variable, is addressed in different studies, whose objectives mark both understanding the school conflict, as well as preventing its occurrence. Since it is impossible to completely eliminate school conflicts, it is essential and urgent to reduce their intensity, duration and severity, so that the teaching and learning process runs smoothly. In this sense, the approaches used to

manage classroom conflict, and some examples of programs that work these skills on teachers and students (Cole 2012).

The school is a society microsystem, in which are reflected constant changes. Thus, one of the most important school functions is to prepare students and teachers to live and overcome the difficulties of a world full of rapid changes and interpersonal conflicts, contributing to the development process of each individual. For being a society microsystem and bringing together different ways of life, thinking, feeling, relationship, constitutes a space conducive to interpersonal conflicts. School conflict is defined as the disagreement between individuals or groups regarding ideas, interests, principles and values within the school community, perceiving the parties their interests as excluded, although they may not be, being that the most frequent school conflicts occur in the relations between student-student and between student-teacher (Chowdhry, R. 2012)

Conflicts in the school can be classified according to their causes and those involved. For Martinez, the conflicts between teachers are mainly caused by lack of communication, personal interests, previous conflicts, power, political and ideological differences. This author shows that conflicts between students and teachers, happen due to lack of understanding of the teacher's explanation of issues, arbitrary grades and divergence in the evaluation criteria, lack of didactic material, discrimination and disinterest in the curriculum content. In turn, conflicts between students can arise due to misunderstandings, fights, rivalry between groups, discrimination, bullying, use of spaces and assets, dating, sexual harassment, loss or damage of school assets, diverse student leadership, travel and parties. Conflicts between parents, teachers, and school administrators can arise due to

aggressions that occurred between students and teachers, due to the loss of work material, problems in the school dining hall or similar, inadequate teachers, lack of pedagogical assistance by teachers, evaluation, approval and disapproval criteria, failure to meet bureaucratic and administrative requirements of school management (Dornyei, 2011)

From the literature review, it is possible to highlight the different causes pointed to the school conflict. Participating teachers in the Gksoy and Argon study indicate as causes for school conflict: the communication failures, personal, political or ideological. With a very similar rating, Jares shows four main causes: ideological-scientific, related to different pedagogical, ideological and organizational options and the type of school culture or cultures that coexist; power causes, related to organization control, professional promotion, access to resources and decision making; causes of structure, related to the ambiguity of objectives and functions, organizational fragility, organizational and variable contexts; and personal and interpersonal causes, related to self-esteem, security, professional dissatisfaction and communication. Also, Burguet points out as possible causes for the school conflict in the school's organizational structure (Barker, 2016).

In this sequence and given the increase in school conflicts, Ibarra recognizes as school conflict causes: the increase in compulsory schooling (one hundred percentage transition from primary to secondary education in Kenya), the increase in the number of students per class, teachers perceive a progressive decline in their authority on students and students are less likely to comply with certain school rules and regulations, which results in conflict situations. Regarding the increase in compulsory education, this leads to a greater number of unmotivated and not disciplined students, which implies an increase in school conflict.

Likewise, the increase in the number of students per class, without increasing the facilities or associated conditions, increases the conflict occurrence, because of their negative changes in the physical and psychological environment, in overcrowded classrooms, with a lack of space for practical and collaborative activities (Rudd, 2015).

In addressing interpersonal relationships in schools, family background cannot be ignored. The family reality of each student has a strong connection with the school conflict. Distinguished authors indicate that school conflict situations often have their genesis at the family level as most of these families are deprived, where alcoholism, domestic violence and unemployment problems occur, being that all these violence and incivilities manifestations that arise in the students' lives are transported to school. Burguet points the dismissal of families as educational agents. This author highlights the overprotection with a sense of guilt for not dedicating more time to children, the experience of fatherhood as a "burden" of those who educate in aggressiveness, the criticisms of parents, society itself, to teachers, instigates conflicts. In other words, the role of the family often does not seem to offer a good foundation in the education of students, which is reflected in their behavior in the processes of interaction at school. As Berkowitz indicates, many of the interaction problems originate in the family, and the student reproduces the behaviors he or she learns from his or her home (Ricketts, 2015)

It should also be noted that although family-school relationships are extremely important for students' learning and development, family participation in school is not always satisfactory. So, the family and the school must be together in contributing to the conflict becoming part of a process of growth, acceptance of the other and accountability. Learning

to deal with school conflicts positively is essential for the development of healthy relationships (Komives, 2017).

Another cause of school conflicts is pointed to society and the values it conveys. Burguet points to the example of social communication, which encourages violence through violent programs, broadcasting news with prejudiced and conflicting messages. All of these situations enhance the conflicting attitudes of students, which are reflected in school behaviors. Teachers' perceptions of conflict indicate that they focus mainly on the conflicts' negative aspects. It is noteworthy that the methods mostly used at school, face of students conflicting behaviors, include warning, disapproval, summoning parents and guardians and in some cases, student suspension. Methodologies that provoke negative feelings and, later, originate new undesirable behaviors, being applied without taking into account the needs, personal conflicts, problems and students expectations . As indicated by Torrecilla et al. if the teacher is not an effective conflict manager, he or she will project this lack of skill, resulting in negative learning for students (Elmuti, 2015)

As noted earlier, classroom conflict is an unavoidable reality. Thus, being inevitable, adequate strategies are needed to manage it so that the conflict potential advantages are utilized and its harmful effects are minimized or canceled out. Conflict management approaches are understood as the behavior types that are adopted in the conflict context, that is, they are basic approaches to manage a situation in which the parties consider their interests to be incompatible.

It is important to note that the choice between different conflict management approaches depends on the conflict level and the various situations that must be managed effectively,

that is, to manage conflict functionally, it is important to recognize that one approach may be more appropriate than another, depending on the conflict situation, being considered appropriate if its use leads to the effective formulation or management of the conflict. So, approaches refer to specific patterns of behavior that are adopted in conflict situations. Following this approach, Rahim and Bonoma established five conflict management approaches using two dimensions “self-concern” and “others concern”. They are different approaches for conflict management and correspond to the attitudes to confront and conflict management (Minnis, 2015)

These five approaches for conflict management are:

- (a) Avoiding when conflicted parties show low levels of concern for others’ interests and a low level of concern for oneself. This approach is characterized by a low degree of assertiveness and cooperation, where neither its interests nor those of its opponents are satisfied.
- (b) Dominating reflecting the attempt to satisfy one’s interests without consideration of the interests of the other. This approach is characterized by a high assertiveness and lack of cooperation, in which the acquisition of objectives is seen with supremacy over the interests of the other party. Furthermore, it is often considered an aggressive approach.
- (c) Obliging tends to be adopted by those individuals who attempt to play down the differences and emphasizes commonalities to satisfy the concerns of the other party. It represents a conflict management approach where cooperation is high and assertiveness is low.

(d) Integrating individuals who use this approach manage conflicts directly and cooperatively, seeking to solve in collaboration with the other, is an approach connected with problem-solving. The use of this approach involves openness, exchanging information, looking for alternatives and examination of differences to reach an effective solution for everyone involved in the conflict. It is an approach useful for effectively dealing with tough issues.

(e) Compromising represents the attempt to satisfy, moderately and partially, the interests of all those involved in the conflict and shares commonalities with all of the other four approaches. It is an approach that requires compromise which is an intermediate approach on assertiveness and cooperation, which implies a compromise in the search for an acceptable intermediate position for everyone involved in the conflict (Abebe, 2015).

Among the variables that influence the choice of different conflict management approaches, the teachers' emotional intelligence stands out. Valente and Lourenço, conclude that teachers who tend to have higher levels of emotional intelligence use more integration and commitment approaches, for conflict management in the school and fewer approaches of consent, avoidance, and domination. Too, the findings of Aliasgari and Farzadnia indicate that teachers prefer the integrating approach over the other conflict management approaches. So, in the presence of classroom conflict, the teacher proposes alternatives, applies open lines of communication, makes concessions, accepts responsibility, maximizes similarities and minimizes existing differences between self and students. Therefore, the integrating approach is connected with classroom problem-solving. The use of this approach involves openness and exchanging information, being the ideal

approach in dealing with complex problems. When applying a commitment approach, the teacher's objective is an intermediate solution for conflict management, for this, he knows how to reduce differences with the student suggests an exchange of proposals with the student and provides a quick solution to conflicts. This is an intermediate approach on assertiveness and cooperation, which implies a compromise in the search for an acceptable intermediate position for everyone involved in the conflict. In this way, teachers' emotional intelligence allows for better conflict management, which supports the development of interpersonal relationships and enables a favorable environment for teaching and learning (Abebe, 2015)

So, conflicts involve, in addition to interpersonal skills such as availability for dialogue, emotional intelligence skills, which require the perception and recognition of the affective dimension and the feelings of those involved. In this sense, we can say that the evolution of interpersonal relationships has not kept pace with scientific and technological developments. We were not educated to know how to interpret the language of emotions, just as we did not learn to manage conflict situations. We do not learn to perceive and manage emotions. Thus, the emotions that emerge from conflicts must be the target of attention and discussion, so that teachers and students are aware of their emotions and know how to deal with them. The concern with improving coexistence in schools, namely about conflict, is mentioned in several studies, whose objectives refer to the understanding of school conflicts, as well as preventing their occurrence through programs aimed at teachers and students. Thus, the national high schools must develop effective skills for conflict management, increasing self-awareness, and understanding of conflict through formal education (Minnis, 2015).

The school is a space for socialization par excellence and, precisely, due to the variety of styles, cultures and values, it becomes an environment rich in conflicts. Conflict, commonly seen as something negative, destructive and generating violence, is, in fact, extremely necessary for individual progress. It should be noted that the conflict itself does not generate violence; this comes when there is a lack of peaceful solutions to conflict management, when there is no conflict constructive management.

Among the conflict management methodologies used in the school, the following stand out: arbitration, conciliation, negotiation and mediation. School arbitration is a dialogue process that takes place between those involved in the conflict with the presence of a third party that determines the conflict management based on the benefits of the parties with their authority and knowledge. The school conciliation is a dialogue process carried out between the involved in the conflict, with the support of a conciliator, who helps them decide, based on their interests and needs. This may present proposals for solutions that the parties can accept or not. The decision-making power belongs to the parties, even if the solution comes from the conciliator. In turn, the school negotiation is a dialogue process focused on conflict management between the involved in the conflict, which either meet face to face to work together unassisted to conflict management. Negotiation is one of the most used conflict management mechanisms in the classroom. The school mediation, this is a dialogue process carried out between the parties in conflict, assisted by a third party, the mediator, who should not influence the conflict management, acting as a communication facilitator. Inserted in a socio-constructivist paradigm, it is considered not only as of the most current and flexible instrument for peaceful conflict management at the educational

level, and promote a new culture for conflict management. Arising not only to solve school problems, but equally as a feasible way for creative conflict modification (Bwiruka, 2019)

A more detailed approach to school negotiation is presented as it is considered the most appropriate method for managing conflicts, in teacher-student relationships. Negotiation includes a set of behavioral skills that teachers must master. It is essentially a well-structured process and based on some tacit behavior, being understood as a process of communicative interaction in which two parties seek to manage a conflict of interest, use dialogue and progress gradually through mutual agreements. The negotiation process implies several skills, which stand out, effective communication, considered the main tool of the negotiation process.

Effective communication is essential to the school conflicts negotiation, as it develops: the fear being rejected reduces, the anxiety reduction produced in the struggle for acceptance and recognition, a greater predisposition to listen to the other and recognize their positive aspects, a strengthening of self-esteem, an increase in the degree of security and a decrease in defensive-offensive behavior .

Concerning the negotiation phases, although there is no agreement on the definition of the negotiation stages, there are at least three that are classically identified : definition of the content and limits of the negotiation (exploratory stage), with the manifestation of antagonism, facing individuals the “dilemma of trust” and the “dilemma of honesty”; negotiation dynamics (dynamic and tactical stage), with manifestations of concession flexibility, systematically assisting proposals and counter-proposals, constituting the central moment of the negotiation process and, the management and agreements stage, this is more

integrative, brief and intense phase, almost always implies tension and uncertainty. These phases testify to the transformation that the negotiations must undergo and must respond to the three negotiation objectives, namely: identification of differences between the parties, making joint decisions and building a commitment to manage the conflict (Best, 2015).

Conflicts of various types have always been present, and the causes that originate them are of great importance, as they allow a better conflict understanding and, consequently, a more correct intervention to its management. It should be noted that personal harmony and the development of attitudes that promote understanding, dialogue and tolerance are indispensable for negotiating conflicts in the teacher-student relationship. The way to intervene in classroom conflicts is essential in education, not only in terms of content, but also as a series of vital procedures in interpersonal relationships. As Lapponi points out, for conflicts correct negotiation with the student, it is necessary to communicate effectively, cooperate, decide responsibly and so teach to manage conflicts.

Ending school conflict is impossible, since they are intrinsic to the students, being an integral part of their development and the interpersonal relationships they experience daily. Learning to live with school conflict requires creating attitudes of openness, interest in differences and respect for diversity, teaching how to recognize injustice, taking measures to overcome it, resolving differences constructively and moving from conflict situations to reconciliations. So, it is essential that the initial and continuous training of teachers encompasses conflict management, providing them with tools so that they can manage the conflicts they experience in the classroom. It is important to conflict face and manage it with skills to manage it properly and constructively, establishing cooperative relationships

and producing integrative solutions. Harmony and appreciation should coexist in a classroom environment and conflict should not interfere, negatively, in the teaching and learning process (Gall, 2019)

#### **2.4.9 Competitive approach in managing conflict**

The main idea here is ‘might make right.’ It is a conflict management approach used when swift action is needed in reaching an agreement. The issue at hand might be important to the school but perhaps unpopular. When the teacher knows he or she is right or when there is need to protect against people who take advantage of non-competitive behavior. However, if the concern for the parties involved is not clear or consequences of action taken have not been considered then this approach might not be the best.

This is where one entity uses force to settle a conflict between two parties. This approach has a “win-lose” result and is known by a strong concern for individuals and a weak concern for group, (Rahim, 2002). Competing style describes self - confidence and uncooperativeness that happens whenever the parties concerned operate at the expense of the opposing party for their individual gain. It is also described as a power-focused style or approach to conflict management where the administration in national high schools uses threats to teachers and students if the conflict tries to escalate and get out of control. The research by Wagude (2015) aimed at establishing factors causing conflicts in Kenya's higher learning institutions, here focusing on national high schools. The research revealed that it is necessary to disclose and settle conflicts before they destroy the relationships of persons involved or it would degenerate into violence causing threats to the stability and operation of the school. On either side, the investigation found that managing social disputes in schools will necessitate moral authority and leadership dignity. If they are not

managed, they might have a negative impact on the school's overall success in all learning processes.

Conflict management is seen by Manesis et al. (2019) as a theory and a collection of skills that allow people or groups of persons to learn to cope with uncertainty as it occurs in all areas of their lives. Conflicts are never positive or negative as a definition, but they have often become something of a central and result-oriented aspect of school life. It provides the school with a competitive and cooperative background, but they differ depending on the circumstances of occurrence. There are issues in conflict management whenever the background is competitive and individualistic or if the background and processes for managing conflict is completely inconsistent. Whenever the classroom and school background are competing, the usefulness of managing disputes and peer mediation programs can be reduced (Gellin, 2018).

Intellectual, emotional and relational capacities are needed to effectively manage conflict cohesively to exchange knowledge, lead to creating value and address differences constructively among different categories of persons within the school, (Wagude 2015; Tjosvold, 2014). A competitive-destructive mechanism, on the other hand, contributes to loss of resources acquired by a school and hence attaining frustration, worsening stakeholders' relationships and as well as poor psychosocial results on a win-lose background (Deutsch, 2014).

People with this form of conflict will confront it as a contest they need and want to win. They could also go out of their way to manipulate areas of conflict, causing new disputes that need to be managed. In certain situations, an individual with that kind of dispute style can make a business dispute personal, trying to get under the skin of a colleague who has a

differing view on the matter. Competitive teachers can be assets to schools, particularly those with a competitive confrontational style, if they can learn to partner their competitiveness with a genuine compassion for the school and other teachers' well-being. However, a competitive teacher can be viewed as a dictator and a troublemaker without this concern. Teachers on the losers of a dispute could feel depressed, that may undermine the morale of the school (Klein & Roberts, 2016).

Oboegbulem and Alfa (2013) noted that conflicts are bound to occur in all human interactions, especially in national high schools where a great number of teachers and students are involved. Similar to any other organizations, due to the obvious selection of people with different personalities, conflicts are unavoidable in national high schools. Conflict can be harmful if it contributes to ineffective deterioration of contact and working relationships, stress, argument, low team members' success and animosity, low esteem that will indirectly influence the better operation of the school (Bano et al., 2013; Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012). When conflicts are managed properly, therefore, advantages are many; leading to unity within opposing groups and unification of moral obligations whereby associations are enhanced in turn, improving the identification of issues and solutions, improving knowledge/skills and safeguarding stability. For teachers in school, the ability to handle or settle disputes is therefore essential for the better operation of the school.

Research on conflict management agrees that disputes are positive and damaging, rather constructive, destructive and unavoidable (Munyaradzi 2014, Deutsch et al. 2014). It discusses the core conceptual and functional issue of understanding how and when, for the good of the school, teachers and students should manage their conflicts. These studies

verified that conflicts must be created, intensified and managed at times, because conflicts are known to be healthy as they keep every individual, within a school, in line to be careful with what they are doing. It is not really shocking, considering the many ways and contexts in which conflicts occur that authors have established different conflict theoretical frameworks. Indeed, controversy over the research of conflict management occurs. Various organizational researchers have revealed detailed information by using theoretical frameworks for conflict management approaches, (Ferlie & Ongaro, 2015).

The puzzling of conflict with competition illustrates both in our measures and in our discussions the challenges that come with using the word conflict. For instance, the word "dispute" unaltered by phrases includes survey measures of task and relationship conflict. Provided that a number of people believe that dispute is competition, with no further clarification, any element that uses the word conflict then tests competition and conflict. By using the word dispute without clarifying, it can lead well to the overall point that task and dispute association measurements are poorly linked to team effectiveness (Salleh, 2013).

Evidently, clear prove revealed that contrasting role and partnership measurement is associated with competitive measurements (Tjosvold, 2014). Groups with high ratings on relationship or task dispute measurements had great marks upon on measurement of competitor, conflicts of win-lose and low ratings on the assessment of the collaborative approach to dispute management; groups with high ratings were also unproductive on task and relationship conflict. Disputes are faced by both people and groups every day. In a social situation, disputes appear as any controversy over the problems of content or emotional resentment that creates tension amongst specific individuals or groups. In a fight, collusion, war, contest, mental dispute, anguish, among others, disputes are usually

manifested. Disputes may be positive or negative. Dispute is a source of inspiration and performance development when held under acceptable boundaries; when these limits are exceeded, it becomes destructive. The organization needs to maintain an optimal level of conflict, i.e. it needs enough conflict to avoid stagnation, motivate innovation and allow conflict to be released while promoting the fruits of transformation and rejuvenation, but not so much that it disrupts or discourages activity coordination.

The findings revealed that when a competing approach is used, conflict is exposed and managed before it damages people's relationships or degenerates into violence, which weakens school stability and performance. Competing approach can be adopted so that the school can achieve overall desired conflict management.

### **2.5 Collaborative approach in conflict management**

The main idea here is 'two heads are better than one.' If there are shared values or goals this approach can be used. Time is available and the power among the parties is balanced. When there is effective communication and the concerns are too important to compromise. If there is a requirement to merge insights from different perspectives on a common problem then this conflict management approach works best. However, if there is no balance of power between the parties, the goals or values are not shared by both parties or poor communication exists between the parties involved.

Opposing parties with a positive attitude develop the necessary communication to overcome any misunderstanding and find the best possible solution to this approach. Furthermore, the approach must include confrontation and open discussion of the problem if it is to be successful in generating creative solutions while also promoting justice and

fairness – two critical components of effective teamwork (Wei & Lau, 2012) (Rahim, 2002). Conflict management studies have usually stated that a collaborative win-win approach where all involved in a dispute pursue a happy ending and encourages positive determination is the most effective approach (Naykki & Jarvenoja, 2014; McDougall & Banjade, 2015). Collaborative conflict management may assist with conflict prevention and management. This involves a broad range of informal approaches including: partners collaborating just to find agreement on contentious issues and the promotion of social education to address conflicts among persons, groups and organizations like national high schools. Here teachers in national high schools listen to conflicting students and help them to find the main source of conflict so that they can avoid it in future.

A collaborative approach to dispute management can elevate confidence levels and collaboration between the manager and the committee members. The collaboration can be a particularly effective approach of dispute management and to reduce the pressure of disunity wherever dispute includes parties with separate resources and power.

Collaboration is a managing conflict approach in which an individual attempts to collaborate with the other individual (Crystal, 2007). It is referred to as positive partnership approach by Kofman, (2015). He argues that this approach shows the desires and limitations of individuals and includes every member in that organization in building solutions to reach far much beyond the original alternatives given. Using collaboration, effectiveness in performance is maximized. Nevertheless, it is the most unique management approach because it has to switch from unilateral power to shared learning.

He further asserts that mutual cooperation among member partners enables each individual to express and appreciate the needs of one another and find creative resolutions. It approaches the mission through agreed decision-making, relationships built on mutual understanding and the subconscious mind of each individual by considering their wants and beliefs.

Consequently, an individual ensures that the general desires of both individuals involved in the conflict are met accordingly in this approach. It is a scenario wherein the interests of each individual concerned are properly considered even before a final decision has been made and is considered among the best dispute management approaches (Blaauw, et al., 2014). If this policy is implemented by the national high schools' chief principals among other persons involved in management accordingly, the conflict and arson attacks will be unimaginable as the needs of the students would have been understood well on time and solution-building strategies implemented. National school chief principals should ensure close monitoring of all trends, from time to time, of any suspected conflicting situations in an array to contain such conflicts in their schools before they get out of control. The students will have no excuse to go on rampage and cause any damage to property in the school and themselves because they are all interested in the finding of the solution to any arising conflict.

A research on conflict mitigation approaches was conducted in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, by Kalagbor and Nnokam (2015). The goal of the study was to determine the extent to which conflict mitigation approaches by principals and teachers: cooperation, rivalry, agreement and avoidance of conflict management styles for high school students

and their performance factors in school administration among others were the challenges facing schools. The research focused on the following goals: to assess the extent of use of integrative approach by school educators and principals, to dominate approach, to compromise technique in management of schools and to assess extent of which avoiding approach influence student conflict management.

The research showed that school principals used more approaches for teamwork and consensus. Their conversation showed that the high school principals chose the integration approach since it is a tactic that inspires learners, helps them be happy and feel part of the school and gives them a reasonable hearing environment in behavior as well. In addition, principals preferred integration approach because they were able to reduce the negative planned and unplanned actions of learners, rather indiscipline in schools and increase administrative efficiency and most desirable academic performance at all levels of learning was attained by the students.

Momanyi et al. (2019) conducted research in Masaba South, Kisii County, Kenya, with the main purpose of evaluating the influence of principals' conflict management approaches on the performance of educator positions in public high schools. The main goals were to define the impact of the compromise conflict management approach of the principal on teacher performance; to investigate how the collaborative conflict management approach of the principal affects the performance of teacher duties; to assess the influence of the conflict management approach of principals on teacher performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted in the report that extensively discussed the independent variables.

Among other aspects, the research concluded that the high school principals that use two or more conflict management approaches will ideally have employed a collective form of managing conflict and are thus able to amicably settle disputes, as they collaborate. The teachers, therefore, carry out their duties effectively. Along with other suggestions, the research proposed that: the school principals need to investigate other factors that could influence the efficiency of their responsibilities.

Collaboration is proactive or co-operative, as per Christine, et al. (2016). They claim that collaboration, in as much as it could be lengthy, is a path often not travelled and takes certain ability and strong will. They argue that teamwork is about projecting constructive purpose and seeing things in depth from both sides. It includes understanding and embracing differences and seeking potential approaches that address the needs and interests of all. Like they figure out, when the problems are relevant to all, cooperation is a valuable conflict management approach, and both parties have to be devoted to the solution. This is also mentioned where negative emotions or resentment need to be worked through. Nevertheless, they suggest that the right decisions are taken by adapting collaboration approach amongst the team players. When school principals implement this approach, they would be forced to adapt to the concerns and resolve the effective approach for the learners and keep any sort of protest away.

Lynch, et al. (2014) agrees that the use of a collective approach to manage interpersonal conflict situations has several advantages. They claim that involving other group facilitates innovative conflict management, as it is a way of encouraging mutual respect and

communication. Therefore, national school chief principals who use teamwork can openly interact with students and consider their interests until there is a dispute and establish mediation structures attained and prevent any unpleasant actions that may otherwise appear which probably would cause destruction in the whole system.

Collaborating takes some time, though, as per Wager (2013), and sometimes cases of dispute are often quite immediate or far too minor to ascertain the amount of time needed to collaborate. However, this analysis reveals that there are several conflict issues that can be managed instead of collaborating with one of the other four dispute management approaches. Great coaches are those that can understand circumstances of interpersonal conflict, conflict between or among people, then use the right approach to manage each circumstance. Therefore, the effective use of situations of conflict for teachers and students would indeed facilitate school discipline and adverse conduct resulting in arson and other types of violence would be reduced greatly.

Huan and Yazdanifard (2012) contend that individuals who choose a style of partnership settle disputes in the best possible way that almost every party concerned come to an agreement. They see the approach as genuine and generally something that honestly and openly approaches the problems of disagreement, between and among parties involved in that conflict, without the leader getting involved and engaging with both parties as well.

Collaboration encourages task-goal accomplishment and is connected to employee's job satisfaction, as revealed by Shah (2018). For teachers and students alike, this satisfaction results in high achievement, both in curricular and co-curricular activities. Collaboration is high in aggressiveness and would work better if both sides are relevant to the challenges at

hand and the nature of the associations so created. Notably, conflict may happen at personal level to be referred to as intrapersonal conflict or family problems to be known as interpersonal conflict. It is typically mostly suggested because of the length of time, energy, confidence and collaboration involved in the matter when the nature of the issue is deemed to be highly critical. If this is not the case, it might be much effective and successful to compete, agree, accommodate or prevent other ways of dispute management. Communication and collaboration are among the core competences given more emphasis by the new Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) in the Kenyan system of education that stands to replace the outgoing 8-4-4 system of education. Scholars found that initiating collaboration is one of the best ways a learner would undertake learning instructions with ease. This is a collection study carried out by education task force. Learners would exchange views, share experiences, opinions and ideas in handling any task ahead of them without necessarily involving the teacher. They shall address any conflicting issues as they would have internalized the collaboration approach to conflict management. Collaboration as an approach is therefore widely supported by researchers as one of the best approaches to employ in conflict management.

The studies on collaboration approach revealed that using it increases confidence and cooperation between the principal, teachers and students. Collaboration can be a particularly effective approach for managing conflicts and relaxing the grip of discord when there are parties with varying levels of authority and resources. The findings therefore showed that collaboration approach can be conducted so that the school can achieve overall desired conflict management.

### **2.5.1 Avoiding approach in managing conflict**

The main idea here is 'leave well enough alone.' This approach is used if the issue or timing is not critical. A cooling off period is required for one or both of the parties involved in the conflict. There is a threat of violence or when more information is required to settle the conflict. This conflict management approach is not used if the situation requires immediate resolution or when one party remains frustrated by the avoidance or denial of the issue.

This approach is characterized by a lack of concern for oneself and others (Rahim 2002) and it encourages the stoppage of a situation and avoids any discussion of the problem with the parties involved. When the conflicting parties show a lack of concern for the interests of others as well as lack of concern for themselves, they are demonstrating avoidance. This avoiding approach has a low level of assertiveness and cooperation with neither party's interests being satisfied; it is the opposite of dominating, which is identified by a high level of assertiveness and very low cooperation, Valente et al (2020). In national high schools this approach is best used when teachers ignore issues raised by students through suggestion boxes so long as the issues raised are not confrontational. The approach works on the assumption that with time some problems will die off or solve themselves.

In this approach, the individual concerned does not go against their own gain or interrupt the other group. This is often seen as appropriate since it operates on the premise of leaving one alone and never bothers about any ones' problems. The collaborative approach is opposed to avoidance and is marked by assertiveness and cooperativeness. The aim of this style is to meet the interests of all people involved. The entire team agrees on working together in this respect. Nebgen (1978) carried out a report on conflict management for the

secondary education director in the United States of America. The research centered on particular methods utilized in educational settings and mentions four types of conflict management approaches which include avoiding conflicts, the use of coercion, involving the third party and rational techniques. The analysis revealed that, the efficacy of using balanced methods to management of dispute (persuasion, agreement and hostility) varies based on dispute courses.

The research on the connection within five approaches of the dual concern model and the individually characteristics of the Japanese Big Five such as extraversion, openness to experience, compatibility, neuroticism and conscientiousness done by Mendiburo-Seguel, et al. (2015) posited that avoidance has been greatly affected by neuroticism and compatibility and adversely affected by openness to experience and conscientiousness when employed.

Similarly, Schaufeli (2016) utilized this form of association as a factor in the research to assess the associations amongst face consciousness, cultural self-construction, public self-consciousness as well as the five model techniques of dual concern. The study revealed that with face perception, use of submission and avoidance techniques improves in low familiarity experiences with the key players among other persons in an organization. Findings have also shown that interdependent self-construction has a beneficial impact on approaches of submission and avoidance. Each of these researches, nevertheless, included salient contradictions and neither concentrated directly on non-salient approaches in conflict management.

In the actual collaborative initiatives, interpersonal conflict might save the action to overcome disputes. Nevertheless, conflict avoidance is not just a simple task. It needs additional commitment that must not be disregarded. Conflict avoidance can also impact the overall performance of the group, since two high-performing individuals may not function together in that place. Furthermore, in order to carefully quantify the gains of conflict avoidance, we have to build models to examine and assess similar activities (Roloff & Wright, 2015).

Many individuals actually choose to avoid conflict and function as though the disagreement does not really exist. Conflict avoidance is not a terrible idea in certain situations; conflicts can drain away or settle itself with time in some cases. Individuals who avoid confrontation are never generally violent but are unable to intensify a situation within the workplace which is already tense. Preventing or retreating from a conflict needs little bravery or consideration of the opponent. They simply assume that it neither happened nor does it occur by just avoiding the conflict. The other forms of conflict avoidance or segregation involve claiming that nothing is wrong, obstructionism or closing down entirely (Pellis, 2019).

It can be disastrous for organizational health to avoid confrontation, prevent it or authorize chronic unhealthy conflict to remain unresolved. Conflict avoidance is categorized by behavior which either avoids the conflict or declines to be part of it. Even though avoidance is seen as a poor approach, it demonstrates little regard for the interests of the members. Conflict avoidance is often a strategic reason, particularly when the association is not long term and the problem is not essential or if the circumstances may intensify into

war. It is a strategy to attempt avoiding being responsible and not willing to own a problem as an issue to attend.

According to Zhang and Wei (2017) conflict avoidance also involves claiming that the problem is not important enough to invest time on it or suggesting that there is not adequate time to provide justice (Zhang & Wei, 2017). Delay is the goal that uses avoidance. This managerial style is acceptable when dealing with low-priority issues, minimizing controversy or buying time. Avoidance entails that an individual has a low-power role and with very little influence over the circumstance, then the individual has to allow some people to deal with conflict, or if the issue is part and parcel of much bigger problems and someone needs to concentrate on its core issue, avoidance is often acceptable and would work without causing further damage.

Excessive usage of avoiding approach however, can lead to a low level of feedback, decision-making and increasing problems, which can lead to deterioration in communication among members of the team, as Okoth (2012) put it. In fear of consequences, individuals who misappropriate avoidance do not talk honestly. Excessive usage of conflict avoidance may also be the product of experiences in adolescence, previous work-related events and adverse conflict resolution experiences. A relatively mild type of avoidance activity is when in the circumstance where decisions are being made, the group members delay over getting work done and purposely considers an alternate opinion improperly or withdrawn.

When avoidance is overused, extreme behaviors may emerge (Yang, 2015). An individual starts to be pessimistic, critical and cynical. Some habits of extreme avoidance may involve

being reactive through being unreliable and not listening attentively at conferences particularly in comparison to some other kinds, which can as well give this form more value even if an individual has dedicated quite ample time to the style (Zhang & Wei, 2017).

Avoidance has its issues as well as conflicts do not go anywhere unless managed. Some workers become annoyed when someone continually avoids conflict by postponing conferences, changing their plan or attempting to hide in their working stations running into a coworker or not responding to emails. In addition, options can be missed when work is not completed.

Conflicts of expectations always encompass conflicts of judgments. Under such circumstances, to combat these challenges, negotiation and problem solving are useful. Conflicts of opinion, nevertheless, cannot always be overcome and should be handled, even with no agreed alternatives are acceptable. Within a background of perceived interdependence, conflicts arise. The prominent form is a poker game, in which group's gains become directly linked to anyone's loss. When the conflicting groups are not interdependent, such that one group actions fail to have any effect on each other and conversely, there would be no conflict. This helps explain the fear of conflict (Miyashita, et al. 2015).

In organizations like national high schools, chief principals often avoid coping specifically with conflict between teachers simply by dividing them. Teachers can avoid conflict as rather dangerous or unpleasant in the school and some circumstances where prolonged communication with an individual would not be stopped, choosing rather to resist openly

coping with the circumstance by venting to someone or participating in passive aggressive attack methods like speculation (Huang & Chen, 2018). In the working sector, unresolved conflict has been correlated with poor communication due to misunderstanding or failure to comply, intensified tension and mistrust.

Some potential conflict-averse outcomes, as noted by Knoth and Pebesma (2018), typically involve managers who perform poorly can thrive because the administrator may not assess or respond to workers' complaints; conflict amongst different department often become malignant due to lack of tie breaker to compel determination and incompetent executives are transferred between departments. Direct conflict or administration debate might have involved precise planning of the organization with an implicit recognition of the group's unity. This case illustrates, though, avoidance could also produce mutual trust and connection (Vasyliiev, 2015). It is needed during and for a relatively short period after the event that harmony generated by avoidance was more lasting than what might be required for conflict. Avoidance has contributed to more lasting unity as a more universal and long-term form of managing conflict.

ChengHe and Zhang (2016) assert that avoidance is much more of a continuous mechanism and therefore its "consistency" performance work to it being an intrinsic part of the community as well as its participants' daily lives. Much like avoidance is a daily phenomenon, one could claim that harmony and solidarity are much more rooted in this way. In attempt to understand avoidance, it is therefore necessary to note its consequences not only for conflict management, as well as for person bonding, team building and maintenance Kombeiz, et al. (2017).

The avoidance approach deals with changing organizational practices in order to decrease future conflict and that the best ways to reduce future conflict are to clarify goals, reduce ambiguities and strengthen policies, procedures and rules.

### **2.5.2 Compromise approach of conflict management**

In this conflict management approach the main idea is ‘split the difference.’ It is best used if the goals are of moderate importance. Both parties involved in the conflict feel a compromise would help in the resolution. There is equal power between the parties but each is committed to a mutually exclusive goal. A temporary solution is required as a step toward resolution of the conflict. However, it should not be used if only one party is willing to give up something or if negotiation is not possible by one party.

Here, opposing parties maintain their differences while being committed to find a solution that is equally favorable to both parties before resolving (Saiti, 2015). It is a middle-ground approach based on assertiveness and cooperation, requiring a compromise in the search for a middle-ground for all conflicting parties. This method could be very useful in national high schools where teachers listen to students involved in the conflict and point out faults and good points from each in order to reach an agreement (compromise). Teachers and students work together to achieve common goals despite their differences.

This approach is a mid-way technique in managing conflicts. It takes an interim path among assertiveness and cooperativeness and this is useful when all members concur to abandon those interests for the solution to be achieved. According to Kibui, et al (2014) research on conflict management in Kenyan public high schools, the causes of conflict in public high schools in Nyakach Sub-County are harshness by support staff, negative

attitude towards teachers, student indiscipline, late payment of fees by parents, poor work performance by staff and financial misappropriation.

According to Saeed, Almas and Niazi (2014), negotiation, arbitration, mediation and an atmosphere of confidence, partnership and constructive communication are considered effective approach. Greek school administrators agree with the view because they are more willing to use the negotiation approach to settle conflicts, as revealed by Saiti (2015), although, as a second choice, they see conflict avoidance as an acceptable conflict approach.

The outcome is in line with Mboya, et al (2016), who also suggests that managing school conflicts by using reconciliation approach does not really create a situation of win-lose since something will have to be given up by each party. In addition, Nissa and Halepota (2018), a prior standard measure of the option of conflict management approach is the seriousness of the conflict in schools. An avoidance technique as well correlated positively with efficacy in continuous school conflicts, while a negative correlation was revealed with truthfulness and efficacy in low and moderate intensity conflicts. The Nyagawa (2018) research related students to poor communication in higher education sectors in Tanzania. The analysis revealed that the participation from every member to a team project is needed, as well as information sharing and resources and collaboration are needed due to the more the members of the group collaborate, the higher they participate in the educational stakeholders meetings to the achievement of common team objectives.

Noermijati, et al (2019), show that conflicts are an essential aspect of the social structure and that they should be managed properly in order to establish an organizational

environment for safety which is so critical for the successful execution of obligations. An individual who involves a compromising approach to conflict management aims to align the interests of every party in a conflict by allowing them to give. This conflict form will take more time and requires more interpersonal skills than other approaches for managing it.

This is, nevertheless, sometimes viewed as less troublesome than resistance, compromise or competitive forcefulness in a market setting. Negotiating is a major step in settling conflicts. If all parties look for mutual understanding, both bravery and consideration are used. They decide to discuss relevant points just let it go through the weaker ones; the consequent reduction is expedited by this approach. The compromising individual can sometimes utilize passive-aggressive approaches to confuse some other group, so be very careful.

Compromise is rarely the best method for managing conflict because it permits all parties to give up everything in order to reach an agreement for the sake of it. It may, in some manner, contribute to neither party's actual satisfaction, which worsens the problem. As a result, when other options are not available or when the situation calls for it, compromise may be an effective and appropriate approach. The readiness of stakeholders to debate the subject and decide that reaching an agreement would be in everyone's best interest, resulting in the adoption of such a policy (Gunkel, et al 2016)

The importance of compromise however, is conveyed to many individuals when they were still children playing together and at times causing misunderstanding amongst themselves. The compromise approach of managing conflict is always a useful skill that is needed,

especially for entrepreneurs who, while making choices or reaching an agreement, would have to align various values and needs. There are many occasions, nevertheless, where compromise is not in the greatest advantage of a national high school (Smith, 2016). It could therefore be necessary to understand fully how to compromise with other fellows at times of conflict than just to know how to compromise.

School conflicts are unavoidable, just like in factories, the executives and workers sometimes distinctly view challenges or learn that they have conflicting agendas. If conflict arises then it will be upon parties concerned to solve it. In several organizations, schools included, employees (teachers) are required to work professionally to settle conflict (Chan et al, 2014). Nevertheless, under certain situations, chief principals or managers might have to interfere in an effort to get the opposing members to respond to one another and come to a compromise. Sometimes it can be hard to settle conflicts in the school because different teachers and students have distinct types of confrontation. It lacks of continuity and conflict style, and also the conflict form itself, can cause animosity and negative emotions. The settlement of important issues may also be postponed and crucial information and programs can even be interfered with.

A common approach to settling conflicts in negotiation and mediation processes is the use of compromise. Although an agreement can be made, compromise does not always address issues that include underlying individual or institutional conflict. It is due to compromise is always a "resolved" solution to the issue and not necessarily the optimization method that any group is looking for (Bommel, 2014). A practical or resource solution might well be produced but psychopathological issues related to the conflict might not be solved. As a consequence, when parties proceed to have interaction with one another, either or both

parties within conflict could proceed to have negative emotions or other resentment that can emerge again.

The use of agreement to resolve a conflict or disagreement allows the parties concerned to be totally aware that perhaps the result may be little than they had initially expected. The one which is appropriate though not optimal could be the ultimate verdict. If the outcome looks like that of a loss, there could be hesitation or opposition to the use of compromise as an alternative to conflict management. Nevertheless, when the emphasis is on whatever is done, instead of what is already been surrendered, there is also a stronger possibility that perhaps the groups would exit with emotions of happiness and recognition. "Compromise is much more effective whenever the actors have a set of concrete results that are self-adjusting in a way that only the ultimate verdict stays for all sides "inside the package" (Tidstrom, 2014).

In other occasions, there could be a necessity "agree to disagree" whenever the conflict appears not solvable and the fact that they are not willing to cooperate fully kicks in. Where there is conflict about beliefs or ideals instead of evidence or procedures, consent to disagree is necessary quite commonly. If all sides are truly capable to listen and strive and appreciate the other group's viewpoint politely, they will also come to recognize their differences. The shared recognition of disagreements increases the possibility that the conflict can be managed productively (Saeed, 2014).

Compromise may be an efficient way to handle disputes and disagreements, but it is not the right option. Putting an end to compromise where other conflict approaches (fighting, accommodating, avoiding or cooperation) would be much suitable may lead in a

mechanism or consequence which is not beneficial for the matter at hand. It is also critical that, throughout the process of compromise, essential problems or critical specifications are not overlooked. Many innovative ideas are required often. There is little need for arbitration with all conflicts. Successful people understand that compromise can be used and if certain techniques to problem solving are required (Bommel, 2014).

In Nigeria, Longe (2015) discovered that the problem of managing conflict was central to the achievement of its target in Osun state, which educators used to carry on a lengthy boycott over the introduction of the national government's announced coordinated wage structure. These are possible causes of workplace conflict, not just in schools, but within the state civil service as well. Wagude (2015) argues that, for various reasons, many schools in Kenya have often encountered conflicts of varying nature, many of which destroy lives and property. The influence of mission and objective interdependence in problem involved and team effectiveness results on the resolution of conflicts in student organizations, Milton and Barakat (2016) imply that the design of activity and goal interdependence influences the dispute management skills of a team, which then influence performance of the team members. Compromise approach is a middle ground technique for conflict management that operates between assertiveness and cooperation and is effective when both parties agree to sacrifice certain issues in order to reach a solution.

### **2.5.3 Arbitration**

Arbitration or mediation is an approach of managing social conflicts and making decisions. It is a structured approach to conflict management in which all parties try to reach an agreement. All parties involved in or affected by the conflict are encouraged to participate. Participation is entirely voluntary, and the party has the right to withdraw at any time.

Aggressive, negotiation, legal proceedings, arbitration and counseling are some other approaches to conflict management. The best approach to arbitration is determined by the type of conflict, the personalities involved, as well as their intentions and interests and the level of conflict reached (Moore, 2014). In this approach, there must be a mediator, a third-party person whose function is to facilitate dialogue between the two conflicting parties. This approach is relevant to national high schools especially when there is a conflict between two teachers and the chief principal is the mediator.

### **2.6 Communication ways of handling conflict**

Writers in communication studies have come up with the communication ways of handling conflict. It involves five stages which do not have a predetermined timeframe. The conflict has to be defined. Once one recognizes it, you should try to explain its nature whether it is violent, slow building over years, particular issues, which party feels more strongly about the issue. Anything to be done about it and by who? Who is to blame in your view?

Check your perceptions. A situation is a conflict when it is perceived to be a conflict. Many possible perceptions which should be checked eg listening to individuals in the conflict, their perceptions as you might be the one who has a wrong perception may be on wife inheritance, village hygiene or family planning. Go beyond your feelings that you initially established during your listening. Try to put your legs in the shoes of the people in conflict, put yourself in their situation (role reversal).

Suggest possible solutions by giving members an opportunity to suggest solutions. Resist the temptation to make fun of the solutions, belittling some suggestions. Suspend judgment and honestly believe that indeed every suggestion has a contribution to make however simplistic or mundane the suggestion might appear.

Assess alternative suggestions or solutions and weigh them bit by bit. You have to keep on reminding yourself that lose-lose or a lose-win situation pricks peoples egos. Weigh the solutions, which one works that will lead to a win-win situation. The best solution might not be the most workable. Be honest with yourself and tell the ones in conflict about the best solution. Check which of the solutions would be mutually acceptable.

Try out the solutions and evaluate them on how to involve all the parties in being part of the solution. Give the try out period time for the gains to be seen for example the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) has been given the try out and evaluation period. Evaluation is continuous, done at every stage as conflict management goes on all the time.

### **2.6.1 Shared decision making in averting conflict in schools**

In Germany participation in decision-making has been an area of major concern among educators (Rice & Schneider, 2014). It is a joint determination of decisions in general (Wegge, 2010). In citing Jung and Avolio (2010), Stone et al. (2014) maintained that shared decision-making was an integral part of school leadership, and that it was a pointer to the future, aligning personal values and interest to the school's interest. Shared decision-making brings leaders (chief principals) and followers (teachers and students) together to agree on a common group goal (Wegge, 2010). When chief principals, parents, students, teachers and other education stakeholders come together in this way, there exists an aura of friendship, belongingness and satisfaction in the school. However, a study carried out by Locke et al. (2017) and Wegge (2010) contradicted a significant positive relationship between shared decision-making and job satisfaction. This gained support from the work of Connell (2018), who visualized that employee participation in decision-making took place

in conditions of job cutting and downsizing, leading to questions of direct positive relationship between followers' participation and job satisfaction.

However, Wegge (2010) went on to refute this idea by asserting that satisfaction accrued from a condition of shared decision-making unless there was lack of support from the leader or when there was persistent conflict among employees. In their own analysis, Scott-Ladd and Marshall (2011) asserted that employee satisfaction was related to participation in decision-making. This aligned with earlier studies, which affirmed that teachers' and students' participation in decision-making resulted to satisfaction at school (Bolger, 2011). In the words of Togia, Koustelios and Tsigilis (2014), employee participation in decision-making was positively associated with intrinsic values of job satisfaction. Leaders who shared decisions and vision with their employees widened their experiences and hence pooled them together for a common purpose (Northouse (2014). This pooling together creates and nourishes environment that is both supportive and productive. National school chief principals who possess such transformative force not only co-opt their teachers and students in school affairs but also arouse their interest, fostering satisfaction at school. In the words of Wildy, Forster, Loudon and Wallace (2014) the results of engaging staff in decision-making were commitment and motivation. Bogler and Somech (2015) contended that teacher and student involvement in decision-making triggered significant commitment that induced them to invest extra efforts in achieving school goals and objectives. Principals with good leadership skills have the tendency to arouse their teachers' interest in school affairs because they are skilled in involving teachers and students in decision-making processes. Such involvement could trigger and strengthen teacher's sense of self-efficacy and their belief in their ability to positively impact student performance in school.

In their study of school governance regimes and teachers and students productivity, Verdugo et al. (2017) posited that teachers' involvement in decision-making fostered commitment to duty and school productivity. Empowerment of teachers in this way depicts recognition, justice and fairness, which satisfy teachers. From the perspectives of Ben-Chaim, Joffe, and Zoller (2014), implementation of any curricular program without involvement of teachers in its decision making would most likely find itself outside the horizon of success. In studying teachers' job satisfaction, Bolger (2011) propounded that a low level of teachers' involvement or participation in decision-making lowered job satisfaction. However, principals who pass on information to teachers and students, co-opting them in deciding the affairs of the school raise their morale and level of satisfaction (Bolger, 2011). Teachers and students who participate in decision-making processes in the school are more likely to commit themselves and express satisfaction than those who have little or no opportunity to engage in decision-making processes. In his study, Bogler (2011) found that the more transformational leadership of principals was, the more participative teachers and students were, and hence the more satisfactory the job was.

Transformational leadership of national school chief principals is associated with freedom to think and make suggestions. Chief Principals who listen, and share experiences and ideas are more likely to give teachers and students the chance to make choices and engage in risk taking in the pursuit of school goals and objectives. This is one aspect of school administration that brings about teacher and students motivation and satisfaction lowering conflict (Blase & Blase, 2010). In their analysis of teacher and students involvement in decision making, Rice and Schneider (2014) cited Alluto and Belasco (2017) as propounding that denying them the opportunity to participate in decision making might

lower level of job satisfaction. This view won a strong support from Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2014) when they asserted that lack of support and appreciation from colleagues and administration might lead to teachers' and students' dissatisfaction. Other studies in this area according to Rice and Schneider (2012) also made similar assertions, indicating a significant positive relationship between teachers' and students' participation in decision making and their job satisfaction. Also in their study Rice and Schneider (2011) found that their results tilted toward the findings of Bogler (2011) that teachers' and students participation in decision-making had a positive relationship with levels of satisfaction in school.

Transformational leadership gears toward support for teachers' and students' ideas and innovations (Blase & Blase, 2010). Principal-teacher-students collaboration associated with reflective behaviors is a hallmark of this leadership. In Tanzania Conley et al., (2018) in their study revealed that teachers and students expressed low productivity in their roles in a system that lacked receptivity to their ideas and visions. Decision-making insinuates teachers and students to construe it as involvement in school governance. In this way, they feel incorporated and recognized as major contributors to the school welfare. This is in phase with the views of Hampton, Mumford and Bond (2017), when they wrote that collaborative work infused in employees the sense of ownership and contributor in the outcome achieved. School leadership that incorporates teachers and students in decision-making not only creates a satisfactory work condition but also builds up trust and unity in the environment (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2014). In the words of Verdugo et al. 2016), the more teachers and students participated in school affairs, the more they had sense of legitimacy of their school's leadership and conflict is avoided. Studies have shown that the

more teachers and students feel good about school leadership, the more satisfied they feel and belong (Bogler, 2016).

Chief Principals with transformational leadership styles solicit teachers and students ideas, visions and creativity in order to find solutions to the conflict in school (Stone et al., 2016). In her statement regarding flattening of decision-making pyramid, Dondero (2017) indicted traditional leadership styles for lowering the enthusiastic spirit of creative and innovative teachers and students, by not allowing them to fully engage in decision-making. This leadership style could easily dampen their spirit and interest in the job, leading to dissatisfaction. Where teachers' participation in decision-making is limited, they may lose opportunity for personal growth, while school administration loses the expert and intelligent contributions by teachers and students. According to Dondero (2017), teacher and students empowerment could be crippled significantly and schools where principals embraced hierarchical or top-down form of communication. When teachers' and students' expertise and suggestions are acknowledged and rewarded by co-opting them into decision-making, an associated high level of job satisfaction and morale. Teachers and students are empowered to translate their visions into reality when they are co-opted into decision-making.

The push to empower employees in this way is characteristic of transformational leadership (Ozaralli, 2014). Participation in decision-making depicts recognition of intellectual power, and when teachers' and students intellectual power or ability is acknowledged, they become more participative, creative and satisfactory avoiding conflict in school. In this way, teachers and students become empowered because they are offered the opportunity to exercise autonomy, responsibility, choice and authority (Blase & Blase, 2017). This

destabilizes the top-down notion of traditional leadership style, and creates a condition that considers leaders and employees as partners and co-workers. It may also infuse a feeling of self-efficacy, self-worth and self-determination in the job, thus resulting in satisfaction. Scott-Ladd and Marshall (2004) highlighted a phrase in Guthrie's (2017) work as pinpointing that participation in decision-making resulted in job satisfaction and greater commitment to duty. However, some doubts existed considering whether there was a notable relationship between participation in decision-making and job satisfaction and commitment to duty or whether some other factors (such as downsizing and cost cutting) had more positive effect than participation in decision-making.

Dissatisfaction where it is associated with participation in decision-making could be as a result of work overload of employees (Scott-Ladd & Marshall, 2014). However, chief principals with transformational leadership skills may not undermine participation of teachers and students in this way especially when there is support and communication (Wegge, 2010).

In his study of perceived styles of leadership, in Kenya Savery (2017) asserted that an increased level of participation in decision-making led to a corresponding increase in the level of employee commitment to the organization (school). Since commitment is positively related with job satisfaction, this could imply that increased participation in decision-making could result in job satisfaction. Chief Principals with transformational leadership skills stand a better chance in satisfying their teachers and students because of their ability to co-opt them in decision-making. Shared decision-making means inclusiveness and autonomy from the teachers' and students' perspective and the consequence may be high level of innovativeness, risk-taking and performance at work

(Ozaralli, 2013), which may result to job satisfaction. In the school system, teachers and students express satisfaction when they have their freedom and autonomy to coordinate school activities (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2014). Chief Principals with transformational leadership skills possess the potential to foster both teachers' and students' self-management endeavors and school demand for goal attainment (Wegge, 2010). The more teachers and students acknowledge their freedom to self-manage, the more they express satisfaction at school.

## **2.7 Theoretical framework**

This is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework encompasses not just the theory, but the narrative explanation about how the theory and its underlying assumptions or tenets are used to investigate the research problem.

### **2.7.1 Empathic Listening Theory**

The importance of listening in the communication process is shown in the empathic listening theory. According to Craig (1999), the words and deeds of the information's provider and receiver are significant. Craig's position was supported by empathic listening, often known as listening to understand. Parylo and Zepeda (2014) add to Craig's argument by stating that effective communication requires abilities in focus, reflection and encouragement. The authors claim that a number of leaders employ the top-down communication paradigm, in which information is transmitted from teachers to students, with little thought given to how it would influence them. According to the findings of both writers, communication is most effective when recipients are given the chance to respond

to the information delivered. In his 2007 critique of empathic listening, Lasswell argued that the goal of communication should determine whether or not feedback is required.

### **2.7.2 Empathic Listening Theory Tenets**

Teachers use the top-down communication approach where messages are passed from them to students with little regard to how the information will affect the recipients who are students. Effective communication involves the sharing of meaning between the sender (teacher) and recipient (student) of information. This tenet is applicable to research question two on barriers to communication in national high schools especially on conflict management.

The importance of listening to understand in the process of communication is stressed here. One of the approaches of conflict management between teachers and students is for both to listen and understand issues in any conflicting situation. This tenet is applicable to research question three on conflict management approaches applied by teachers in national high schools.

Effective communication is when recipients (students) are given the opportunity to respond to the information sent (feedback). Communication involves focusing, reflecting and encouraging skills. As per the findings, an effective teacher provides support to students by motivational communication skills in creating conducive learning environment. This tenet applies to research question four on conflict-free teaching and learning environment in national high schools.

## **2.8 Empirical studies conducted in Africa and Kenya**

Williams (2017) investigated conflict management approaches in non-governmental schools in Benue State, Nigeria and proposed conflict management approaches such as agreeing on a procedure for conflict management, encouraging parties to collaborate, taking teachers and student comments and suggestions and involving the school disciplinary committee and the public complaint commission, among others. A variety of factors contributed to conflicts, including poor school leadership, poor communication, insufficient food, poor learning environment, lack of funds and student indiscipline. It was noted in Nigeria that the conflicts had the following impacts if they remained unchecked: hostility among the school community, teachers' turnover, negative impact on performance, damage to school properties, schools' closure before time, school negative image and fulfillment of some demands.

Jonkman (2006), researched conflict management by principals in Soshanguve Secondary School in South Africa and found that the conflicts encountered in schools were intra-personal interpersonal and intra-organization. Conflicts arose as a result of poor communication, a scarcity of resources, competition and perception differences. The study also discovered that most school principals did not effectively manage conflicts and as a result, conflicts became unavoidable in schools. The study concluded that principals recognize that conflicts are unavoidable and, as a result, develop appropriate plans and procedures for dealing with them.

Ira (2002) investigated conflict management in schools as it was practiced in Machakos County Kenyan Secondary Schools. The region was chosen because it had the most conflicts between public schools. According to the study's findings, when school

management is knowledgeable about conflict management, the school performs better. According to the study, if school principals viewed conflict positively, it could be used to improve cohesion and productivity in Kenyan national high schools. Unresolved conflicts, on the other hand, can result in job dissatisfaction, high absenteeism and turnover, prolonged disruption activities and a lack of concerted effort on the part of school members (Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012). This calls for principals to understand the underlined reasons for conflicts and application of proper mechanisms to manage them.

The challenge of school principals, according to Msila (2011), is to identify the problems that exist in schools. Msila went on to say that the workloads of school principals are becoming unmanageable and as a result, many of them are struggling to manage conflict in their schools. He discovered that conflict is not necessary for schools in a subsequent study on conflict management and school leadership in South Africa because it causes stalling. He also believed that schools that had progressed through conflict would never thrive because all of the energy was usually directed toward managing these conflicts. This viewpoint may face many opponents because some researchers believe that these conflicts in schools are unavoidable, but what is important is having a mechanism in place to deal with them constructively as a result of the approaches, they use to manage conflict in their schools, the schools' performance may nose dive. To show the importance of managing school conflicts, it has been suggested that principals should reduce some other activities or delegate in order to equip themselves with conflict management.

Likewise, Nyamwaya (2011), surveyed conflict management mechanisms used in Kenya's Nairobi County's public secondary schools. The study aimed to identify the major sources of conflict in public secondary schools by developing a shared understanding of the term

“conflict management” among students and teachers in the context of the school setting. According to the findings, the term “conflict management” refers to the act and process of resolving disputes between two or more parties. When students were confronted with personal conflicts, the majority of them dealt with them constructively, according to the study’s findings.

Furthermore, the study discovered that the cause of conflicts in public secondary schools differs and that resolving different types of conflicts would necessitate different approaches because the root cause could be unique. According to the study, school administrators and teachers should strive for open systems in which everyone is free to express their opinions and disagreements are openly discussed. Because these conflicts persist, it is critical to investigate how they are resolved and to propose the best mechanism for dealing with them.

Onsarigo (2007) investigated the factors that influence conflicts in Kenyan high schools. According to the study, it is preferable to expose and resolve conflict before it harms people’s relationships or even escalates into violence, endangering school stability and performance. In contrast, the study discovered that managing social conflicts in national high schools necessitates moral authority and leadership integrity. They can have a destabilizing effect on examination performance in all learning processes if not addressed.

## **2.9 Research gaps**

Communication being the lifeblood of organizations like schools, it is essential that teachers are aware of exactly what needs to be done in order to manage conflicts, make important management decisions and create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning for themselves and students. Information on organizational communication

and how it should support efficient management of schools can be found in the literature study. However, this study will provide additional information on how to effectively manage conflict in the school settings, particularly when it comes to making important school decisions so that teachers and students achieve their goals and objectives.

Extensive global, regional and local reviews of studies on effective communication approaches used in conflict management in schools have been explored. Despite the fact that much of the literature was centered on conflict management in secondary schools in Kenya and beyond, the findings apply to the current study on conflict management approaches used in six national high schools in three North Rift Counties of Kenya. It is important to note that despite extensive literature analysis, there is still a knowledge gap on how to guarantee effective communication approaches and use it to advance appropriate conflict management practices, particularly in Kenya's national high schools.

Another startling finding is that whereas the majority of the studies that were carried out used a quantitative approach to conduct their research, the current study has filled this gap by adopting a qualitative approach. Additionally, in almost all of the studies that were evaluated, information was taken from school principals alone or in conjunction with teachers, while the current study also included students as they are the ones that directly initiate and face the conflicts and are equally affected. The majority of the papers that were reviewed used descriptive data analysis while the study at hand examined data on communication approaches used in conflict management in schools on a thematic level. The majority of findings and recommendations, which largely pertain to industrial settings, tend to demonstrate a connection between various communication approaches and employee motivation, job satisfaction and job accomplishment. Through the current study,

inadequacies in the communication approaches used in conflict management in national high schools have been filled.

Conflicts in schools are unavoidable, according to a review of the literature. Conflict management is also a well-known phenomenon. However, in Kenya, most studies on conflicts in schools have been conducted in institutions of higher learning and few in ordinary secondary schools. In higher learning institutions studies including ones by (Machira 2008, Towo, 2013, Makongo 2013, Ignace 2014) reported about conflicts in Teachers' Colleges and very few in sub-county, county and extra-county secondary schools, but there has been little attempt to carry out and address conflict management in national high schools, where there might be very different dimensions and kind of complexities in conflicts due to wide understanding of students, teachers, and in fact Chief Principals of these schools. This is the gap in the literature that this study seeks to fill by examining the conflict management approaches used by Chief Principals of national high schools and teachers as the most effective ways of minimizing dysfunctional conflicts.

Taylor (2014) defined thematic data analysis as a process that involves data segmentation, categorization and re-linking before the final write-up, which is typically used near the end of the data collection processes. Furthermore, according to Deterding and Waters (2021), thematic analysis facilitates an investigation of interview data from a data-driven perspective, an inductive coding perspective and a research question perspective to determine whether the data was consistent with the research questions. As a result, thematic analysis was employed to produce an insightful analysis that answers the four research questions asked in this study. Following the fieldwork, the data was analyzed using qualitative methods, specifically thematic analysis, as proposed by Kombo and Tromp

(2006). This data was transcribed and organized into emerging themes and categories. The qualitative data was collected using interview guide, observation and document review.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Overview**

In this chapter, strategies used to execute this study are discussed. A detailed account of research methodology that allows a comprehensive interrogation of the research topic and exploration of the research questions to come up with viable conclusion is given. The chapter also explains the research philosophical paradigm, design, approach to the study, research method, research site, study population, sample size and sampling procedures, data generation techniques, data analysis and presentation. The chapter ends with ethical considerations involved in the study.

### **3.2 Philosophical Paradigm**

In this study, relativist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology has been adopted in order to understand the dimensions of communication approaches used in conflict management in schools. This research paradigm suits my study as the focus is on schools as educational organizations which are crucial in a nation's social, economic development. The relativist ontological worldview is ideal for this study as communication is a highly relative term. The interpretations made here are subjective based on personal judgment and view of the world and context of the national high schools setup. Research paradigm is the logic of the study such as the What? How? Why? of data production (Green & Thorogood, 2009).

The nature of reality or the assumptions we have about reality or knowledge is ontology. This study follows a relativist ontology which takes a subjective position that there is no single worldview and therefore reality is internal to and dependent on the individual's

perceptions and experiences (Johnson, 2008). Knowledge, here, is considered to be relative, dependent on other issues, contextual and dynamic.

In this study, knowledge is being studied or sought. Epistemology is the 'How' we study or search for knowledge. The study adopts an interpretivist epistemology stating that knowledge can be interpreted and gauged differently. It also assumes that knowledge is informed by worldviews, flexible and generalized naturalistically.

The relativist ontological and the interpretivist epistemological stances are the ideal framework for this study. The conclusions drawn from my interpretations of communication approaches used in conflict management in schools are highly dependent on the context within which I operated, (Asiyanbola, 2005). The strengths of using the relativist ontological and interpretivist epistemological positions is that they allow an in-depth exploration of the subject of communication approaches used in conflict management in national high schools and helps me understand societal interpretation depending on the voices of the participants in the study.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Is the overall plan that guides the study and links us to the philosophical paradigm i.e. the worldview taken by the researcher (Jwan & Ong'ondo 2011) is also a framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various components of research in reasonably logical manner so that the research problem is efficiently handled in a cohesive and coherent manner, (Bhat, 2019). Case study research design enabled me to develop appropriate instruments for data collection. Anastas (2011), says that case study research design helps provide answers to the Who? What? When? Where? How? Questions associated with particular research problems.

It is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. In this study, existing communication approaches used in conflict management in schools in the selected national high schools were looked at and suggestions on improvement made. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and a report presented based on the research questions.

### **3.4 Approach to the Study**

There are three general strategies or roadmaps in arriving at, studying or searching for knowledge. These strategies are referred to as approaches. They are qualitative, quantitative and mixed approaches (Oso & Onen, 2005).

In this study, the qualitative approach was used as it suited the study in that communication approaches used in conflict management in national high schools was explored in depth. The research questions raised were answered in an explorative and comprehensive style. This approach provided an in depth description and understanding of the social issues as it focused on individuals. Interviews of specific individuals on communication approaches used in conflict management in schools assisted in understanding their interaction, discourse and social phenomenon.

Green and Thorogood (2009) posit that it is useful to characterize qualitative approach by its aims and not by method used or by kind of data generated. Qualitative approach uses words and categories of the participants making it much easier to produce a convincing and vivid case for a wide range of audiences - Gillham (2000). In this study, deeper understanding of communication approaches used in conflict management in national high schools was sought. Views on the existing communication approaches used by school stakeholders and chief principals in conflict management were clearly sought. This

approach comprehensively exhausted the subject under study, employing varied participants' voices thus being highly effective in understanding national high school issues.

### **3.5 Research site**

Six national high schools in three North Rift Counties of Nandi, Trans-Nzoia and West-Pokot were the research site because of easy accessibility to my research. The schools are: Kapsabet Boys High School and St. Joseph's Girls High School – Chepterit (Nandi County), St. Joseph's Boys High School and St. Brigid's Girls High School (Trans-Nzoia County), Chewoyet High School and St. Theresa's Girls High School – Tartar (West-Pokot County). Three boys schools and three girls schools. Why? These national high schools like the rest in Kenya have the best infrastructure as per the Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education data on school infrastructure, admit academically top performing students nationally and are believed to have excellent communication structures. When it comes to fresh admissions, some are popular while others are unpopular. There is also disparity in their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) examination results. (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2023)

### **3.6 Study population**

Seven thousand two hundred students and four hundred and eighty teachers were targeted. The target population in this study was teachers and students of six national high schools in three North Rift Kenya Counties. Views from the chief principals of national high schools from Nandi, Trans-Nzoia and West-Pokot Counties were sought. Information from purposively sampled teachers and student leaders of the said national schools was sought.

Research population refers to the target population which is the total number of participants or the total environment of interest to the researcher (Oso & Onen 2005).

### **3.6.1 Sample size**

Twelve teachers and twelve students totaling to twenty four participants who represent various interests in the mentioned schools for example the Principals and Deputy Principals represented the school administration and the Heads of Departments (HoDs) represented crucial departments in the school administration. The Students' Governing Councils (SGCs) are the voices of both teachers and students in communication in the school.

### **3.6.2 Sampling procedures and sample formulation**

Here, non-probability purposive sampling was employed where those included in the study were chosen. Purposive sampling is appropriate to research where the aim is to investigate human experiences or to gain understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling was used as the focus was communication approaches used in conflict management in national high schools so stakeholders known to have the information needed in the national high schools were picked on. To get in-depth explorations of participants who possessed specific information concerning the key research questions asked in this study, groups were divided into: twelve teachers and twelve student leaders totaling to twenty four participants. Teachers are leaders in communication in the school set up and student leaders are the heads of the Students Governing Council (SGC) who represent students' communication with the teachers especially when there is conflict.

A sample is part of the target population that has been procedurally selected to represent the rest (Oso & Onen 2005). It is the procedure a researcher uses to select the number of

individuals or objects from a population to study (Kombo et al 2006). The sampling criterion adopted in any research depends on the nature of the study.

### **3.7 Data generation techniques**

In this study, interviews, observation and document review were used to generate data. Interviews provided extensive exploration of communication approaches used in conflict management in national high schools.

In qualitative approach to research, data is mainly made up of words. The art of assembling data is generation and the different ways used in generating data are techniques (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011).

#### **3.7.1 Interviews**

University of Minnesota, (2019), on Data Collection Technique says that this is an oral conversation between the researcher and respondents. Leedey and Ormod (2011), say that face-to-face interview enables the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and their cooperation, yields the highest response rate where the researcher asks a standard set questions.

In this study, the open-ended (semi-structured) interviews were used. Here the interviewer has a general idea of where he or she wants the interview to go, and what should come out of it, but does not enter the interview with a list of pre-determined questions (Jwan & Ong'ondo 2011). Views and opinions of the participants concerning communication approaches used in conflict management in the six national high schools in North Rift Counties were sought. The challenges faced by the schools in communicating with students

during conflict were addressed. Interviews ensured the generation of clear and detailed information as participants had time to clarify and explain information required.

The selected participants in the interviews included: twelve teachers and twelve student leaders totaling to twenty four participants. The responses from the interview were written down in a notebook and also recorded on a voice recorder since it is faster than writing down in a notebook. The notes written were a backup of the recorded information. Personal (face-to-face) interviews were preferred than the telephone (mobile phone) way. Face to face was flexible, more information was generated and the non-response was low unlike the mobile phone use. With the covid-19 pandemic that was there, all Ministry of Health protocols on protection were followed.

Interview is a technique of generating data involving presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply of oral-verbal responses (Kothari 2004). It involves gathering data through direct verbal interaction between individuals (Cohen et al 2007). According to Ong'ondo, Jwan and Agumba M.N. (2008), an interview is a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information. Oso and Onen (2005) add that an interview involves person to person verbal communication in which one person (group of persons) asks the other questions intended to elicit information or opinions.

### **3.7.2 Document review**

Notices, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, advertisements, letters, memoranda and any other written documents used in the national high schools communication during a conflict were purposively sampled. These were the raw documents used in communication in national high schools which allowed comprehensive exploration of the topic,

communication approaches used in conflict management in schools. This also enhanced the credibility of this study as subjectivity assisted in data interpretation basing on personal knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and predispositions. Data generated here was corroborated through interviewing relevant stakeholders in the national high schools. Document analysis helped explore this communication topic comprehensively as document hard copies allowed repeated review.

### **3.7.3 Observation**

St. John's University of Tanzania's Website (2017), explains that observation involves watching or viewing behavior and systematically recording the results of those observations. Vein, Wimmer and Dominick (2011), explains observation as involving planned watching, recording, and analysis of observed behavior as it occurs in natural setting. In this research, I was an observer and I developed an observation schedule to guide me right from the school gate. I observed whether the schools had information centers (students' noticeboards), suggestion boxes, service charters and the general communication channels used. Sobowale (2018), notes that observation is an intensive and more involving way of gathering information. The Atlas Website (2016), explains that observation involves a researcher observing behavior that otherwise would not be accessible. Observation enables the researcher and participants to develop rapport and trust which is needed for participants to reveal the 'backstage realities' of their experiences that are generally concealed from outsiders. Hamersley (2010) suggests that relying on what people say about what they believe and do without also observing what they do, is to neglect the complex relationship between attitudes and behavior. I was able to understand and capture the context within which records moved and as such I had first-hand

experience with a setting which was open to discovery and inductive, rather than what the context was like. Due to the researched sources I opted to use observation because I was in a better position to see all that appertains to communication approaches used in conflict management in the national high schools.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

In this study, data analysis was done thematically which is a process of searching and identifying common trends and extends throughout an interview (Morse & Field, 1995). This analysis type aimed to produce a detailed and systematic recording of the themes and issues together under a reasonably exhaustive category system (Sloan 2006).

This is the process of examining, categorization or recombining qualitative data into more explicit data (Yin 2003). It involves the organization, interpretation and presentation of data collected. According to Oso and Onen (2005), data analysis entails separation of data into constituent parts or elements or an examination of data to distinguish its component parts or elements separately or in relation to the whole. According to Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011), data analysis in qualitative research involves looking at data, assigning categories and putting together emerging issues into themes in an attempt to answer the research questions raised. Yin (2003) observes that analyzing data is not easy because there are no specific universal steps of doing it in research publications and that the process of data analysis varies depending on research focus. Stake (2006) adds that there is no particular moment when data analysis in qualitative research begins as it is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations.

### **3.8.1 Transcribing the Data**

In this study, the recorded data was changed into actual texts after listening to what participants in the study said. I reread the transcripts to familiarize with the data generated. I identified emerging themes focusing on the research questions. The coding process which was in three coding stages; first phase (open) coding, second phase (axial) coding and third phase (selective) coding, Cresswell (2007), followed.

Transcription involves turning data from the verbal (and sometimes non-verbal) to the written mode. This is mostly relevant to interview data which ought to be audio-recorded so as to capture all that an interviewee is saying and also to free the interviewer from the task of taking detailed notes and allow for concentration on asking questions and probing. As for observations, journals or documents, we expected that at the analysis stage the data was already in transcript form (Jwan & Ong'ondo 2011).

#### **(i) First Phase (Open) Coding**

Alston et al (2003), open coding is the initial coding done early in qualitative approach to research and is unrestricted data coding aimed at producing provisional concepts and dimensions which seem to fit the data needed. Here, I highlighted themes that seemed to answer the research questions raised in chapter one. The labeling of emerging themes with different codes in relation to research questions was done.

#### **(ii) Second Phase (Axial) Coding**

Similar codes that are most familiar to the research questions were grouped together (Flick, 2009). In qualitative research, I removed redundancies and overlap (Dornyei, 2007), created hierarchies of codes (Lichtman, 2006) and reduced or 'winnowed' the data

(Cresswell, 2007). Codes generated from open coding were sorted out and core categories of data established leading to selective coding.

### **(iii) Third Phase (Selective) Coding**

Here, I grouped categories into themes. Themes usually corresponded to the research questions posed in chapter one and ended up forming the chapters in which findings were presented. Different categories and codes were grouped into themes and regrouped appropriately similar to the axial coding including relevant chunks of data as suggested by Clarke and Braun (2006). I re-read the data under the new themes ensuring that the categories and codes were appropriate labels of the chunks of data under them. I banked more data that does not fit the new themes, categories and codes (Jwan & Ong'ondo 2011).

Here different codes from the axial coding were grouped into broader categories, putting related codes together. Themes developed were matched with the research questions in chapter one. There was narration of data as per the participants' responses and this involved going back to where data was saved. Some important quotes of what was said by participants, was included. Lastly, I concluded and made recommendations.

### **3.8.2 Data Presentation (Producing a Research Report)**

This is the stage where the story was taken from the mouth of the participants and reported to readers basically by paraphrasing the statements of the participants and only retaining a few direct quotations to give the report credibility. Refining was done here to capture much detail and remove unnecessary repetition to achieve precision, clarity, coherence and accuracy. Presentation chapters could be more than one, perhaps according to research questions, the different cases for a multiple case study method like in this study, according to sets of participants, stages of the study or any other logical formula.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics is the moral principles that guide research from its inception through to its completion and publication of results (Jwan & Ongo'ondo 2011). Ethics involve individual and communal codes of conduct based upon adherence to a set of principles which may be explicit and codified or implicit and which may be abstract and impersonal or concrete and personal.

Research involving human participants is regulated by strict professional and research ethical codes which ensure that participants are protected from potential physical and emotional harm during the research process (Seidman, 2006). According to Oso and Onen (2005), the major ethical issues of concern are informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, anonymity and researcher's responsibility. Regarding informed consent, I informed participants about the procedures of the study they participated in. Participants were given information on the purpose of the research, the expected duration of participation and the procedure to be followed, any unforeseen risk or discomfort to the participants and the benefits of participation.

I ensured anonymity of participants by informing them not to mention their names during the interview as the voice recorder would record this if they did so. Take into consideration the researcher's responsibility by being sensitive to human dignity and well-meaning to the intent. The participants' privacy and confidentiality was maintained and I assured them that data generated was to be used for the purpose of this study only.

#### **3.9.1 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is an important concept in qualitative research because it allows research to describe the qualities of the study (Given 2008). It refers to the truthfulness of the data

generated from the field (Macnee & McCabe 2008). It helps acknowledge, admit and possible influences encountered in the study process. Similarly Jwan and Ong'ondo 2011, point out that in qualitative approach to research, a researcher should ensure that the research process is truthful, careful and rigorous enough to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the study. Trustworthiness here refers to credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. They (Jwan & Ong'ondo 2011) further define credibility as a researcher showing what he or she claims to investigate and report what transpired in the field. Transferability refers to generalization of the data to other contexts. Here findings from the field can be applicable in another context where the study was not done. Dependability refers to the extent to which a researcher provides sufficient, detailed and clear research process in a way that another researcher can replicate the study. Conformability is to what extend the findings are free from both internal and external influences.

I followed the required steps above so that findings were true and could be used for both academic and non-academic endeavors. I ensured that findings revealed a believable link between the participants' expressions and the themes and codes that emerged. As a researcher, I worked closely with supervisors to ensure that all goes right.

I got the authorization letter from Moi University and from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) permitting me to do the research. I prepared an informed consent form and letter to be read and signed by the participants for anonymity and confidentiality. Lastly I went into the field with the interview guide for key informants.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Overview**

This chapter presents and interprets data. It interconnects between data collected and the research questions raised in chapter one. The chapter starts by presenting the causes of conflict between teachers and students in national high school, the barriers to communication encountered by teachers and students in conflict management in schools and communication approaches used by teachers to manage conflict in national high schools. Lastly, it deals with how communication can be utilized to create a conflict-free teaching and learning environment at school.

### **4.2 Causes of conflict in schools**

The major conflicts in national high schools in North Rift Counties of Kenya were noted to be between students and teachers. When interviewed, one participant from national school two said that:

On discipline matters, when a student refuses punishment meted out by a teacher and he is called to the administration office to explain why, he may sneak away from school...this is a huge conflict existing in our school. Other small conflicts happen in classrooms when students do not do their assignments or fail in internal examinations. We have come to realize that, when you punish a student, they develop hatred against you as a teacher who punished them or makes close follow up on punishment (Teacher NS2)

One teacher from national school three replied this way in one of the interviews:

The causes depend on how the students follow the laid down school rules and regulations. If they fail to follow the school rules and regulations, they are punished and through punishment some change their behavior while others don't and they cause conflict with teachers. Other causes of student conflict are punishment when they fail in internal examinations like Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs), failure to complete subject class assignments, not wearing proper school uniform like missing tie, late-coming when school opens and truancy (Teacher NS3)

From the above two responses, I noted that the participants saw student indiscipline issues as irresponsibility, laziness, failure in internal examinations, hatred due to punishment administered, absenteeism, truancy, improper school uniform, arrogance and revenge to be the main causes of the conflicts in their national high schools.

In Kenyan national high schools, it was noted that one of the sources of conflicts is the use of mobile phones, which are prohibited according to the school rules and regulations. Many school meetings minutes and apology letters that were written by students to the school administration or to the teachers' discipline committees showed that students apologized for being caught with mobile phones especially after coming to school from home after school holidays. Other sources of students' indiscipline include; absenteeism, sneaking from school, drug and substance abuse especially bhang and cigarette smoking, vandalism of school property (lockers and window panes) and late reporting to school during opening days.

The disciplinary committee members are quite crucial in the process of conflict management approaches in any national high school. They deal with students' conflicts. In one of the interviews a member of the national high school one disciplinary committee had this to say:

Cause of conflicts in this school is indiscipline, where students are not serious with their academic work. We usually give them career guidance and counseling and the importance of good performance in examinations for this to be realized. (Teacher NS1)

Another participant from national high school 4 said:

The use of abusive language by students towards teachers due to strict follow-up makes teachers to be annoyed. Mostly this happens when teachers make close follow-up on class academic assignments where lazy students resist. They don't

complete the assignments or just do it haphazardly to satisfy the teacher without any care whether they have got it right or wrong. Close supervision also happens on personal grooming or classroom cleanliness, going out without permission especially during co-curricular activities competitions, students' hobbies which are outside the laid down school rules and regulations, so when you reject their hobbies like dancing, it brings conflict. (Teacher NS4)

Regarding the two responses above by the disciplinary committee members, it showed that the main causes of conflict between teachers and students in schools were indiscipline cases, abusive language, failing to follow the laid down school rules and regulations and strictness of some teachers. According to Saiti (2015), the causes of school conflicts include a lack of cohesion among teachers in enforcing discipline, a lack of effective school leadership, school ineffective communication, lack of or scarce resources and individual differences. The absence of proper services within a school forces students to get out of school to seek for them. Additionally, improper communication of chief principals to ensure that students and teachers pursue the school goals and objectives causes conflict. Efforts should be made to understand the rules and regulations governing the school plus the culture of the school. This will help in minimizing conflicts in national high schools. According to Valente et al (2020), teacher conflicts are primarily the result of a lack of communication, personal interests, prior conflicts leading to anger transgression, power issues or political and ideological differences.

Conflicts between students and teachers, on the other hand, arise as a result of a misunderstanding of the teachers' explanation (communication), poor academic performance and divergence in the evaluation criteria, a lack of didactic material, discrimination and disinterest by students in the study material. This was also noted by Edet et al. (2017), who concluded that the reasons for conflicts in national high schools

included bad leadership by chief principals, poor communication, inadequate student food rations especially during the labeled special diet (meat days), poor learning environment, lack of enough funds for school administration and students' indiscipline. Students have their interests and perceptions; it is the duty of teachers to educate them on how to harmonize their differences. Some of their hobbies or interests might be accommodated within a school environment to reduce unnecessary conflicts between them and teachers. Machibula (2011) pointed out that, the most common conflicts were between teachers and students, followed by conflicts between students and the school administration. The question of whether students use or not use mobile phones in this digital era is debatable. I call on stakeholders to reexamine the ban on mobile phones and motivate digital learning by soliciting donors to build Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure in national high schools so that both teachers and students can embrace technology in communication.

The findings established that issues causing conflict brought about by students are; students violating the school rules and regulations, failure to do assigned manual work by the teacher on duty, not respecting teachers, students engaging in vices like theft, fights, cheating in internal examinations, drugs and substance abuse, bullying or not attending lessons as time tabled on the class master timetable.

The study findings showed that issues brought about concerning teachers are like the teacher not respecting the chief principal or other teachers or not completing the academic curriculum on time and the teacher violating rules like being absent from duty without apology. The teachers complained that inadequate teaching and learning materials like pens, chalk and exercise books, equipment especially the sciences laboratory ones and

unsafe working environment made their job very challenging. However, since they have to pay personal bills, they have to persevere and push on with their work so that they can earn by end of the month.

The study established that the chief principals in response said that salary advance commonly known as 'soft loans' had become a challenge, due to late disbursement of Free Secondary Education (FSE) funds by the government. Thus much as teachers employed under the Board of Management (BoM) terms needed salary advances to sort out many financial issues, the money was not available in the school accounts. However, the teachers did realize that salary advance is not a right and therefore persevere with the little that they earn despite personal financial constraints.

The chief principal, teachers and students complained of water and electricity shortage. Most national high schools have installed solar panels and back-up generators just in case of the frequent Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) power outages. Water and power shortage made work hard, inconvenient and ineffective and is the cause of some of the conflicts in national high schools that I visited. For instance, with electric bells in place, time management becomes hard when there is power outage.

Some teachers feign sickness to take sick leaves, compassionate leaves, failure to adhere to official dress code and reporting late to work. The chief principals complained that they had a shortage of teachers that leads to heavy workloads as there is no money to employ teachers under the Board of Management (BoM) terms and conditions. This also has some effects on the quality of work that they do. Shortage of teachers was reported as a major factor in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.) performance. Most of the

national high schools were understaffed by teachers. When teachers are many with affordable work load, then syllabus coverage will be done early so that adequate revision is done on time before candidates sit for K.C.S.E. The students claimed some teachers had preferences in handling them assessed them differently, such as form ones, students who were low achievers and not belonging to the category of teachers' pets or favorites are disadvantaged.

The study established that the students reported teachers to their parents and school administration for giving them humiliating punishment like scolding them in front of all the schoolmates or classmates and informing their parents making them have a low self-esteem. This negatively affected their class academic performance. Some teachers were accused of not assessing the student's anger transgression and did not choose a punishment mode which was adequate and effective as per the mistake committed by the student. Teachers disregarded circumstances that students might not be having sufficient knowledge and skills to assess the impropriety of their mistakes, because they were form ones or two students. The students' reaction towards numerous punishments was expressed by a deep sorrow, the feeling of hopelessness, the fear regarding negative reaction of parents towards punishment meted out on their sons and daughters. All this caused conflict between students and teachers in national high schools.

#### **4.2.1 Student leaders knowledge on causes of conflict in schools**

Student leaders were sampled amongst participants in conflict management approaches in six national high schools in three North Rift Counties of Kenya. Apart from the conflicts, they manage amongst students themselves, they are also affected by many resolutions outcomes done by their teachers and the school chief principals. It is from this point that I

wanted to know their understanding of the causes of conflict in their schools and one student leader in national high school three had this to say:

Disciplinary issues, unequal treatment of students by teachers, poor governance by school administration (chief principal) and teachers cause conflict most of the time (Student NS3)

Students have many grievances concerning unequal treatment meted to them by their teachers. This includes punishment when they make mistakes, insults, abusive language use (reprimanding) and suspensions which make them unhappy and seek revenge through anger transgression. This might cause these students not to concentrate on their academics and co-curricular activities and fail to perform exemplarily as planned leading to more conflict of being punished for failure. According to Thakore (2013), conflict is the result of behavior such as negative attitudes towards both academic and co-curricular activities, hatred, aggression, hostility, rivalry and misunderstanding between teachers and students. It is also associated with situations in which two opposing groups' interest conflict. Furthermore, Machibula (2011) pointed out that the causes of conflicts in national high schools are lack of effective communication, differences in perception and authoritarian tendencies of teachers or chief principals. Different perceptions regarding the administration over punishment modes divide students and teachers into two hostile camps that need proper explanation and agreed upon communication to solve this controversy.

In document review, it was revealed that many causes of conflict are late reporting to school during school opening days, being caught with mobile phones, attempting to commit suicide after theft suspect, absenteeism, truancy, improper uniforms and vandalism of school property (Appendix).

### **4.3 Barriers to communication encountered in conflict management in schools**

The study established that the following factors hindered the flow of information leading to miscommunication between the teachers and students and the school administration in the national high schools as explained below.

Cultural barriers were within a school, teachers and students belonging to different nationalities, regions, cultures, religions, castes, creed and different status groups interact. Teachers and students at times do familiarize themselves with each other's cultures and backgrounds, whereas other times they are even unaware. A cultural barrier occurs when people of different cultures are unable to communicate with each other efficiently and this inability may be due to diverse factors such as different backgrounds, languages, customs, viewpoints, ideas, notions and so forth. In national high schools, students and teachers come from all corners of the country each with a different cultural background. It takes time for them to familiarize with each other for smooth effective communication.

There are sometimes unclear assumptions underlying the message that hinder effective communication. The chief principal may assume, for instance that accommodation will be provided to those attending a capacity building course for instance because it has been provided in the past. Yet, it may turn out that the accommodation is not to be provided this time round. This may result in some teachers failing to attend the workshop for they may not have planned and budgeted for money for accommodation. Thus, good communication is clarity of understanding including what, when, how and with whom to share the information so that both the sender and receiver get the meaning of each other. It increases the chances for school success by linking the management functions toward achievement of

goals like increased efficiency, quality, responsiveness and innovation to teachers and students.

Psycho-emotional state prevents the active inclusion of a student in the process of the collective interaction within the class. This is characterized by a lack of motivation to actively participate in the academic activities. The examples of external barriers may be illness or problems in personal life of a student or teacher. With the diverse psycho-emotional state of both teachers and students in a national high school, it may affect effective communication.

Instrumental barriers that are expressed in the absence of tools among communication teachers and students, lack of knowledge about the methods of entering into the situation of communicative interaction. It was observed that older teachers experienced some problems with communicating using smartphones and their applications like WhatsApp, X, YouTube, et cetera. Some were not technology savvy when it came to use of computers. However, the young teachers had no problem with the communication gadgets but raised concern over the cost of purchase of the same and the bundles or airtime (financial cost) involved. Technology is dynamic and with it comes new communication gadgets, so unless teachers and students are abreast with these gadgets it will be difficult for effective communication.

Physical barriers within a school structure, vital to have team spirit and teachers should work in coordination with each other and be cooperative towards each other. Formal and informal means of communication occurs within the school. One of the crucial factors is closeness within the school structure. There is a system of hierarchy and those

individuals who are placed at the higher levels of the hierarchy (chief principal, deputy principals and Heads of Departments - HoDs) have closed doors, offices and cabins and are physically placed at a distance from each other. Their juniors though teachers like them are in this way unable to communicate with them effectively and this is a physical barrier to communication.

There are different academic departments in national high schools and each department has a Head of Department (HoD) and other staff members. Communicating in an effective manner is extremely crucial within the school. For example, a teacher teaches a topic in a given subject and some students within the class may have differing viewpoints so that does not mean that the teacher will not only instruct but also communicate with those students. Within the school, there are different cultures, subcultures, nationalities, traditions, norms and values in one classroom, it is a possibility that out of so many students, there may be few Sikhs, Muslims, Christians or Hindus and all have to develop mutual ties and communicate effectively with each other which is essential in the learning process. A psychological barrier that might arise in the case of a national high school is some students may face difficulties in some programs, they may find some concepts hard to understand, these are considered to be psychological barriers because they are unable to understand from a different perspective through a logical viewpoint. In three of the schools visited, Christian Religious Education (CRE) was a compulsory humanity subject as per the school religious sponsors' directive irrespective of the students' religious affiliation. Here whether a student has an Islamic, Hindu or Sikh religious background, he or she has to do Christian Religious Education (CRE).

Personal bias is when a person is prejudiced against another person, then there is breakdown of communication between them for instance, teachers tend to get biased on one student in class than the other because of good or bad performance. When students feel that a teacher is biased against them, they tend to develop negativity and there is breakdown of communication between them leading to conflict.

There are communication barriers caused by the collective or the group nature of the learning process. The essential distinction of this type of barrier is the fact that the student actively enters into communication and can propose and advance his or her solution of the problem, but does not do it, since he or she believes that other participants of the process will do it for him or her. A vivid example of the manifestation of barriers of this type is a weakened sense of individual responsibility for the class decision. In a class a student might not have understood a given concept taught but at the same time fear asking the concerned teacher to reteach the same. Later the same student might fail in the internal examination leading to conflict.

There is communication barrier of fear where those in this group are the most difficult to overcome in interaction. The student is often afraid to receive criticism, fail to solve a problem, not to live up to the expectations of the teacher or the class. The overstated requirements of students to themselves, caused by the desire to match the school image built up over years and the reluctance to appear stupid before fellow students.

Rank differences of teachers within the school setting, is a barrier to effective communication. Juniors or ordinary teachers who are low in rank, do not tend to communicate effectively with teachers of the higher rank like Heads of Subjects (HoS),

Heads of Departments (HoDs), Director or Dean of Studies (DoS), Deputy Principals and Chief Principals. They may have a feeling of inferiority complex or would feel discriminated against. Not only within the school structure but also economically backward sections of the society do not communicate in an effective manner with upper class, wealthy individuals; therefore, rank differences prove to be barriers to effective communication.

Communication barrier connected to the speech aspect, namely with problems arising during the transfer of ideas. This barrier can be represented by the following manifestations: indistinct diction, fast or too slow speech and use of junk (slang) words.

Semantic distortion is where the source or recipient of information may be affected by the communication process. Semantic distortion (whether intentional or unintentional) may hinder effective communication. Verbiage can hinder or make it difficult to pick out significant points and different meanings can be drawn to the same message. Some words may also give the wrong unintended meaning for example the chief principal may announce that teachers who fail to complete the syllabus in their respective subjects will be taken to have failed in their work. Teachers may from then onwards, aim to complete the syllabus without taking into account whether students comprehend content or not. In other words, they will teach hurriedly to complete the syllabus instead of teaching at a pace, which each and every student can understand the content. This will definitely lead to conflict when students fail in the examination for lack of content comprehension.

Task preoccupation, for example, the chief principal has to go for a very important formal KESSHA meeting and when he is about to leave, a teacher enters in order to resolve some

student indiscipline issues, then it becomes his job duty that he should attend to the issues of that teacher before leaving for the meeting; in this case, a teacher coming up instantly without informing the chief principal proves to be a barrier to effective communication as the chief principal will have divided attention between listening to the teacher and getting late for the KESSHA meeting.

Poorly written and expressed messages where the writer of the message may fail to communicate effectively by use of poorly chosen words, omissions, lack of coherence, poor organization of ideas, awkward sentence structure, platitudes, unnecessary jargon, and a failure to clarify the implications of the message (Koontz & Weihrich, 1990). This is a major problem experienced when students communicate to the school administration through suggestion boxes. It is therefore imperative for the writer, whether chief principal, teacher or student to ensure that his or her message is written in a clear language, which the recipient of the message will easily understand. One can do this by choosing the right register, style, vocabulary, layout, length et cetera in-order to make his or her message comprehensible.

Poor transmission of the message where the medium being used to communicate the message may be faulty is another communication barrier observed. The telephone maybe producing noises within it and this may prevent one from hearing the message clearly or correctly. In the end the message recipient will do a wrong thing leading to conflict.

Lacking an internal communication system as times have changed leads to miscommunication. National high schools cannot (emphasis on cannot) solely rely on telephones and cell phones as a communication medium any longer. There are too many

downfalls teachers face with cell phones that prevent them from successfully communicating and asking for help during emergencies or day-to-day communication activities (for example low battery life, spotty reception and poor network coverage). Today, there are school safety applications and school identity badge holders to assist with communication in schools. These school communication systems offer alerts, instant messages and more during conflict and emergencies.

Poor retention of the message where the message may be communicated less accurately (or even fail to be communicated) when only one person is used. As noted by Koontz & Weihrich 1990. In a series of transmissions from one person to the next, like from the chief principal to teachers, and students, the message becomes less and less accurate. Poor retention of information is another serious problem thus the necessity of repeating the message and using several channels is rather obvious. Consequently, national high schools often use more than one channel to communicate the same message.

The national high school administration, especially the chief principal or even the teachers should not use the students to orally pass messages to other teachers and students but it is important that they write down important messages to them. Unsuitable messages for the intended audience for example students and teachers should not use online communication to send each other inappropriate messages. Hence this type of message is unsuitable for students. Recipients' poor listening skills and assumptions in that the recipient of the message may hinder communication by failing to listen to the message properly. He or she may for instance, read an internal memorandum half way and assume that he or she knows the rest of the content of the message. As a result, he or she may fail to read an important

part of the message and this may distort the message, sometimes with disastrous results leading to conflict.

Information overload where the person in the position of authority may receive information that much of it ends up being disregarded. The teachers and students may also be given too much information by their Heads of Departments (HoDs) that they are unable to take in all the requirements. This will lead them to misinterpret the meaning and doing what is not required leading to conflict.

Lack of opportunities for communication makes teachers and students not to have an opportunity to communicate with the chief principal or school administration. The ones given the messages by senior managers may fail to pass on the same to the junior staff. Sometimes the chief principals might be busy with school administration duties and responsibilities and fail to meet with teachers and students over crucial issues. This anxiety might lead to conflict as one party might misinterpret it to mean that the other party is avoiding them.

Reference group either ethnic, religious or neighbors that the teachers and students belong to influences the way he or she interprets the received communication. One may fail to take the advice of another person from another religious group simply because this religious group is looked down upon by his own religious group.

Stereotyping is attributing a person with certain characteristics simply because he or she belongs to a certain group, class, ethnic group (for example rich or poor, white or black person). Presupposing that members of an ethnic group have a bad temper or they are mean, means that anybody belonging to this ethnic group will be taken to have a bad

temper or to be mean. Stereotyping can therefore interfere with communication in that one will judge someone on the basis of his or her culture, group et cetera. In other words, one will assume that the receiver of the message will behave in a certain way or he or she behaved in a certain way because he or she belongs to a certain ethnic group.

Halo effect is the assumption that because one possesses a certain characteristic then he or she possesses certain other characteristics. So while with stereotyping a person is taken as having all the characteristics assumed for his or her group, with halo effect, one's total set of characteristics is judged on the basis of the trait that has been observed in him (Bennett, 1994). Further, Hicks & Gullett (1981) point out that 'The halo effect is the result of two-valued thinking. In this situation, we see things only as dichotomies – good and bad, right and wrong, white and black, and so forth.' As a result, we tend to agree with a person we admire and disagree with a person that we dislike.

Physical limitations like the environment where the communication is taking place can also act as a barrier to effective communication. It is difficult, for instance, to communicate in a noisy environment such as, a noisy classroom or near the noisy dining hall.

Determining when a message should be communicated is referred to as timing, it is important for teachers and national high school chief principals to determine the most appropriate time to transmit a message. For instance, a teacher who wants to enforce desired behaviors of a student should do it as soon after, that is, not before or too long after the desired behavior. A school chief principal who wants to reprimand a teacher for chronic lateness would possibly want to speak with the teacher as soon as possible after the event had occurred. Correction of miscommunication should be prompt for effective results.

### 4.3.1 Lack of basic systems and services

In this context, infrastructure refers to electricity (power) and network, none of which are reliable or readily available in some national high schools. This to some extent hampers smooth communication between chief principals, teachers and students. The quote below from a teacher in national high school one shows how communication is hampered by the challenges of reliable communication infrastructure. Communication demand contemporary and prompt responses, which are not possible when network and electricity (power) are not readily available:

Electricity connection in this school is unreliable. So one may not have time to dash his or her mobile phone to a charging place where there is power and therefore if you need to talk or SMS the chief principal or a fellow teacher through your mobile phone you become 'mteja' (unavailable).

Power blackouts are quite common here especially during rainy season and when there is an electricity power blackout for long, my mobile phone battery goes off and communication through phone is cut off completely.

Communication network is unreliable because there is time you can spend a long time trying to browse the internet and you can't get the required information because of low (unreliable) or no network. (Teacher NS1)

However, some national high schools I visited had standby generators. The only let down was the cost of fuel for running the generators. On inquiry I discovered that the generators are only there to be used during emergencies for example when there is electric power outage during Computer Studies practical examinations.

### 4.3.2 Knowledge and skills obstacle

The following quotes show the lack of skills and knowledge on the communication gadgets that some chief principals and teachers struggle with. There are capacities missing on different levels for example knowledge about how to use different communication channels as well as knowledge about information in school in general and language skills. This

means that the gadgets illiteracy level is high in different ways. For improved communication in national high schools and other education stakeholders, the usage of communication gadgets is quite crucial. However, looking at the data from this research many chief principals and teachers in these schools lack the basic skills required to administrate the use of these technologies. As a key participant in national high school three highlights, he sometimes ends up physically going to the cyber cafe at the nearby market or town center to deliver a document instead of emailing it due to lack of the basic communication gadget-use (computer) knowledge.

My feeling is that chief principals and teachers should have the basic computer use knowledge. Unfortunately, many of us are computer illiterate (smiling). If you are not in a position to sponsor yourself to learn computer skills (packages), it is difficult.

The school does little. The school administration doesn't know about how things are handled in Information Communication and Technology (ICT), they don't know about most of our challenges. We need to be trained on how to use computers.

Training facilities for computer are missing for teachers. First, this should be done for us teachers because at times even we don't know how to effectively use information. This makes it more expensive, because instead of photocopying, scanning or emailing a document, you end up travelling to deliver the document physically when you just needed the skill to send it easily and fast. The teachers' employer TSC and the school administration have not provided any computer use knowledge but they assume that it's a requirement that you should get it by yourself.

There are lots of gaps in as far as communication channels are concerned. Including us teachers, we are expected to be all round and yet we are unable because of those limitations. These teachers we are talking about, most of them are not computer literate. Ironically, they are teaching and communicating with students in the digital era yet they are still technologically analogue in communication which is a big challenge. So how I wish we had chief principals and teachers being computer compliant, literate, then they would be in a position to champion this course of communication with the students and non-teaching staff.

We have low digital literacy level among chief principals and teachers (Teacher NS3)

### 4.3.3 Inaccessibility to communication gadgets

For one to communicate effectively through communication channels one does not only need infrastructure, skills and money. One does also need access to the communication gadgets. The majority of the participants (teachers) I met did not have access to a computer, laptop or smartphones. If they want to use the internet they needed to go to a cyber cafe and pay for the service as few offices are wireless fidelity (WiFi) enabled.

We don't have personal computers/laptops so if we want to use internet or computer for example filing KRA returns or wealth declaration form, we need to go to a cyber cafe where we are charged two hundred Kenya shillings. And when it comes to phones I use my private phone to make calls in my office.

There is one official phone-line used for communication, the one for the Chief Principal. So I use my private phone to make calls to friends and colleagues.

For example in this office we would be having a computer/laptop but the resources cannot allow. That's why I am even limited in these skills because I have no access to them.

At times you need to have a laptop to text an email a document, but some of these things are still lacking in our offices. Like you see in all these offices, including my, Deputy Principal's do not have laptops and printers. So whenever I need to do formal communication like writing an internal memorandum, I have to go to the secretary's office (Teacher NS5)

The school chief principals in most national high schools in North Rift counties of Kenya are facing many challenges when they try to communicate through communication gadgets. The infrastructure is not stable, many of the participants are lacking basic skills and knowledge of how to use the different communication channels and many of them do not even have the required access to the communication gadgets. On top of these challenges the offices do not even have a communication vote head. Many of the participants end up using their own money in order to communicate with teachers and students. The above challenges greatly hinder communication in these schools.

#### **4.3.4 Eradicating barriers to free flow of information**

The study established that there should be a combination of channels with emphasis on closer communication activities like frequent one-to-one meetings with school administrators or talk back sessions that encourage discussion because they build understanding.

There is need for more open interactions between teachers, students and chief principals of national high schools. They also expressed desire to have frequent meetings where they would air their views without intimidation or victimization. This however, with Eze (2011) who stated that, some of the primary characteristics of democratic leadership opined, staff are encouraged to share ideas and opinions, even though the Chief Principal retains the final say over decisions teachers and students feel more engaged in the process and creativity is encouraged. They feel satisfied that at least they shall have contributed to given school policy.

There is need to provide monetary incentives to teachers like heads of departments as without a distinction in pay between the heads of departments and their juniors and confirmation in the position by the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), most of them are not keen on how they handle conflict or communicate with their juniors.

The teachers and students also said there was need to be given opportunity to give feedback on issues communicated to them, especially when communication is made through Short Message Service (SMS). They explained that less meetings and lack of opportunities to give feedback triggered or escalated conflict yet if provided, it would help to arrest issues before they escalate to destructive conflict. Others said they would like to see teachers treated with respect whenever communication is made to them especially when it comes to

conflict. They also said there was need to send clear messages to prevent conflict stemming from unclear messages. They also expressed wish to have the school chief principals being objective and taking time to listen to the teachers and students, not using grapevine as a source of information to make decisions against them. Conflict can also stem from either inaccurate or incomplete assumptions made by teachers or students.

Decision making process needs to be less authoritarian and more democratic while another observation was made by a teacher in national high school two that:

The only improvement is in the process as at times some urgent things are delayed. Other times some people are left out in important information. You only get the required information during the policy implementation stage which is not fair as we are part of this school (Teacher NS2)

Other propositions in terms of what the national high schools need to pay attention relating to internal communication included academic objectives and achievement strategies. It was also proposed that it is advisable to have a comprehensive department handbook with all what a department needs to know about the entity and school policies and program activities, also, a school prospectus with clear academic calendar for all national high schools' entities would be desirable.

Teachers ought to make their ideas clear before communicating and always give a thought to what they are going to say. They need to have clear ideas about what they are about to speak. Know the motive behind the subject. Begin with a clear goal of communication and precise thinking. In order to minimize ambiguity and confusion in the communication process, clear communication builds upon exact terms and concrete words. When teachers make their ideas clear before speaking, make their message simple and to the point, the receiver (students) will understand what they are trying to say.

Chief Principals of national high schools should think of it from start to end and analyze all possible options when it is a new idea they want to share. When they have to explain it, they should be sure that all steps and linkages are fully understood by them and why they exist. Expect questions from their listener and be prepared to answer them appropriately.

Teachers in national high schools should ensure the time of their communication is good. When they speak to students, they should try to see the time and the mood of the students. Teachers in national high schools should not go and knock at their colleague's office after office hours. Time is an important factor in communication. When a group of people initiates communication, one should pay attention and communicate in due time. It is also important to say the right thing at the proper time. For example, when your listener is in a sad situation, do not try to tell an irrelevant joke. Or, if your listener is in a particularly happy mood, do not say anything that will trigger sadness or a bad mood to him or her.

Ensure that you are speaking the language which your listener can understand. Make your grammar and vocabulary as easy as possible while talking and writing. Language skills can be shown in report or thesis writing. But when one is delivering a meaningful message or conversing formally or informally, one should avoid any complex language or using a different accent. Verbal and written messages that are easy to understand and jargon-free engage your audience. It will increase their interest in the conversation. Also, they will easily communicate back and forth with you.

Make your message to the point and short. When speaking or writing emails or chatting, make your message to the point. Firstly, avoid any kind of unnecessary information. Secondly, only communicate one idea, thought or feeling at a time. Thirdly, do not make

your message too lengthy. When people hear long messages, they usually lose track of it, get bored or lose interest in the topic. Your message receiver will have a hard time grasping the message and take action on it. As a result, it will increase your time to explain again.

Check if the other person has understood your message. When you communicate with someone else, ensure that they understand the message properly. Giving and requesting feedback proves that you are serious about what the other person says and their views on the subject. The motive of feedback is to determine whether the recipient has grasped the significance of the received information. The reaction on the recipient's face can be understood in face-to-face communication. However, the sender should adopt an appropriate feedback method in case of written communication or other kinds of communication.

Take care of your body language, tone and content of the message. Your expressions, gestures, posture and voice tones are powerful tools. Whenever you are speaking, make sure you are communicating with correct body language. Aggressively saying something good might take your listener aback. Using a polite tone is equally important. For example, when you are congratulating someone, you have to say it with genuine excitement. Saying "Congratulation!" with a sad face will make you seem like you are not happy with their progress. When you use the wrong body language and tone, the subject matter of your message can be easily misinterpreted. Also, when you are choosing your word, make sure it is not contradictory and does not have any kind of double meaning.

Listen before you speak again. As Polonius said in Hamlet, "*Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.*" For effective communication, you must always listen to the other person

attentively. Even though you and the other person may have a different perception of the subject, listening to the person overcomes barriers. By listening, you will make the other person feel that their perception is equally important as yours. Furthermore, you will be able to give more appropriate feedback.

Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking. Strongly avoid interrupting someone when they are speaking. Wait till they are finished with what they are saying before joining in (appropriate turn taking) a conversation. Unnecessary interruption in a conversation is considered rude behavior. When you interrupt someone, it distracts them from the things they were saying. As a result, they might lose their flow. So if you are interrupting someone, you must have a strong reason for it. Otherwise, strictly avoid speaking until the other person is done.

Make your message judgment free. The chief principal should not speak to the teachers and students rudely or impolitely about someone's culture, religion or belief. It will demean the listener and may affect the listener emotionally. As a result, he or she will lose interest in the conversation.

Respecting other people's opinions and perspectives plays a huge role in overcoming barriers to effective communication. If you want to say something about a culture, religion, or belief, make sure you say it politely. They require patience, understanding, and conscientiousness. Ensure that when you or your team is struggling to communicate that you never raise your voice or over-enunciate. Talk slower instead of louder and forcefully. Remember, when someone is working through a language hurdle, it has nothing to do with their actual intelligence or ability to grasp the concept behind what you are trying to say.

Continue to speak proper English as you search for common ground, so they can learn how to understand correctly, too.

#### **4.4 Communication approaches in avoiding conflict in school**

The study concluded that the issues to be dealt with to encourage communication between teachers and students on school management are listed below:

The study established that chief principals should monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers' teaching and discharging their duties and any signs of conflict should be addressed as soon as practically possible. When a slight problem is postponed without a solution it will escalate to a bigger problem.

Chief Principals should use different techniques such as negotiation, mediation, communication, discussion and dialogues as well as compromising in managing conflicts in school settings. The school administration needs to build up leadership innovation and creativity in handling conflicts and should have a mechanism in place to deal with emerging conflicts.

The study findings showed that that there was need to increase the frequency and speed of communication between administrators and their juniors. The school should observe the choice of the medium of communication because it is important in matters to do with conflict as credibility of the sender of a message also matters if communication is to be deemed effective. For example, a teacher or administrator communicating his dissatisfaction through social media platforms like a WhatsApp group may not be taken seriously like one would if he or she wrote a formal letter addressing the same. The letter should be directed to the right office for effective response.

The study established that chief principals should treat all staff members fairly and equally in order to build mutual respect and trust among all members who make-up the work force in the school setting and the surrounding community. Furthermore, all academic staff members (teachers) should respect one another and avoid indulging in matters that can cause conflict.

Before employing any conflict management approach, the study found out that, it was necessary to identify the root causes of conflict at hand so as to be effective and efficient when addressing them. The study established that the school management should also be sensitive on compassionate and sick leaves so that teachers are able to work effectively when they are in good health physically and psychologically. A teacher who has been denied his or her rights to good healthy will be angry and he or she would not manage students' conflict.

The study established that, the management should focus on the issue, not the person. Try not to take everything personally, and similarly, express your own needs and opinions in terms of the job at hand. Chief Principals should solve problems rather than attempt to control teachers and students. For example, rather than ignoring a student who routinely answers questions in class with inappropriate responses, the teacher should speak with the student outside class about how this might disrupt the class and distract other students from concentrating and comprehending the lesson content.

Being genuine rather than being manipulative is crucial. Better be honest and open. Being honest with yourself and focusing on working well with the people around you, and acting with integrity endears one to his or her audience.

Empathize rather than remain detached. Although professional relationships entail some boundaries when it comes to interaction with colleagues, it is important to demonstrate sensitivity and to really care about the people you work with. If you do not care about them, it will be difficult for them to care about you when it comes to working together. For any conflict to be managed academic staff cohesion in the working relationship is crucial.

Being flexible towards others, allowing for other points of view and open to other ways of doing things. Diversity brings creativity and innovation. Value yourself and your own experiences. Be firm about your own rights and needs. Undervaluing yourself encourages others to undervalue you, too. Offer your ideas and expect to be treated well.

Teachers should use affirming responses. Respond to others in ways that acknowledge their experiences. Thank them for their input. Affirm their right to their feelings, even if you disagree. Ask questions, express positive feeling and provide positive feedback when you can.

Factors that encourage communication between teachers, students and the chief principal on school management are summarized by Tuhovsky (2015) adding that the ability to effectively communicate consists of:

- (i) Understanding of others (and showing it) especially during conflict
- (ii) Clear expression of oneself on all matters
- (iii) Imposing a positive influence on others
- (iv) Active listening during conflict
- (v) Asking open and detailed questions
- (vi) Taking care of our own needs and goals during a conversation

- (vii) Exchanging opinions in a non-conflicting way through turn-taking in conversations

Avoiding information overload where employers as well as the employees should not overload themselves with work; they should manage their work for the day accordingly, extended working hours should be avoided and national school chief principals should also take out time during their working hours to listen to the students, teachers and workers' grievances; they should practice effective time management skills.

Providing constructive feedback to the teachers, students and subordinates, negativity should be avoided and feedback should always be delivered in a constructive manner; negative feedback is stated to be a barrier to effective communication. The content of the feedback can be negative, if the superior feels that there have been some misinterpretations, but it should be communicated in a constructive manner with a positive attitude.

Emotional state of mind during communication is crucial as the speaker is required to make effective use of body language and not depict ones' emotional state for example, if the speaker is upset due to some reason then he should not portray his distress in his speech, the listeners might misinterpret the information if it is delivered by a speaker in a distressed mood.

The medium of communication should be proper; if it is a simple message or just a minor notice, it can be delivered either through a face-to-face conversation or through a telephone; information which is complicated and lengthy should be delivered in a written manner for example, through letters, notices, newspapers or electronic mail, therefore proper media selection also leads to effective communication avoiding conflict.

Flexibility in meeting that set targets, goals and objectives in national high schools is important. Teachers and students when they are admitted within the school, should work towards accomplishing the desired goals and objectives, they should not be put under pressure to complete a particular assignment within a particular time period, in other words, they should be allowed sufficient time, especially when the task is extensive; in accomplishing the school's goals and objectives, it is essential to have effective means of communication and flexibility should be allowed in target setting meetings.

Reduction and elimination of noise levels as noise is the most common barrier which occurs everywhere, for instance, when teachers are communicating in class, constant noise may be coming from other students, or other classes too while teaching, hence that leads to emergence of noise levels. It is necessary to identify the sources of noise and then formulating measures to eliminate those sources for effective communication.

#### **4.5 Communication during conflict in school**

Coercion is used to force individuals or groups to a particular conclusion. This explains why teachers and students in conflict with the school administration are given warning letters, suspended or forced to go on transfer to other schools. Others had emissaries, for example heads of departments or other senior teachers sent to them to address the matter. That emissaries were sometimes sent in an attempt to address conflict with members of the academic staff relates to one of the approaches used to resolve conflict, arbitration or using a third party which was used to manage the issue in dispute, but with the consent of the parties involved.

Teachers and students said silence was used, where the parties involved in a conflict kept quiet and left a conflict unresolved. However, some said a teacher in conflict with the

national high school chief principal was sent on transfer, with at least one participant saying an aggrieved teacher sought to be transferred. This response about transfer differed with what the interviewed school chief principals said as none said they had asked for the transfer of a teacher or forced one to be transferred because of a conflict with them.

Sometimes, teachers' interrupt and talk to students in a critical tone, making them to switch off and concentrate on other activities like whispering amongst themselves and ignoring the teacher because they feel disrespected. In a way, this communication brings barriers by preventing discussion or making the other party feel inferior, angry, hostile, dependent, compliant or passive. Occasionally, when handling a conflict, the school communicates through an internal memo instead of sending a formal letter from the chief principal, which really demoralizes the teachers. Teachers feel that an internal memo is like an order which has to be obeyed by all without raising questions. This introduces some silent resistance to the message contained in the said internal memo.

Other senior teachers considered their juniors as immature professionals. However, many of those who said the gender of the chief principal affected the way they (chief principals) communicated when addressing conflict felt there is more care employed in addressing conflict with teachers of the opposite gender. Some female teachers especially the Heads of Departments (HoDs) felt male teachers respect them more than fellow women teachers do. They also felt that women tended to provide more intimate information than do their male counterparts, adding that when relating with their female bosses, there seems to be a blurred social boundary with women while men are more formal when relating with their female bosses.

Older teachers explained that older administrators (chief principals, deputy chief principals, Heads of Departments) were more objective and careful when addressing conflict with teachers and that younger administrators were rush in making decisions that affected their juniors and were less sober when dealing with issues.

Older staff also felt that young members of staff were inexperienced in dealing with conflict and had a tendency to withhold details from their older colleagues. On the other hand, younger members of staff felt they were looked down upon by their older counterparts. This difference in opinion between the older teachers and the younger ones could stem from the fact that people's world view is largely influenced by their background in terms of culture. The finding would mean that the teachers could be coming from a cultural background where elders are always deemed wiser and the older people would thus view a boss, younger than them as unwise and irrational while younger administrators may feel belittled by their older juniors on account of being young and inexperienced, which concurs with Craig (1999), who stated that there is importance in the words and actions of both the sender and receiver of information.

#### **4.6 Conflict management approaches used by student leaders in school**

In an aspect of conflict management approaches practiced by the Students' Governing Council (SGC), I used an interview guide and document review to respond to research question three of this study. Conflicts between students and teachers are managed by teachers themselves, the disciplinary committee, the Guidance and Counseling Department or between an individual teacher and student. Some of these conflicts between students and teachers can also be managed by teachers or between students themselves with the prefects

that is Students' Governing Council (SGC) in national high schools. During interview, a teacher from national school four (NS4) had this to say:

If there is any quarrel between students, we usually manage it diplomatically by sitting down with them to find the best way forward and manage the problem then we conclude. If the misunderstanding is a little bit big, I usually call my committee, we sit and discuss the issue raised and we come up with solutions, like punishing students, sending them to the Deputy Principal Administration who sends them home, giving them out-doors activities like gardening, weeding in the school farm or doing general school compound cleaning (Teacher NS4)

From the above response, the teacher meant that in their school discipline is maintained by managing varied student to student and students and teachers conflicts, he employs diplomatic discussion, compromise, mediation, suspension, manual work as their techniques for conflict management. It was also pointed out by Valente et. al. (2020) that, most common conflicts in national high schools occur between student-student and student-teacher relationships. In this case, much attention should be paid to ensuring the disciplinary committee office is capable of handling these conflicts between the two groups of teachers and students and students themselves.

Another teacher from national school three (NS3), when asked the same had this to say:

We normally talk to students conflicting for them to understand their mistakes first. Both sides must understand the cause of the conflict, after which measures are taken like punishment given out or guidance and counseling sessions recommended or involving their parents. If the problem is with the teacher, we sit as teachers, speak together finally we come up with the way forward. Regarding the teachers' problems we normally forward to the chief principal who calls the concerned teacher and speaks to him or her over the issue (Teacher NS3)

The teacher in national school three is suggesting that in their school they use discussion, compromise, mediation, punishment, guidance and counseling and involve parents as conflict management approaches. This agrees with Saiti (2015) in suggesting collaboration, avoidance, compromise, competition and accommodating as the approaches for conflicts

management and emphasized that the adoption of any of the mentioned approaches above depends on circumstances of the conflict and the perception of the involved parties in the conflict. However, researchers agree that the two approaches most preferred by individuals when conflict arises are collaboration and compromise. Salleh and Adulpakdee (2012) proposed that while teachers agreed that the most effective way to manage conflict is to identify the causes and take appropriate steps toward managing them. Compromise, negotiation, face-to-face discussion and sincerity in managing the problem are other methods for conflict management.

In reviewing documents concerning conflict management approaches, the use of meetings, punishment and warning letters have also been looked at. Many meetings in disciplinary offices files (Deputy Principals' administration offices) and minor and major punishment books show the implementation of punishment, suspension, warning letters and calling parents to school as collaboration approaches to address conflict in national high schools. However, some parents when called to school tended to either side with their sons or daughters making the school administration to be on the defensive side.

Student leaders or prefects play a notable role in conflict management in national high schools. These student leaders are also the main reporters (eyes and ears of teachers) on what has been taking place in the school compound regarding cleanliness, early roll call attendances, students who sneak out of school, those who use abusive or unacceptable language and bullying others among other offences. Teachers can never be everywhere all the time. They have to rely on student leaders to get reports for action. I wanted to know if student leaders' ideas about how conflict are managed in their schools, what approaches have been used to manage these conflicts and whether the conflict management approaches

used were effective in reducing conflicts between students and teachers. When asked in the interview, this was one of the responses from one of the student leaders in national high school five:

By mediation, two sides sit together with the mediator (teacher on duty) and solve the problem by the offender apologizing. Most of the times those involved in the conflict tend to cooperate for fear of escalating the conflict so that they are taken to the deputy principal administration or the chief principal (Student NS5).

Another student leader from national high school six added the following as one of the conflict's management approaches followed in their school:

Punishment, listening for their opinions, managing the root cause of conflicts is the best way of managing conflict among fellow students (Student NS6)

In the above response, the student leaders showed that mediation, apologizing, punishment and compromising were the dominant conflict management approaches that were used in their schools. On the other hand, student leaders confessed that these approaches were effective because the schools had many conflicts and some of them were reduced and managed. I noted that students had some skills for managing their conflicts and they used constructive approaches such as integration and compromising. The finding is similar to Raman and Zhimir's (2010) discovery, as quoted in Towo (2013), that when students faced personal conflicts, majority of them dealt with them constructively. Furthermore, Valente et al (2020) defined compromise as an intermediate approach based on assertiveness and cooperation that encompasses a compromise in the pursuit of acceptable middle-ground for all conflicting parties. This implies that for these conflicts to be well managed, the parties involved should ensure effective communication and address the present problem together to attain mutual understanding.

The student leader in national high school four agreed on this:

The use of appropriate language to allow positive criticism and educating fellow students on effects of conflicts in school will help in managing most conflicts arising between students and teachers (Student NS4)

Student leaders considered use of effective communication, dialogue, collaboration and discussion to be effective communication approaches in conflict management in national high schools. This is agreed by Arop et. al. (2018) that dialogue and effective communication can be used to manage conflict in national high schools.

#### **4.6.1 Communication approaches used by teachers to manage conflict in schools**

When interviewed teachers from national high school 1 claimed to adopt discussion, compromise, negotiation, punishment and warning as approaches to conflict management, as quoted:

What we mostly do is a discussion (communication) to find peace, bringing issues to the table of discussion and at the end, I give teachers the freedom to discuss with students and find the solution to prevailing conflict. For students we normally include suspension. After suspension, students who are the ringleaders are excluded from school. So, I like making peace through discussion (communication), of course, I use the democratic method of school administration to solve most of the emerging issues (Teacher NS1)

It is noted that teachers use specific conflict management approaches depending on the kind of conflicts that exist in the national high school, the context and the nature of student involved, some of the conflicts are taken to the Guidance and Counseling Department and there is clear communication between departments and the principal when conflict arises. In compromise approach to conflict management, most teachers in national high schools listened to students in conflict then they pointed out their mistakes and good points so that one side agrees (compromises) with what the opposing side was saying. It was further

noted that these conflicts are managed collaboratively. A teacher from national high school two had this to say:

We discuss – compromise on how to manage the conflict, when it persists, we take it to the Guidance and Counseling Departmental committee, then to the disciplinary committee if the issue became so serious. Most of the times a solution will be found here (Teacher NS2)

Most teachers in national high schools used discussion, negotiation, compromise and administrative procedures to manage school conflicts. This is supported by Ghaffar (2019) who highlights conflict management approaches that are mostly used include mediation, negotiation, avoidance and cooperation. It was discovered that most chief principals take an authoritative approach. This was supported also by Arop et al. (2018) who insisted on the use of dialogue as a key approach for conflict management. It is within dialogue and integration that people can discuss, negotiate, compromise and effectively manage conflicts. According to Rahim (2002), the use of an integrating style promotes openness and the free exchange of information to arrive at an effective solution that is acceptable to both teachers and students. Harmony will prevail in schools, according to the findings, if the integrating style is consistently used to manage conflicts.

The participants went on to say that they usually have face-to-face open discussions and if they make a mistake, they apologize and the conflict is managed. Sometimes there was dominance approach by teachers where threats are used if the situation threatened to get out of hand. In one of the national high school three, one teacher participant said this:

There was a time that a group of form four students demanded special diet from the school administration without any medical records backup. The Chief Principal called them to his office and told them to stick to the school provided diet or go home and come with their parents. They all opted to continue eating the school provided diet (Teacher NS3)

However, they indicated that the disciplinary committee only handled the most serious conflicts, specifically those between students and students and students and teachers. Those conflicts between students and students accommodation approach was used where the two conflicting parties were brought together to make them discuss and see sense. The conflict is assessed objectively to make the two parties see sense. At the end one party agreed with what the other one said.

The documentary analysis showed that teachers also prefer the use of meetings especially class meetings as one of their approaches to conflict management. Mostly here, collaboration was used where teachers listened to both parties, pointed out faults and genuine points from each so that one side agrees (compromises) with the other. This was also insisted on by Isabu (2017) that conflict management approaches include accommodation, avoidance, competition and collaboration and regarded the staff meetings as one of the most important approaches for ensuring the national high school's smooth operation because it serves as a forum for teachers to exchange ideas.

Interestingly, one participant from national school six when asked if she had any other opinion about conflict management approaches had this to say:

I think there is a problem in the Ministry of Education, once conflict emerges there is no direct procedures on measures to follow, so it depends on the communication skills of the person involved especially the chief principal. The chief principal will simply be instructed by the Ministry of Education to use communication to resolve the conflict. The Ministry of Education should state clearly how to manage students' protests and what should be done as per the protest. If the same mistake is repeated by a student, different punishment mode should be administered. (Teacher NS6)

The above participant is proposing that there should be general educational procedures by the Ministry of Education, uniformity and training on conflict management to avoid double standards across the national high schools. This would reduce the hostility and revenge attitudes from students who face these irregularities when conflict happens.

Some teachers ignored or avoided students' conflict so long as the conflict situation is not confrontational. It was their assumption that some problems solve themselves with time. This was a response from one of the teachers in national high school five who was a member the school complaints committee in charge of student issues raised through the suggestion boxes:

We usually read the suggestions dropped in the students' suggestion box after the deputy principal administration has given them to us. Some suggestions are ridiculous like students saying they be given two days in a week for them to put on civilian clothes! We usually ignore such then it fizzles out with time. As time goes by no student will remember to write about the issue (Teacher NS5)

From the above response, it seems sometimes avoidance approach works best under given circumstances.

#### **4.6.2 Communication approaches used in conflict management in schools**

I used an interview guide in answering research question three to get teachers and students views about the effective communication approaches used in conflict management in national high schools. In the interview many teachers mentioned the use of meetings, discussion, compromising and accommodation as effective approaches in conflict management in their schools. One of the teachers in national high school two said this:

I like compromising and sometimes accommodating conflict management approaches because there is some behavior that is not easy to change in students.

You have to accept some behavior because it does not bring major impact to the school set-up so we just tend to ignore it (Teacher NS2)

The second participant in national high school three noted this:

Compromising, collaborative, show cause why letters and warning letters are the commonly used approaches to conflict management in our school (Teacher NS3)

The last participant of communication approaches used in conflict management between teachers and students in national high school four had this to say:

Compromising, sitting together, managing the problems together has brought us much success in avoiding conflict (Teacher NS4)

The third participant (Teacher NS4) suggests that effective communication approaches are compromising, discussion and collaboration. The three participants are suggesting that compromising, accommodating, collaborating and discussion are the effective communication approaches in managing conflict in the six national high schools in the three North Rift Counties of Kenya. In supporting the compromising approach, as supported by Saiti (2015), is an agreement on how to manage conflict; opposing parties must maintain their differences while being obligated to find a solution that is equally acceptable to both parties. According to Valente et al. (2020), compromise is an attempt to satisfy the interests of all conflicting parties, moderately and partially and it shares characteristics with all four strategies. It is an approach based on assertiveness in speaking by students and cooperation and empathic listening by teachers that entails compromise in the pursuit of an acceptable middle-ground for all conflicting parties especially between teachers and students.

Ignace (2014) researched conflict management approaches in ordinary secondary schools in Kinondoni in Tanzania and concluded that teachers used compromise and collaboration as their main conflict management approaches. Furthermore, Nyamwaya (2011) asserted that school principals and teachers should strive to embrace open systems in which students are free to express their views and disagreements are openly discussed. The open system pointed out by Nyamwaya, indicates open discussion, collaboration, compromising and accommodating to ensure friendly or conflict-free teaching and learning school environment.

The teachers' disciplinary committee member in national high school one responded that:

In Guidance and Counseling Department, avoidance and compromise, we sit together and discuss emerging issues to arrive at amicable solutions (Teacher NS1)

Another participant in national high school five pointed out:

Compromising, discussion, collaborative, negotiation and sitting at a round table with both conflicting parties is the best communication approach to conflict management (Teacher NS5)

The teachers noted that compromising, collaboration and discussions are effective communication approaches for conflict management in national high schools. However, they have added negotiation, avoidance and counseling as other effective communication approaches in conflict management. Valente et.al (2020) highlighted that avoiding approach is characterized by a low level of assertiveness and cooperation, where neither its own nor its opponents interests are satisfied; this is the inverse dominating which has a high level of assertiveness but a low level of cooperation. Arop et al (2018) noted that the three conflict management approaches - arbitration, dialogue and effective communication should be applied. He went on to suggest that high school principals learn how to use a

variety of conflict management approaches and practice them depending on the nature of the conflict to minimize the negative impact of conflicts. These suggestions cement the views on the use of multidimensional conflict management approaches depending on the context are important for conflict management in national high schools.

In life, conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in any system or national high school that requires human beings, their presence and interaction in its operations. It is therefore easy to say that life without conflict is incomplete. Individuals often find themselves, at crossroads over certain decisions. Organizational members (including family members) often clash over vital decisions involving resources, policy issues or direction, matters of communication and interdependence. There can be conflicts about (a) the perception of how things are (conflict of facts), (b) how things should or ought to be (conflict of values) and (c) who is entitled to have what (conflict of interests) (Onwe & Nwogbagba, 2017). It is therefore not normal to expect conflicts in school management systems. However, these conflicts and crisis sometimes grow to big proportions where they become harmful to the involved parties and the organizations as their regular occurrences largely affect effective management and productivity. It is in this light that implications of conflict and crisis for management and productivity that I deemed it necessary to examine their causes in the school system.

In national high schools in North Rift counties of Kenya and most other parts of the world, conflicts occur from time to time and students are controlled and guided in schools by rules and regulations, school time table and curriculum content. These however, affect students' behavior and learning, teachers who implement the organizational control patterns are also

faced with other statutory duties such as updating continuous assessment records, class registers, schemes of work and all the professional records. The chief principals and teachers do have constraints than any other as they are required to be hardworking, honest and responsible, irrespective of the conflicts that could arise in the national high schools while performing these roles. Therefore, when a conflict arises, it must be managed with a view to resolving it, using either of these approaches: integrating, compromising, avoiding and dominating.

From the foregoing, it should be stated that the national high school as a social system has its own norms and values and it is characterized by complex relationships between members of the system: principals, teachers and students. Due to the high degree of interdependence of duties and individual differences in role expectations, conflicts do arise from different circumstances and situations among members of the school system and would be addressed by the application of the above mentioned approaches (Tromp, 2016).

#### **4.6.3 Communication approaches chief principals apply as best practices in decision making**

It was indicated from the findings that effective communication is a critical component of successful leadership and the communication style used by chief principals can have a significant impact on the motivation of teachers and students in the school community. There are several leadership communication styles that chief principals can utilize to promote motivation, including transformational leadership. This style of leadership involves inspiring and motivating others to work towards a common goal. Transformational leaders communicate a vision for the future and provide support, guidance and encouragement to help individuals achieve their goals. By utilizing this style

of leadership, chief principals can inspire teachers and students to work towards academic success and strive to reach their full potential (Johnson 2018).

Supportive leadership involves creating a positive and supportive school environment where teachers and students feel valued and respected. Chief Principals who use this style of leadership are approachable, open-minded and empathetic, which helps to create a culture of trust and collaboration. This communication style can motivate teachers and students to work together to achieve shared goals and promote a positive school culture (Kreither, 2016).

Participative leadership is involving others in decision-making processes and seeking input from individuals at all levels of the school. By soliciting feedback from teachers and students, through suggestion boxes, chief principals can gain valuable insights into their perspectives and ideas, which can help to foster a sense of ownership, investment and belonging in the school community. This style of leadership can motivate teachers and students to feel more engaged and committed to achieving shared goals, both academically and in co-curricular activities (Johnson, 2018).

From the data, I found out that national high schools chief principals use a variety of approaches and best practices in their daily decision-making processes to ensure effective school management. Some of the most common approaches and practices include:

The data-driven decision making approach, which involves using data and evidence to arrive at a conclusion on a given issue. National high school chief principals may collect and analyze data on student achievement, attendance and other factors to make informed decisions about curriculum, instructional practices and resource allocation.

Collaborative decision making where chief principals involve teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and other stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure that all voices are heard and decisions are made with a shared understanding and commitment.

In strategic planning, chief principals may establish long-term goals and objectives for their schools. This process can help to align resources and efforts toward achieving specific outcomes and can provide a framework for decision-making.

Continuous improvement model where chief principals assess and improve their schools by gathering feedback from stakeholders, analyzing data and implementing changes based on the findings. There is also evidence-based practice where chief principals prioritize the use of research and best practices to guide decision-making and ensure that instructional strategies and interventions are effective (Patton, 2018).

#### **4.7 Communication utilization in creating a conflict-free teaching and learning environment at school**

The communication style of school principals plays a significant role in motivating both teachers and students to perform their duties effectively. A chief principal who adopts a positive, supportive and clear communication style is more likely to foster a positive national high school culture and increase motivation. Here are some of the communication styles that chief principals can use to contribute to teacher and student motivation thereby creating a conflict-free teaching and learning environment:

Clear communication by chief principals is important to help teachers and students understand their expectations and goals. When chief principals communicate clearly, teachers and students are more likely to feel confident in their tasks and the tasks are more

likely to be completed effectively with positive results. Clear communication also helps to reduce ambiguity and misunderstandings, leading to increased motivation to both teachers and students.

School chief principals who adopt a supportive communication style provide teachers and students with the encouragement and support they need to succeed. Supportive communication can help teachers and students feel valued and appreciated, which can lead to increased motivation.

Chief Principals and teachers who adopt a positive communication style promote a positive school culture. When chief principals use positive language and show enthusiasm for their work, it can create a more conducive working environment and increase motivation.

Those Chief Principals who adopt a collaborative communication style involve teachers and students in decision-making processes. Collaborative communication can increase motivation by making teachers and students feel that they have a stake in the success of the school. They feel a sense of belonging and more often one will hear them referring to the school as ‘our school.’

Chief Principals who adopt a constructive communication style provide feedback that helps teachers and students grow and improve. When chief principals use constructive communication, teachers and students are more likely to be motivated to learn and develop their skills (Northouse, 2014).

The study established that the chief principals used a face-to-face conversation between them and the teachers and students. The tone of the voice was informal so that the former

is less nervous, and could open up to sharing information. The informal conversation provided opportunities for chief principals to ask quick questions and the former could share more information and reflection on issues at hand. Teachers and students indicated that it is the easiest way of communicating as well as getting undistorted information and is appropriate for informal communication. In relation to body cues one participant indicated that they preferred personal contact as it broadened the discussion especially if it is a sensitive issue one could observe the non-verbal communication cues too or get immediate feedback most of the time even if one does not get immediate feedback the body language would point to it.

The study findings showed that the physical structures of the school were also noted as a major factor to choosing face-to-face communication where some participants showed that offices were far while teachers and students were many and the closeness with the chief principal's office mattered a lot. Further, others indicated that it was a personalized approach that guaranteed a response, whether desired or not, and was used in formal sessions for non-major issues, when there are meetings and forums where information is shared. Indeed, other scholars have asserted that face-to-face remained the most powerful human interaction never replace intimacy and immediacy of people conversing in the same room.

This completely underlined the attitude of the participants and the aspect of provision of warmth and emotion that communication gadgets like telephones and computers lacked.

The study established that the chief principal gave out certificates of recognition for excellent and exemplary performance to teachers and students. The chief principal wrote emails, letters or memos giving specific suggestions on what ought to be improved on thus

helping the person grow and develop; written communication was used in executing their duties. Teachers and the management indicated that they hardly used written communication. This was attributed to factors like cost where there are better, cheaper and easier means of communication. They attributed use of written communication to situations where communication is individualized, where there were confidential documents that needed to be filed, for bulk documents that needed attention and follow up, formal or documented information warranting written approval. The nature and business of the school was also associated with written communication being hardly used. Participants directed that they used written communication when giving exam feedback as it was the most appropriate and it was not a common practice in the school except for student related information like timetables and curriculum schedules. In addition, written communication in form of letters was mentioned as being limited to communications mainly from the bursar and the deputy principal administration, which can be like twice a year. Other factors mentioned included conserving the environment and lack of a personal secretary especially for Heads of Departments (HoDs).

Staff meetings were found to be the preferred channel used by teachers to air their concerns to the school chief principals. This would mean that teachers avoided private meetings with their chief principals, preferring to air their views when staff meetings were held. This could also mean that the matters raised were not sensitive enough to warrant a private meeting with the concerned administrator. Few participants, said teachers communicated their concerns through grapevine, that some would raise the matter as a rumor in the presence of someone close to the chief principal for the concern to be relayed to him or her.

The study findings established that the administrations occasionally used Short Message Service (SMS) and phone calls. The participants indicated that telephone communication was often used and that phone consultation with fellow teachers was a common occurrence within the school. Other reasons attributed to choosing telephone communication in executing their work included, cases where substantial distance is involved, where the subject matter for discussion is brief such that it warrants a phone call, in terms of time and cost saving, accessibility and availability. Telephone communication choice was also attributed to being used for urgent matters especially when out of the school, when they needed clarification and immediate feedback. Others indicated that they used telephone communication for urgent information when they would not reach someone face-to-face was the easiest way to get immediate feedback.

The findings established that private meetings with the concerned teachers were held to iron out matters. The participants however, agreed that conflict in their schools did lead to poor performance of duties, wastage of time, mistrust and suspicion and it spilled to students leading to poor student performance.

#### **4.8 Factors that affect communication positively in democratic management style**

On factors that affect communication positively in democratic management style of leadership, one participant from national high school four had this to say:

At first he tries to listen to everyone. We think that all of our rights are guaranteed, especially those of our students. Our chief principal is constantly receiving opinions from us teachers on many issues. Most decisions emerge as our common decision. This leaves most teachers satisfied and happy (Teacher NS4)

Allowing teachers to contribute in decision making makes them to feel at home and the consequence is higher productivity in both academic and co-curricular activities and

positive work attitude at school. Research on leadership styles has also shown that democratic leadership leads to higher productivity among group members and this is as a result of exhibiting positive work attitude. Some of the primary characteristics of democratic leadership opined Eze (2011), includes staff are encouraged to share ideas and opinions, even though the leader retains the final say over decisions; teachers feel more engaged in the process; and creativity is encouraged. Due to the fact that teachers are encouraged to share their thoughts, democratic leadership seems better in providing ideas and more creative solutions to problems. Teachers also feel more involved and committed to projects, making them more likely to care about the end results. From the below response of a teacher in national high school three:

Warm, sincere behavior is very important. A chief principal who is at peace with himself is also successful in communication. A self-developed school principal... my determination is that the personalities of the school chief principals who read a lot of books and investigate innovations also improved. (Teacher NS3)

This goes hand in hand with the study in Mexico by Maqsood and Bilal (2013) who noted that the leader (chief principal) is the coach who dictates the tune but inputs from the teachers are not ignored in decision making. It is a style that is characterized with higher productivity in both academics and co-curricular activities and this high output is sustained for a long period. This is because many staff likes the trust they receive and respond with cooperation, team spirit and high morale in a democratic environment.

We know that in many schools, our colleagues do not have the opportunity to speak to their chief principals. They can be busy yes, but some principals are able to turn our teacher friends from their rooms. They say, "Let's meet later." But then they don't. I had such a principal. But our current school principal is very respectful and kind. No matter where we catch him, he stops, if he is interested in something, he quits and listens to us. (Teacher NS6)

This is clearly shown in the study done by Men (2010) who articulated that democratic leaders provide support to staff, encourage staff to learn and develop, and build good relationships with staff, which then nurture staff favorable perception of the organization or school.

The study discussed conflict between chief principal, teachers and students as being normal in any other community in the society. We debated about communication playing a major role in triggering conflict, escalating it and deescalating it but in an attempt to address conflict, there are challenges that dog the process of communication like personal attitude and channel used to communicate.

We talked on how teachers treated students and fellow teachers in conflict with regard to respect if a conflict is to be amicably resolved as people like to be treated with respect. The frequency of interaction between school administrators (chief principals) and their academic staff to build staff morale is key and whether the interaction allowed the parties to openly express themselves. The communication centered on situations of conflict, its objectivity and listened to the parties involved with an open mind. The study sought to investigate whether clear messages were sent to reduce misunderstandings.

The school administration uses upward communication when holding meetings because they encourage upper management and lower-level employees to interact with one another in person. These include one-on-one meetings between teachers and their principal or non-staff meetings where all employees and executive personnel gather to celebrate an important milestone like good Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results or address major changes.

The school administration uses suggestion box where teachers and students place written feedback, complaints or advice for upper management to review. The school administration has created a "suggestion box" email address to which employees send their digital feedback, complaints or advice. The school complaints committee reviews the written messages and informs the principal who makes the final feedback.

#### **4.8.1 Nature of communication between teachers and Chief Principals**

On the nature of communication between teachers and the school principal, one teacher from national high school two said:

Our chief principal wants to feel stronger. For this, he can resort to intimidation and psychological violence. It is always he who is afraid. (Teacher NS2)

This concurs with Clark (2015) who states that, some people tend to think of this style as a sort of command and control thing, using demeaning language, leading by threats and abusing their influence or authority. This is not the authoritarian style, rather it is an abusive, unprofessional style called 'bossing people around.' Another participant teacher from national high school five agreed with the above adding:

I don't know exactly where it originated, but it may have happened later. Communicating with an arrogant chief principal is very difficult. (Teacher NS5)

The autocratic style of leadership according to Gosnos and Gallo (2013) is characterized by teachers not participating in decision-making process; all decisions are made without their agreement and they are well controlled with an 'iron hand.' In addition, principals are uncompromising and most times refuse to explain their behavior. Leaders often disregard previous agreement with staff. They define tasks and methods and do not care about staff's decisions and initiatives. A teacher participant from national high school one also added:

Some chief principals want to be aware of their position. He wants to be treated differently. He believes that his rank is higher. With gestures and facial expressions, words he uses, he sometimes makes teachers feel like kids by treating them like children and expects everyone to act accordingly. (Teacher NS1)

Tuitoek, Yambo, and Adhanja (2015) explain that, school principals who use this kind of leadership do not give room to participation in decision-making. They unilaterally make decisions, are task oriented, hard both on students and teachers, keen on schedules, and expect people to do what they are told without much debate. Such principals are influenced by the scientific management approach. They ascribe to McGregor's Theory X that presumes that people are naturally lazy and need close supervision. In schools where this style is used, both teachers and students lack motivation and they show less involvement and commitment in their work.

#### **4.9 Feedback in school communication**

The principal used face-to-face conversation between them and the teachers and students. The tone of the voice is informal so that the juniors in the leadership ladder are less nervous, and they can be open to sharing. The informal conversation provides opportunities for principals to ask quick questions, and the former can share more information and reflection on the subject matter of discussion. Teachers and students indicated that it is the easiest way of communicating as well as getting undistorted information and is appropriate for informal communication. In relation to body cues one participant from national high school two indicated that:

I prefer personal contact as I can broaden the discussion especially if it is a sensitive issue. I can observe the non-verbal communication cues too. I get immediate feedback most of the time even if I do not get immediate feedback the body language points to it. (Teacher NS2)

The physical structure of the national high school was also noted as an indicator of choosing face-to-face communication where some participant in national high school three indicated that:

*Offices are far people are many so proximity with the principal is an issue (Teacher NS3)*

Further, others indicated that it is a personalized approach that guarantees a response, whether desired or not, and was used in formal sessions for non-major issues, when there are meetings and forums where information is shared. Indeed, other scholars have asserted that face-to-face remains the most powerful human interaction, never replace intimacy and immediacy of people conversing in the same room. This completely underlines the attitude of the respondents, and the aspect of provision of warmth and emotion that telephones and computers lack.

The principal gave out a certificate of recognition for the excellent and exemplary performance for example those students who excel in academic performance there was the Principal's Academic Award (PAA) or the Principal's Achievement Tea (PAT). The chief principal writes an email, letter or memo giving specific suggestions on what to be improved on thus helping the person grow and develop; written communication was used in executing their duties. Teachers and the management indicated that they hardly used written communication. This was attributed to factors like cost where there are better and cheaper and easier means to communicate. They attributed use of written communication to situations where communication is individualized, where there were confidential documents that needed to be filed, for bulk documents that needed attention and follow up, formal or documented information warranting written approval.

The nature of and business of the school was also associated with written communication being hardly used. Participants directed that they used written communication:

When giving exam feedback it is the most appropriate and it is not a common practice in the school except for student related information like timetables and schedules (Teacher NS4)

In addition, written communication in form of letters mentioned to as being limited to communications mainly from bursar and deputy principal administration office, usually like twice a year. Other factors mentioned included conserving the environment and lack of a personal secretary.

From data collected, staff meetings were found to be the preferred channel used by teachers to air their concerns to the school chief principals. This would mean that teachers avoid private meetings with their administrators, preferring to air their views when meetings were held. This could also means that the matters raised were not sensitive enough to warrant a private meeting with the concerned school principal. Two participants, said teachers communicated their concerns through grapevine, that others would raise the matter as a rumor in the presence of someone close to a concerned chief principal for the concern to be relayed to him or her.

The school administrations occasionally use Short Messages Service (SMSs) and phone calls: The participants indicated in the interviews that telephone communication was often used and consultation with fellow teachers was a common occurrence within the school. Other reasons attributed to choosing telephone communication in executing their work included, cases where substantial distance is involved, where the subject matter for discussion is brief such that it warrants a phone call, in terms of time and cost saving,

accessibility and availability. Telephone communication choice was also attributed to being used for urgent matters especially when out of the school, when they needed clarification and immediate feedback. Others indicated that they used telephone communication

For urgent information when I can't reach someone face-to-face it is the easiest way to get immediate response. (Teacher NS6)

Private meetings with concerned teachers to iron out the matter proved crucial. The interviewees however, agreed that conflict in their institutions did lead to poor performance of duties, wastage of time, mistrust and suspicion and it spilled to students leading to poor student performance.

Communication barrier connected to the speech aspect, namely with problems arising during the transfer of ideas. This barrier can be represented by the following manifestations: indistinct diction, fast or too slow speech, use of junk words.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Overview

Communication is the life blood of any academic institution as all functions heavily rely on it. Teachers led by principals are the school managers who direct the communication that goes on in the school. Ministry of Education (MOE) in conjunction with the teachers' employer, the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) should offer training to school managers (principals) and all teachers on effective communication with students within schools so as to mitigate conflict and enhance teamwork and performance of school duties and responsibilities.

Schools should employ a variety of means of communication instead of solely relying on formal meetings to communicate between teachers and students, the same should encourage feedback to the communication made. The students should be treated with respect by teachers when communicating with them or handling a conflict concerning them.

Communication in national high schools can continuously be used among teachers and students to avert unrest and create opportunities for effective management of academic programs. The school administration can adequately spell out what is expected of their role in downward communication while upward communication can be upheld through activities like open door policy where students could easily consult with teachers and that channels are in place to gather students' suggestions through suggestion boxes or face-to-face communication.

The channel of communication needs to be modern, effective and as personal as possible if management of the school is to maintain close ties with stakeholders and encourage maximum performance. If the communication system in a school is open, an atmosphere of trust, reciprocity, intimacy and growth is built thus giving room for effective teaching and learning. Students should be trained to be assertive speakers in raising any issues of concern whereas teachers have to be empathetic listeners so that amicable solutions are easily found whenever a conflict arises.

**5.2 RQ1: What are the main causes of conflict between teachers and students resulting from poor communication in national high schools in North Rift Counties of Kenya?**

**(a) Poor academic performance**

This causes tension amongst students. Failure in internal examinations like Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs) and Random Assessment Tests (RATs), make students victims who feel a sense of not belonging to the school. All schools I visited are associated with exemplary national K.C.S.E examination results and right from the day of admission of new students or form ones to the school, they are told that they have to score quality grades in both internal and national KCSE examination.

“.....conflicts happen in classrooms when students do not do their assignments or fail in internal examinations....” (Teacher NS2). “Other causes of student conflict are punishment when they fail in internal examinations like Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs), failure to complete subject class assignments....” (Teacher NS3).

This causes conflict between students and teachers in the national high schools.

**(b) Unpopular school management policies, rules and regulations**

These include waking up early, sleeping late weekends inclusive, movement by running, buying barbed wire rolls or iron sheets when one goes out of the school compound without permission, et cetera.

“Close supervision also happens on personal grooming or classroom cleanliness, going out without permission especially during co-curricular activities competitions, students’ hobbies which are outside the laid down school rules and regulations, so when you reject their hobbies like dancing, it brings conflict.” (Teacher NS4)

The use of mobile phones is prohibited according to the school rules and regulations. Through document review, many school meetings minutes and apology letters that were written by students to the school administration or to the teachers’ disciplinary committees showed that students apologized for being caught with mobile phones especially after coming to school from home after school holidays.

“The causes depend on how the students follow the laid down school rules and regulations. If they fail to follow the school rules and regulations, they are punished and through punishment some change their behavior while others don’t and they cause conflict with teachers.” (Teacher NS3)

**(c) Teachers’ rash in syllabus coverage.**

There is rash against time to complete academic syllabus clearly manifested in the 2020/21 covid-19 academic calendar. Most national schools I visited the deadline for form fours syllabus coverage is by 31<sup>st</sup> of March yearly. Some slow and average learners cannot cope with the fast paced content delivery by teachers. These same students fear academic consultation lest they are labeled “academic dwarfs” in an “academic giant” school. This in turn causes student panic of failure in internal exams which is a recipe for teacher-student conflict.

(d) **Inadequate human and physical resources to match the high student enrolment** causing congestion especially in the boarding areas like dormitories and dining hall. Shortage of teachers leading to heavy workloads as there is no money to employ teachers under the Board of Management (BoM) terms and conditions. This also has some effects on the quality of work that they do. Shortage of teachers was reported as a major factor contributing to poor results in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.) performance. Most of the national high schools were academically understaffed. When teachers are many with affordable work load, then syllabus coverage/class teaching which is a communication function will be done early so that adequate revision is done on time before candidates sit for K.C.S.E.

### **5.3 RQ2: What are the possible barriers to communication encountered by teachers and students in conflict management in schools?**

#### **(a) Fear of criticism in academic failure.**

A student may fear asking a question in class.

“I perform poorly in Mathematics because I fear Mr Y who’s quite harsh in class (S1).

Gestures, facial expressions and words used by teachers made students fear to express themselves. There is communication barrier of fear where those in this group, mostly introverts are the most difficult to overcome in interaction. The student is often afraid to receive criticism, fail to solve a problem, not to live up to the expectations of the teacher or classmates. The overstated requirements of students to themselves, caused by the desire to match the school image built up over years and the reluctance to appear stupid before fellow students. (Not all students in these schools merit academically. Some have come in

with low entry behavior because of connections). Sometimes, teachers' interrupt and talk to students in a critical tone, making them to switch off and concentrate on other activities like whispering amongst themselves and ignoring the teacher because they feel disrespected. In a way, this communication brings barriers by preventing discussion or making the other party feel inferior, angry, hostile, dependent, compliant or passive.

**(b) Poorly written or expressed messages, poor word choice, omissions, lack of coherence and poor sentence structure in suggestion box messages.**

Poorly written and expressed messages where the writer of the message may fail to communicate effectively by use of poorly chosen words, omissions, lack of coherence, poor organization of ideas, awkward sentence structure, platitudes, unnecessary jargon.

**(c) Message recipients' poor listening skills**

This distorts message meaning like during parade announcements in the national schools some students do not get information clearly. Recipients' poor listening skills and assumptions in that the recipient of the message may hinder communication by failing to listen to the message properly.

**(d) Lack of time to frequently communicate due to teachers' busy schedule.**

Teacher-student communication is limited to the curriculum and syllabus coverage. I observed that whenever students approach teachers, it was consultation over some subject content that they did not comprehend in class. It was rare for students to communicate with teaches over their personal welfare as they will be directed to the various departments like Boarding or Guidance and Counseling. Sometimes the chief principals might be busy with

school administration duties and responsibilities and fail to meet with teachers and students over crucial issues “minor issues.” This anxiety might lead to conflict as one party might misinterpret it to mean that the other party is avoiding them. Information overload where the person in the position of authority may receive information that much of it ends up being disregarded.

#### **5.4 RQ3: What are the communication approaches used by teachers to manage conflict in national high schools in North Rift Counties of Kenya?**

##### **(a) Empathic listening**

Listening to understand and giving information recipients an opportunity for feedback. For example, rather than ignoring a student who routinely answers questions in class with inappropriate responses, the teacher should speak with the student outside class about how this might disrupt the class and distract other students from concentrating and comprehending the lesson content.

##### **(b) Coercion**

This can be in form of apologies and commitment letters, suspension or transfer of students and teachers. Coercion is used to force individuals or groups to a particular conclusion. This explains why teachers and students in conflict with the school administration are given warning letters, suspended or forced to go on transfer to other schools.

##### **(c) Avoiding**

This can be through silence so that the conflict is not escalated. Avoiding information overload where teachers as well as the students should not overload themselves with work;

they should manage their work for the day accordingly, extended working hours should be avoided and national school chief principals should also take out time during their working hours to listen to the students and teachers grievances; they should practice effective time management skills. Some teachers ignored or avoided students' conflict so long as the conflict situation is not confrontational. It was their assumption that some problems solve themselves with time. This was a response from one of the teachers in national high school five who was a member of the school complaints committee in charge of student issues raised through the suggestion boxes:

We usually read the suggestions dropped in the students' suggestion box after the deputy principal administration has given them to us. Some suggestions are ridiculous like students saying they be given two days in a week for them to put on civilian clothes! We usually ignore such then it fizzles out with time. As time goes by no student will remember to write about the issue (Teacher NS5)

From the above response, it seems sometimes avoidance approach works best under given circumstances.

(d) Providing constructive feedback to the teachers, students and subordinates, negativity should be avoided and feedback should always be delivered in a constructive manner; negative feedback is stated to be a barrier to effective communication.

#### **5.5 RQ4: How can communication be utilized to create a conflict-free teaching and learning environment at school?**

(a) **Informal meetings for frequent communication feedback are crucial.**

Apart from the suggestion boxes, teachers can frequently organize for informal forums popularly known as 'students' kamukunjis or barazas' where key administrative issues

between students and teachers are discussed. The teachers and students also said there was need to be given opportunity to give feedback on issues communicated to them.

**(b) Involvement in decision making**

This makes teachers and students feel satisfied leading to higher productivity levels. This can be done by the principal asking for their advice through a complaints committee or suggestion boxes. Decision making process needs to be less authoritarian and more democratic while another observation was made by a teacher in national high school two that:

The only improvement is in the process as at times some urgent things are delayed. Other times some people are left out in important information. You only get the required information during the policy implementation stage which is not fair as we are part of this school (Teacher NS2)

(c) In all schools visited, motivational speakers are key in teacher-student motivational communication.

“We’ve been inviting key motivational speakers termly and whenever we have official school functions like parents’ AGMs” (T1)

The principal gave out a certificate of recognition for the excellent and exemplary performance for example those students who excel in academic performance there was the Principal’s Academic Award (PAA) or the Principal’s Achievement Tea (PAT).

**(d) Informal tone of the voice matters a lot in conversation.**

Informal tone when used by seniors (teachers) while conversing with the juniors (students) the latter will be less nervous and they can be open to sharing information. The informal conversation provides opportunities for teachers to ask quick questions, and students can share more information and reflection on the subject matter of discussion. When students

are relaxed in a conversation, they will volunteer more information than when they are tensed up. Teachers and students indicated that it is the easiest way of communicating as well as getting undistorted information and is appropriate for informal communication. In relation to body cues one participant from national high school two indicated that:

I prefer personal contact as I can broaden the discussion especially if it is a sensitive issue. I can observe the non-verbal communication cues too. I get immediate feedback most of the time even if I do not get immediate feedback the body language points to it. (Teacher NS2)

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Overview**

In this chapter, I provide conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for future research. Findings analyzed in this chapter are based on interviews conducted with teachers and students of six national high schools in the North-Rift Counties of Nandi, Trans-Nzoia and West-Pokot in Kenya. I also observed how communication was going on in every school I visited. There is also document review from school noticeboards or information centers on communication from the six national high schools as discussed in the previous chapter.

### **6.2 Summary of major findings**

Below is a summary of major findings as per the research questions in chapter one:

#### **6.2.1 Causes of conflicts between teachers and students resulting from poor communication**

The first research question of this study was to investigate the causes of conflicts between teachers and students in six national high schools in three North Rift Counties of Kenya.

The main causes of conflicts between teachers and students were disciplinary issues and teachers' widespread punishment modes. Other contributing factors included abusive language, failure to follow school rules and regulations by students and ineffective communication by teachers or school administration. Most learners are youth who are growing so food was noted to be a key area. Most conflicts were caused by poorly prepared meals or little food being served to them. This is an area that caused conflicts most of the

time. I found out that the conflicts that occur most frequently in the national high schools were between teachers and students followed by students themselves but very few conflicts between students and chief principals, due to the hierarchical nature of the national high schools.

### **6.2.2 Possible barriers to communication encountered by teachers and students in conflict management**

The second research question of this study was to find out the barriers to communication encountered by teachers and students in conflict management in six national high schools in three North Rift Counties of Kenya.

The study established that the following factors hindered the flow of information between the teachers and students and the school administration.

Cultural barriers were within a school, individuals belonging to different nationalities, regions, cultures, religions, castes, creed and different status groups are employed together. These people at times do familiarize themselves with other people's cultures and backgrounds, whereas other times they are even unaware. A cultural barrier occurs when people of different cultures are unable to communicate with each other efficiently and this inability may be due to diverse factors such as different backgrounds, languages, customs, viewpoints, ideas, notions and so forth.

Physical barriers within a school structure, vital to have team spirit and individuals should work in coordination with each other and be cooperative towards each other. Formal and informal means of communication occurs within the school. One of the crucial factors is proximity within the school structure. There is a system of hierarchy and those

individuals who are placed at the higher levels of the hierarchy (chief principal, deputy principals, HoDs and the bursar or financial officer) have closed doors, offices and cabins and are physically placed at a distance; their subordinates are in this way unable to communicate with them and this is a physical barrier to effective communication.

Personal bias is when a person is biased to another person rather than the other, then there is breakdown of communication between people; for instance, sometimes teachers tend to get biased on one student in class than the other. When students feel that a teacher is biased towards a particular student, then they tend to develop some kind of negativity and there is break down of communication between them.

There is communication barrier of fear where those in this group are the most difficult to overcome in interaction. The student is often afraid to receive criticism from teachers for examination failure or not to living up to the expectations of the teacher or the class. The overstated requirements of students to themselves, caused by the desire to match the national school image built up over years and the reluctance to look stupid before fellow students. Teachers should be empathic listeners as students are taught to be assertive speakers. Whenever a student approaches a teacher with an issue, they should take time to listen before offering personal views. Most times students have been dismissed by teachers and their issues labeled inconsequential. These minor issues are the ones that develop into major conflicts in national high schools. However, if teachers listened to and provided right responses to the petty issues then major school conflicts could be nipped in bud. Students on the other hand should be trained to be assertive speakers.

When most students join national high schools at form one, they are assertive speakers but with passage of time they become reserved preferring to share their petty issues with fellow students not teachers. With time the petty issues pile up and become major conflicts that take time to be managed. Students should be assertive in raising their issues through the school suggestion boxes and other communication channels like class meetings and students' barazas or 'kamukunjis' (informal meetings). This would help prevent a conflict situation from becoming unmanageable, which could hinder school national high school progress and cohesion.

Task preoccupation, for example, the chief principal has to go for a very important formal KESSHA meeting and when he is about to leave, a parent enters in order to resolve some student indiscipline issues, then it becomes his job duty that he should attend to the issues of that parent before leaving for the meeting; in this case, a parent coming up instantly without informing the chief principal proves to be a barrier to effective communication.

Poorly written and expressed messages where the writer of the message may fail to communicate effectively by use of poorly chosen words, omissions, lack of coherence, poor organization of ideas, awkward sentence structure, platitudes, unnecessary jargon, and a failure to clarify the implications of the message (Koontz & Weihrich, 1990). It is therefore imperative for the writer, whether chief principal, teacher or student to ensure that his or her message is written in a clear language, which the recipient of the message will easily understand. One can do this by choosing the right register, style, vocabulary, layout, length et cetera in order to make his or her message comprehensible.

Poor retention of the message where the message may be communicated less accurately (or even fail to be communicated) when only one person is used. As noted by Koontz & Weihrich 1990. In a series of transmissions from one person to the next, like from the chief principal to teachers and students, the message becomes less and less accurate. Poor retention of information is another serious problem thus the necessity of repeating the message and using several channels is rather obvious. Consequently, schools often use more than one channel to communicate the same message.

Determining when a message should be communicated is referred to as timing, it is important for teachers and administrators to determine the most appropriate time to transmit a message. For instance, a teacher who wants to enforce desired behaviors of a student should do it as soon after, that is, not before or too long after the desired behavior. A school chief principal who wants to reprimand a teacher for chronic lateness would possibly want to speak with the teacher as soon as possible after the event had occurred.

In this context, infrastructure refers to electricity (power) and network, none of which are reliable or readily available in some national high schools. This to some extent hampers smooth communication between chief principals, teachers and students. Communication demand contemporary and prompt responses, which are not possible when network and electricity (power) are not there.

Lack of skills and knowledge on the communication gadgets that some teachers use in communication was manifested. There are capacities missing on different levels for example knowledge about how to use different communication channels as well as knowledge about information in school in general and language skills. This means that the

gadgets illiteracy level is high in different ways. For improved communication in school and other education stakeholders, the usage of communication gadgets is quite crucial. However, looking at the data from this research many chief principals and teachers in national high schools lack the basic skills required to administrate the use of these technologies. As a key informant highlights, he sometimes ends up physically going to the cyber café at the nearby market or town center to deliver a document instead of emailing it due to lack of the basic communication gadget-use (computer) knowledge.

For one to communicate effectively through communication channels one does not only need infrastructure, skills and money. One does also need access to the communication gadgets. The majority of the participants I met did not have access to a computer, laptop or smartphones. If they want to use the internet they need to go to a cyber cafe and pay for the service as few offices are not wireless fidelity (WiFi) enabled.

The school chief principals in most national high schools in North Rift counties in Kenya are facing many challenges when they try to communicate through communication gadgets. The infrastructure is not stable, many of the participants are lacking basic skills and knowledge of how to use the different communication channels and many of them do not even have the required access to the communication gadgets. On top of these challenges the offices do not even have a communication budget. Many of the chief principals end up using their own money in order to communicate with teachers and students. These challenges greatly hinder communication in national high schools.

Teachers are the national high schools' spokespersons in conflict management yet they lack training to handle communication during crises. Teachers used the top-down

communication approach during conflict where messages are passed from them to students with little regard to how the information will affect the recipients (students). Effective communication involves the sharing of meaning between the sender (teacher) and recipient (student) of information. In empathetic listening theory, teachers who are senders of information should be empathetic listeners to conflict whereas students should be assertive speakers so that they clearly bring out the problems they are experiencing for amicable solutions. It was noted that most students when admitted in form one are usually assertive communicators questioning everything they see and hear. Teachers also are empathic listeners always ready to listen and provide answers to their inquisitiveness. With passage of time, as they progress to forms two, three and four, they tend to become reserved and teachers also weighed down with a heavy academic workload, become less empathic in their listening. This is where conflict sets in through anger transgression.

### **6.2.3 Communication approaches used by teachers to manage conflicts**

The third research question of this study was to investigate the communication approaches that are used by teachers to manage conflicts in the six national high schools in three North Rift Counties of Kenya.

Most teachers used meetings, discussion, negotiation, compromise, accommodation and administrative procedures to solve student conflicts. It was noted that teachers used specific conflict management approaches as per the context and nature of student involved, some of the conflicts are taken to the Guidance and Counseling Department and there is clear communication between Heads of Departments (HoDs) and principals when conflicts occur in school. It was further noted that these conflicts are managed collaboratively. It was

further found that students had some skills for managing their conflicts and they used constructive approaches such as integration, compromising, apologizing and mediation.

The findings revealed that there were many approaches used for conflict management like compromising, accommodating, collaborating, effective communication meetings, discussion, dialogue, apologizing, administrative procedures, negotiation and avoiding. These were the effective approaches for conflict management practiced by chief principals, discipline teachers and student leaders in national high schools. However, it was found that the most predominant conflict management approaches practiced by chief principals, discipline teachers and student leaders were compromising, accommodating and meetings discussions which are open systems in which everyone is allowed to express their opinions and areas of contention are openly discussed.

In empathic listening theory, there is the importance of listening to understand in the process of communication. Teachers are the school spokespersons in conflict management yet they lack training to handle communication during crises. Most teachers do not listen empathically to students' issues so as to provide objective judgment in conflict management in national high schools. One of the approaches of conflict management between teachers and students is for both to listen and understand issues in any conflicting situation. Most of the times whenever students have issues to raise, teachers in national high schools do not have time to listen and comprehend what is being raised. The excuse that is usually given is huge curriculum to be covered within the specified time. This makes students to become passive communicators (unassertive speakers) and teachers to become non-empathetic listeners. Unless the students issues concerns academic work, they are

usually dismissed which escalates the conflict as they (students) transgress their anger of not being listened to through conflict.

#### **6.2.4 How communication can be utilized to create a conflict-free teaching and learning environment**

The fourth research question of this study was to find out how communication can be utilized to create a conflict-free teaching and learning environment at school.

Frequent teacher-student interaction and feedback lacks in most schools creating a tension-filled learning environment. The study established that majority of the chief principals used authoritarian management style. Teachers and students believed the chief principals used authoritarian style so that they feel superior and stronger. Some chief principals even resorted to intimidation and psychological violence against their teachers and students which always made them afraid. This concurred with Clark (2015) who stated that, some people tend to think of this style as a sort of command and control thing, using demeaning language, leading by threats and abusing their influence or authority. This is not the authoritarian style, rather it is an abusive, unprofessional and is called 'bossing people around.'

Teachers interviewed said that communicating with an arrogant chief principal is very difficult. The autocratic style of leadership according to Gosnos and Gallo (2013) is characterized by teachers not participating in decision-making process; all decisions are made without the input or agreement of the teachers and they are controlled with an 'iron hand.' In addition, most chief principals are uncompromising and most times refuse to explain their behavior. They (chief principals) often disregard previous agreement with

teachers. They define teaching and learning tasks and methods of accomplishing them and do not care about teachers' decisions and initiative.

Teachers felt like some directors wanted their directorate known and in return treated differently. Those directors believed that their ranks were higher. Observation of their gestures and facial expressions, words they used, sometimes made teachers feel like children (demeaned). This corresponded with the study done by Tuitoek, Yambo, and Adhanja (2015) which explains that, school chief principals who use this kind of leadership do not give room to participation in decision-making. They unilaterally make decisions, are task oriented, hard on teachers and students, keen on schedules and expect people under them to do what they are told without much debate. Such chief principals are influenced by the scientific management approach. They ascribe to McGregor's Theory X that presumes that people are naturally lazy and need close supervision to deliver on their mandate. In schools where this style is used, teachers and students lack motivation and they show less involvement in their work.

The study established that democratic management style when mostly used brought about a positive impact. Most teachers said that their chief principals at first tried to listen to everyone which made them think that all of them were part of school management. The chief principal constantly received suggestions from them. Many decisions emerged as their common decision. When staff was allowed to contribute in decision making, it made them feel at home and the consequence is higher productivity and positive work attitude. Research on leadership styles has also shown that democratic leadership leads to higher productivity among group members and this is as a result of exhibiting positive working environment. Some of the primary characteristics of democratic leadership opined Eze

(2011), includes teachers encouragement to share ideas and opinions, even though the chief principal retains the final say over decisions; teachers feel more engaged in the process and creativity is encouraged. Due to the fact that teachers are encouraged to share their thoughts, democratic leadership seems better in providing ideas and more creative solutions to problems. Teachers also feel more involved and committed to projects, making them more likely to care about the end results.

The study findings showed that warm, sincere behavior was very important as it makes the chief principal to be at peace with him or herself and succeed in effective communication. This goes hand in hand with the study in Mexico by Maqsood and Bilal (2013) who noted that the leader is the coach who dictates the tune but inputs from the staff are not ignored in decision making. It is a style that is characterized with higher productivity which is sustained for a long period of time. This is because most teachers like the trust they receive and respond with cooperation, team spirit and high morale in a democratic environment.

The study findings showed that, teachers and students wished to have a chief principal who they would speak to freely or who would spare some time and interact with them, a chief principal who would be very respectful and kind as well as a good listener. This is clearly shown in the study done by Men (2010) who articulated that democratic leaders provide support to staff, encourage staff to learn and develop, and build good relationships with them, which then nurture teachers' favorable perception of the national high school as an organization.

The study discussed conflict between chief principal, teachers and students as being normal in any other community in the society. It debated about communication playing a major

role in triggering conflict, escalating it and deescalating it but in an attempt to address conflict, there are challenges that dog the process of communication like personal attitude and channel used to communicate.

The study found out how people treated each other in a conflict. With regard to respect if a conflict is to be amicably resolved, people like to be treated with respect. The frequency of interaction between school administrators and their staff to build staff morale and whether the interactions allowed parties to openly express themselves was crucial. The communication centered on situations of conflict, its objectivity and listening to the parties involved with an open mind. The study sought to investigate whether clear messages were sent to reduce misunderstandings and create conducive teaching and learning environment.

The study established that the school administration used upward communication when holding meetings because they encourage upper management and lower-level employees to interact with one another in person. These include one-on-one meetings between teachers and their chief principal where all teachers and school administration gather to celebrate an important milestone or address major changes.

The study findings showed that the school administration used suggestion boxes where teachers and students placed written feedback, complaints or advice for upper management to review. The school administration had created a "suggestion box" email address to which teachers sent their digital feedback, complaints or advice. This created free communication with the school administration leading to a friendlier teaching and learning environment.

Schools like many other organizations have been adversely affected, particularly in their academic performance by the persistence of conflicts in their daily operation. From the findings, chief principals of national high schools, teachers and students recognize the presence of conflicts and they have some mechanism to deal with them. Most school administrators, however, have been lacking a proper management approach to address these conflicts effectively due to the absence of clear procedures provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the teachers' employer, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC).

Due to the complex and multifaceted nature of conflicts, they occur in a variety of contexts, school chief principals and teachers are encouraged to try out with different approaches to reduce or minimize the negative aspects of conflicts. As a result of this study, national high school chief principals and teachers must be trained in conflict management and should always involve all interested parties when managing a conflict. This would help prevent a conflict situation from becoming unmanageable, which could hinder school progress and unity among school members.

In empathic listening theory, effective communication is when recipients (students) are given the opportunity to respond to the information sent (feedback). Communication involves focusing, reflecting and encouraging skills. As per the findings, an effective teacher provides support to students by motivational communication skills in creating conducive learning and teaching environment.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

National high schools have been affected by conflicts just like the rest of the secondary schools in Kenya. This has been manifested in their daily operations both in curricular

(academic) and co-curricular performance. From findings, chief principals, teachers and students are very much cognizant of the presence of conflicts and they have some mechanism to deal with these conflicts. Most of the chief principals, however, have been lacking a proper conflict management approach to address the conflicts effectively due to absence of clear procedures provided by their employer the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Education (MOE).

It should be noted that conflicts are a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that occurs in a variety of contexts, chief principals and teachers are encouraged to experiment with different conflict management approaches to reduce or minimize the negative aspects of conflicts. As a result of this study teachers must be trained in conflict management and should always involve all interested parties when managing a conflict.

Providing meaningful professional development and effective communication is essential to promoting good national high schools' administration practices. Teachers should be empathic listeners as students are taught to be assertive speakers. Whenever a student approaches a teacher with an issue, they should take time to listen before offering personal views. Most times students have been dismissed by teachers and their issues labeled petty. These "petty issues" are the ones that develop into major conflicts in school. However, if teachers listened to and provided right responses to the petty issues then major school conflicts could be nipped in bud. Students on the other hand should be trained to be assertive speakers. An observation has been made that when most students join national high schools at form one, they are assertive speakers but with passage of time they become reserved preferring to share their petty issues with fellow students not teachers. With time the petty issues pile up and become major conflicts that take time to be managed. Let

students be assertive in raising their issues through the school suggestion boxes and other communication channels like class meetings and students' barazas or 'kamukunjis' (informal meetings). This would help prevent a conflict situation from becoming unmanageable, which could hinder school progress and unity among school members.

Excellence in education stems from high-quality stakeholder relationships and communication is the key to building these relationships (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Effective communication creates positive school cultures wherein teachers can adapt and embrace change. Increased skill in all components of effective communication decreases the fear associated with challenging conversations. Trust is essential to build strong relationships among stakeholders. Clarity of intent increases transparency and active listening supports people to process feedback and implement changes for growth. These essential characteristics build the strong stakeholder relationships necessary for productive schools focused on improvement. Communication will enable the maintenance of relationships while delivering honest assessment, challenging colleagues, engaging in difficult conversations and creating partnerships with families.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

Following the analysis of the collected data and the presentation of the summary and findings, the proposed recommendations are presented as below:

1. Conflict management in schools is becoming complex in today's world of science and technology where people are highly informed due to the rapid flow of information, extensions and availability of information in real time. This aspect has eased learning which builds up divergent perspectives in teachers and students in national high schools

need to cope with and explore the wide range of mechanisms and proper procedures on how to handle conflicts in their institutions to ensure harmony and progress. To facilitate this, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in conjunction with Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should ensure that teachers get professional development programs to cultivate their understanding on the best ways to interact with students in managing conflict in schools.

2. Teachers should take students as individuals with different backgrounds, interests, perceptions, visions and affiliations. Teachers should involve students in decision making by listening to their suggestions as this will make them feel satisfied leading to achievement of the set school goals and objectives. Considering this would help reduce many unnecessary conflicts between them and students.
3. The Guidance and Counseling Departments in schools should be strengthened to educate students on tolerance, teamwork and individual care. This would not only help students but also teachers. Many disciplinary conflicts could be managed in this crucial department through frequent and free communication between teachers and students should be encouraged by the former listening empathically to understand the concerns raised by the latter so as to create conducive teaching and learning environment.
4. Chief Principals should also improve their intellectual stimulation practices to bring about improvement in the management of conflicts in national high schools. This is appropriated by encouraging teachers and students to be more creative and innovative as they undertake their teaching and learning activities. Creative and innovative teachers and students are adequately rewarded to create competition.

5. In a conflict management process, the school conflict management board should consider the utilization of two or more strategies in order to contain conflict amicably. A blend of two or more management strategies in containing conflict will enhance effective conflict management.
6. The school management assesses the conflict source or sources before ascertaining the best approach to employ in managing the conflict. It is from the source of conflict where the best approach to employ in managing it shall be identified and hence applied accordingly without use of trial and error.
7. The study also recommends that the school's Boards of Management (BoMs) organize training of its members, teachers and students on an array of conflict management approaches so as to enhance effective conflict management in national high schools and by far extension all secondary schools as they are under the department of Basic Education and Early Learning within the Ministry of Education.

### **6.5 Suggestions for further study**

This study on communication approaches used in conflict management in schools was conducted in six national high schools in North Rift Counties of Kenya. As a result the following research topics are suggested for further studies:

1. Similar studies can be done on conflict management approaches used in extra-county, county, sub-county and private secondary schools in Kenya.

2. Similar studies can be conducted in other parts of the country, with the results contributing to a better understanding of conflict management in national high schools of Kenya.
3. A study can be done on communication approaches used in conflict management in colleges/universities in Kenya.

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**APPENDICES****APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR GATEKEEPERS**

I am willing to participate in this research study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from the research at any time. The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that any information gathered in the course of this study is confidential and that neither my name nor any other identified information will be used or published without my written permission.

I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about this study, I can contact;

Natembeya Kisiangani Martin - 0722928747

Moi University - Eldoret.

Signed\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX II: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR KEY INFORMANTS

P.O. Box 3900-30100,  
Eldoret

22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2022.

Dear Participant,

My name is Natembeya Kisiangani Martin, a PhD candidate at Moi University - Eldoret. I am conducting research on **Communication approaches used in conflict management in schools: A study of National High Schools in North Rift Counties of Kenya**. The purpose of this interview is to seek information from you as a Chief Principal/teacher/student leader because I believe you have adequate information that will assist me draw relevant conclusion on this topic. You have been purposely selected to participate in this study and I will be pleased if you kindly sign the **informed consent letter** provided to enable us proceed with the interview. Our interview procedure will be guided by the following:

**Your informed consent** is sought and your willingness to participate in this interview follows your freedom in giving information for this study.

**Anonymity** of your name will be kept and matters discussed in this interview will be reserved for research purpose only.

**Confidentiality** in all your information provided shall be held and treated with confidence and will not be disclosed or no reference of your direct words will appear in the final report.

**Duration of interview** will be **thirty minutes**.

**Gender** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent Declaration**

I have read and understood the above information and the procedures pertaining to this interview for research purposes. I also understand that by signing this consent letter, I have agreed to participate in this study with consent and willing to provide information required voluntarily.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

### **APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS**

#### **(a) Communication**

1. Tell me about the communication that goes on between you and the principal/teachers/students in this school?
2. What are the issues that you communicate about with the chief principal/teachers/students in this school? or What are the issues that student/teachers/ chief principal communicate about with you in this school?
3. How do the teachers/students in this school communicate to you during conflict? or How does your office communicate with teachers/students in this school in handling conflict?

#### **(b) Organizational communication structures**

4. How do you get feedback from the chief principal/teachers/students on policy implementation on school management? or How do teachers/students get feedback from you on the issues they have raised on school management?
5. Please tell me about any factors that sometimes hinder the flow of information between the teachers/students and the school administration?
6. What issues should be dealt with to encourage communication between teachers/students and the chief principal on school management?

#### **(c) Conflict management**

7. How can communication between teachers/students and the chief principal be used to encourage/motivate good practices in school management?
8. What is your comment on the seriousness/importance of the communication between students /teachers and the chief principal in this school?

9. How can barriers to free flow of information between teachers/students and the principal in school management be removed?
10. Do you have any other suggestions/opinions/views you may wish to share with me on communication between stakeholders in school management?

**APPENDIX IV: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

1. From the gate, security giving directions to the school administration and other relevant offices
2. Information center/noticeboards/students' information desk
3. Chief Principal's verbal and non-verbal communication with teachers and students
4. Teachers verbal and non-verbal communication with the chief principal, fellow teachers and students
5. Non-teaching staff verbal and non-verbal communication with the chief principal, teachers and students.
6. Students verbal and non-verbal communication with the principal, teachers and fellow students.

## APPENDIX V: RESEARCH PERMIT LETTER FROM SCHOOL



SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLISHING, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Tel: (051) 43211  
 Fax No: (051) 43292  
 Telex NO: 33147 MOU/ASIT  
 E-mail: [foadit@mu.ac.ke](mailto:foadit@mu.ac.ke)

P. O. Box 1000  
 Eldoret  
 Kenya

Ref. No.: MU/SIS/PJ&amp;CS/SA/34

29<sup>th</sup> June, 2022

The Executive Secretary  
 National Council for Science and Technology  
 P.O. Box 30623-00100  
 NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: RESEARCH PERMIT IN RESPECT FOR NATEMBEYA KISIANGANI  
 MARTIN Reg. No PHD/CS/5707/21**

The above named is our postgraduate Higher learning Degree (PhD) student at Moi University, School of Information Sciences, department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies.

He has successfully defended his proposal and need to proceed for his fieldwork which is a requirement to PhD students. His research title is:- *Leadership Communication in Educational Management: A Study of National High Schools in North Rift Kenya*

For further information please be free to contact this office.  
 Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jared Obuya', written over a rectangular stamp area.

Dr. Jared Obuya  
 Ag, CoD  
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLISHING, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES  
 /mkm

**HEAD**  
 PUBLISHING, JOURNALISM  
 & COMMUNICATION STUDIES

**APPENDIX IV: RESEARCH PERMIT FROM NACOSTI**

  
REPUBLIC OF KENYA

  
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 118258 Date of Issue: 21/July/2023

**RESEARCH LICENSE**



This is to Certify that Mr. Martin Kisiangani Ntamboya of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi, Transmara, Westpokot on the topic: LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS IN NORTH RIFT KENYA for the period ending : 21/July/2023.

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