

Classroom Conflict Management Strategies and Students' Competency Development: A Survey of Teacher Training Colleges in Fako Division, Southwest Region, Cameroon

Martin Tiku Abunaw

PhD in View, University of Buea, Buea, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate the impact of classroom conflict management strategies and students' competency development in Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon. Four research questions were asked: how does the teaching of conflict management strategies with respect to problem solving, smoothing, forcing/win-lose, compromising and withdrawing impact teacher competency? The study employed a survey design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a concurrent triangulation mixed-method perspective. Two Teacher training Colleges were randomly selected. In each of the sampled college, only class three students were involved in the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the colleges and the classes. Data were collected using an evaluation questionnaire. Evaluation questionnaire were effectively used by Jehan (2017) and Saduman (2010). The evaluation questionnaire was trial tested on 15 student teachers. Student teachers were later on administered the questionnaire whereby their knowledge of conflict management was captured and how it influences their teaching competency development. An in-depth interview guide was used to sample the opinion of directors of colleges and the teachers on the conflict management in the curriculum of teacher training, the perceived importance and how they think it can impact teachers' competency.

KEYWORDS: Conflict management, problem solving, smoothing, forcing/win-lose, compromising, withdrawing, Teacher competency

Quantitative data were processed using Epidata 3.1 and analysed with the support of SPSS 21.0 while qualitative data from interviews were analysed using the process of thematic analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was very satisfactory, with a value of 0.820. This therefore implies that the items on the questionnaire were understood and answered to a satisfactory level of objectivity. Logistic Regression was used to measure the influence of student teachers' knowledge of classroom conflict management on teaching competency. Teachers were to a very high extent inspired by problem – solving negotiations ($R=0.381$; $P=0.000$), smoothing ($R=0.208$; $P=0.022$) and withdrawing (0.447 ; $P=0.000$) that correlated significantly with good teaching competency. To a very high extent as well, they dissociated with compromising which effect though positive was very

weak and not significant ($R=0.125$; $P=0.174$). They also very highly disagreed with forcing that did not correlate significantly with competency development ($R= -0.331$; $P=0.000$), which instead had a significant negative effect. In fact, forcing is not an official recommended pedagogical approach for teaching in educational institutions. Teachers mostly perceived that at school level, to a high extent, more reconciling conflict management approaches like problem – solving negotiations was the most adequate in building in the young learners the sense of mutual understanding.

INTRODUCTION

It has been realized that in Fako Division some teachers assist student teachers to develop their competencies, while others do not. So, the researcher seeks to investigate if the problem is due to classroom conflict management in teacher training colleges.

How to cite this paper: Martin Tiku Abunaw "Classroom Conflict Management Strategies and Students' Competency Development: A Survey of Teacher Training Colleges in Fako Division, Southwest Region, Cameroon" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-6 | Issue-1, December 2021, pp.458-473, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd47753.pdf



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This work deals with the classroom conflict management and competency development of students in some of the schools in Fako Division the issue at stake is the difficulties teachers have in monitoring competency development of students and the extent to which they succeed in managing classroom conflicts.

According to Besong (2016) conflict management is primarily concerned with controlling conflict in human relations. If a conflict is well managed and resolved it could lead to some qualitative development in the relations between them. In classroom conflict management between administrators, teachers and students will lead to student teachers competency development.

Also Nayere (2014) explained the fact that teaching students' conflict management and resolution skills may provide them with necessary tools to solve their own conflict in a productive and practical way. This kind of training can also improve students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and communication skills. The thrusts of this study are on the exploration of the history of mediation and explain essential elements of adult and peer mediation programmes. Discussion about advantages, students' behavioural problems and abnormalities in school are not new phenomena. Undesirable activities of students include a vast range of unacceptable behaviours such as lack of participation in class programmes, causing disturbance for other students, violence (verbal, physical), destroying the school building, equipment and facilities. Methods used in Iranian schools for solving conflicts depends on the position where they see the undesirable behaviour as a result of student's personal problems and those of the family and the student's cultural environment. These methods therefore, apply force and use the reward or punishment system to eliminate such behaviours. Warning, reproaches, calling the parent to school, physical punishment and in some cases expulsion from school are among common methods used in school against the students' violent behaviours.

Fako Division has about 03 Teacher Training Colleges, 01 lay Private Teacher Training College, 300 Teacher Trainers, 18 classes, 250 student teachers and teacher trainers – student teachers in the ratio of 6:5 (300:250). The general ratio for the sub – division is average because of the low employability of trained teachers.

According to McGuire (2017), how do we teach students of all ages and developmental levels strategies like 'win-win' negotiation, mediation skills, and violence prevention; conflict management is the skill set and concepts for understanding how to

prevent, manage, and resolve competing needs and interests without resorting to violence.

The need for conflict management

McGuire (2017) explained that conflict management skills are needed because conflict is an everyday part of life. Conflict may be as simple as a misunderstanding between friends or as complex as violence in the home. Most conflicts can and should be handled as they arise, before they escalate into something more complex or violent. Unfortunately, many children and adults lack the skills necessary to effectively resolve conflicts. An independent evaluator interviewed students, teachers, guidance counsellors, principals, superintendents and parents and recorded the following statements about why they believe conflict management programmes are needed in schools today.

Society is more complex and violent. All you have to do to show its need is to pick up a newspaper or watch TV. Today's culture is teaching children only violent approaches to problem solving. Our society is much more complex. Understanding how to manage it requires more knowledge. Society teaches too much that someone else will solve our problems. We need to teach that we can solve our own problems. We can't count on old ways, we need new skills, and one is conflict management.

We see evidence every day that people are getting more intolerant of each other. Society as a whole is more violent. Teaching kids conflict management skills is something very beneficial to society as a whole. Our society is more and more driven to conflict. We have more aggression and hostility from people because the society is so highly competitive.

Effective learning requires a safe environment. It is prospected that by the year 2035, every school in Cameroon will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning. The number one responsibility in a school has to be the safety of the students. In an unsafe atmosphere one cannot learn no matter what. School conflict is on the rise. Discipline problems are escalating. Rumours quickly escalate into more serious problems. As a result, students spend less time learning (Msilla, 2012).

Msilla (2012) explained conflict is common at all levels of our social life. In a time when divorce is commonplace and everyone is fighting at home as a norm, we find more turmoil in children and we need tools to help. Most kids are told at home to be men and fight. In some cases it's OK, maybe on the street, but not in school where you have to learn. We've got to teach kids alternative behaviours. A child has to

have tools other than fighting to resolve conflicts. Conflict management training is the best method for this goal that I know of. It does not fix everything, but it is a piece that empowers kids to become problem solvers.

An increasingly diverse school population has to learn how to deal with each other. It is a life skill and you cannot function in society without. It's as important as learning how to balance a check book.

Theoretical background

The theoretical background focuses on theories of classroom conflict management by Cindy (2008) and the symbolic interactionism theory by George Herbert Mead (1934).

According to Cindy (2008), among the many tasks of early childhood, two stand out: to communicate needs in a respectful way to other children and to listen with respect to the ideas of others. These areas of learning are important to all young children, but especially to those who participate in group settings away from home—preschool and child care programmes, playgroups, or summer camps. With the support of knowledgeable adults, children are able to learn the skills necessary for effective communication within peer groups.

As children learn to be together in a group, they will inevitably experience conflict with another child. Many adults find conflict among children frustrating and feel uncertain about how to be helpful. However, when adults are thoughtful and skilled in their approach to classroom conflict, children benefit.

With respect to the symbolic interactionism theory by George Herbert Mead (1934), Sandstrom and Kleinman, (2005) argued that we cannot talk of symbolic interactionism theory without referring to George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley though Gary Fine, Kent Sandstrom (2020) acknowledged that The most important bridge between the pragmatic tradition and sociology was George Herbert Mead in one of his most famous books, *Mind, Self, and Society*. Symbolic interactionism limits their analysis of education to what they directly observe happening in the classroom (Hall, 2007). They focus on how teacher expectations influence student performance, perceptions, and attitudes. Rist (1970) monitoring the students through the year, it was found that the students closer to the teacher received the most attention and performed better. The farther from the teacher a student sat, the weaker that student performed. The study through the next several years and found that the labels assigned to the students on

the eighth day of kindergarten followed them throughout their schooling.

While symbolic-interactionism sociologists can document this process, they have yet to define the exact process of how teachers form their expectations or how students may communicate subtle messages to teachers about intelligence, skills and so forth.

Statement of the Problem

In Cameroon, it has been reported over 2020 and 2021 several cases of teachers been assaulted and even killed by students, and student-student conflicts where students even lost their life.

Even teachers, administrators, school staff, and families can benefit from school or district wide implementation of a conflict management training programme. Let's unfold some of the details of how conflict management works.

According to McKinney (2005), conflict management is the ability to be able to identify and handle conflict sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. Since conflicts in a business are a natural part of the workplace, it is important that there are people who understand conflicts and know how to resolve them. This is important in today's market more than ever. Everyone is striving to show how valuable they are to the company they work for and at times, this can lead to disputes with other members of the team. Wherever there are people, there always will be conflict. Hence, in classroom students are always in conflict with one another, at times even in conflict with teachers. It is inevitable and many of such cases have been recorded in Cameroon.

According to Collins (1987), conflict is a serious disagreement and argument about something important. If two people or groups are in conflict, they have had a serious disagreement or argument and have not yet reached agreement. Try to keep any conflict between you and your ex-partner to a minimum. Hence, classroom conflict management is how sensibly an administrator or teacher in classroom manages collision between students or between students and teachers and administration. For effective classroom conflict management, the teacher or school guidance counselor (Administrator) must focus on the following; Models of classroom conflict management, strategies of classroom conflict management, benefits of classroom conflict management, interpersonal classroom conflict management, intrapersonal classroom conflict management, intergroup classroom conflict management and intra group classroom conflict management.

The challenge here is how classroom conflict management will be taken care of so that teachers' competency development is realized. According to Fisher (2002), there are five strategies of classroom conflict management which are problem-solving negotiation, smoothing, forcing or win-lose negotiation, compromising and withdrawing. The researcher seeks to investigate if the above conflict management strategies could improve classroom conflict management and student teachers' competency development.

Consistent with the competency- Based Approach (CBA), several methodological and theoretical discussions on the classroom conflict management and student competency development have hastened the need for taking into consideration the teachers' actual attainment and achievement in Teacher Training Colleges.

General Objective

The general objective of the study is to find out the extent to which students' acquisition of skills in

classroom conflict management could impact their development of teaching competency.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study is set in;

- To find out the extent to which students who are aware of problem – solving negotiations do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not.
- To find out the extent to which students who are aware of smoothing do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not.
- To find out the extent to which students who are aware of forcing or win-lose negotiation do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not.
- To find out the extent to which students who are aware of compromising do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not.
- To find out the extent to which students who are aware of withdrawing do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not.

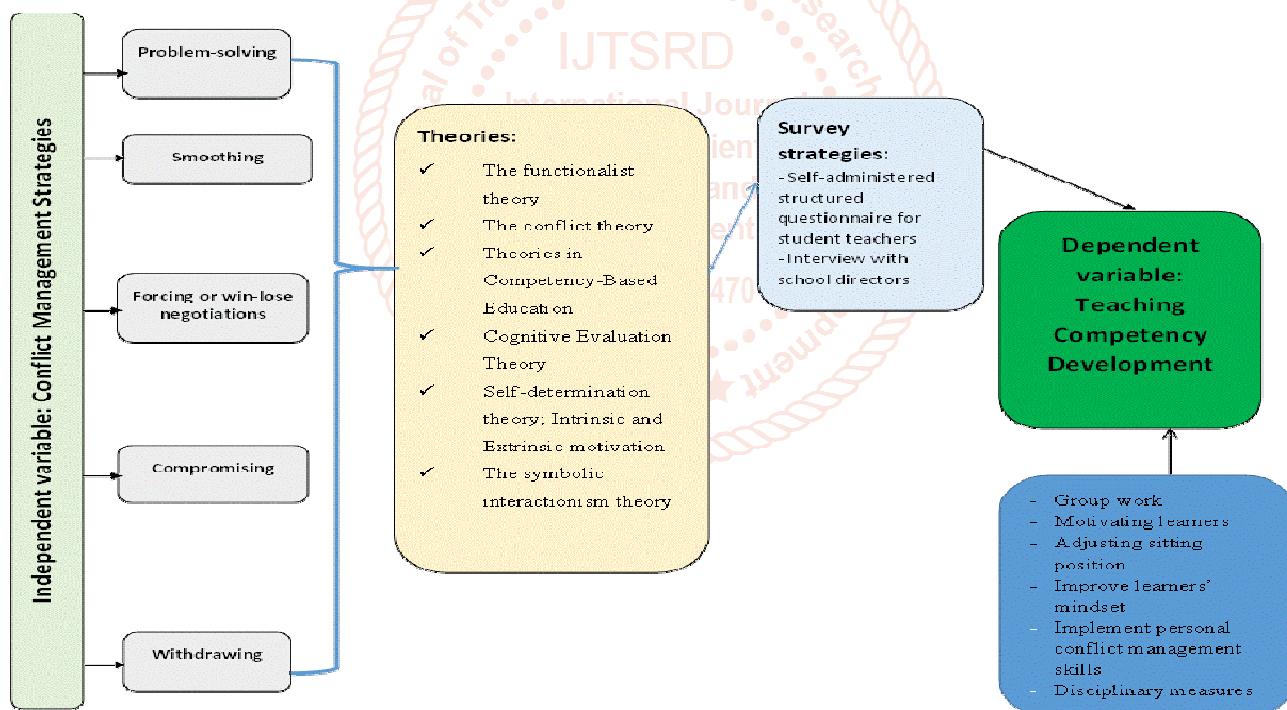


Figure 1: Conceptual framework depicting conflict management strategies in a training/capacity building scenario impacting teaching competency

Methodology

Research Design

The research design used is a survey design. The dominant approach is quantitative employing a structured questionnaire. This quantitative approach, in a concurrent triangulation mixed-method perspective, is substantiated by a qualitative study whereby the opinions of heads of colleges and teachers were sought on how conflict management is handled in the curriculum and how it can help in shaping the teaching competency of teachers.

Area of Study

The research site for this study is the Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. Fako Division is located on the slopes of Mount Cameroon. It is made of five Sub-Divisions including Buea, Limbe, Tiko,

Muyuka and West Coast. The Fako is host to major cities like Buea, Tiko and Limbwehich, is one of the fastest growing towns in Cameroon today with a mixed cosmopolitan setting. English and French are the two official languages used for general interaction while pidgin is the lingua franca. The Bakweri language spoken by the natives is equally written and documented. The average life expectancy of this area is 50 years (1999 statistics) literacy rate is on the rise with some 60-75% of the youths having access to education.

Table 1: Population for the Study

S/N	Name of College	Population of Student-teacher
1	Government Teacher Training College, Buea.	150
2	St. John Bosco Teacher Training College, Buea.	100
3	Remedial Teacher Training College, Buea.	100
4	Government Teacher Training College, Limbe	150
Total		500

Source: Regional delegation of secondary education (2020).

All the schools were accessible, thus, the target population of this study was 500 student-teachers.

Sample

All the four teacher training schools were involved in the study whereby 30 students were sampled in each of the schools to make a total of 120.

Sampling Techniques

Students were sampled conveniently whereby in each of the schools, any student that was available and willing to participate in the study was administered the questionnaire.

Data Collection Instrument

Evaluation questionnaire

The instrument used for this research is an evaluation questionnaire. The evaluation questionnaire has three sections A B and C, section A has to do with the demographic, section B has to do with the structured questions on conflict management strategies (problem solving, smoothing, forcing/win-lose, compromising and withdrawing), and section C made of structured questions capturing competency development in teaching. Evaluation questionnaire were effectively used by Jehan (2017) and Saduman (2010).

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Construct validity was check by ensuring that the measures under investigation relate with one another in a way that is consistent with theoretically derived hypothesis.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was checked by the researcher, his supervisor, a colleague (teacher trainer) and the statistician to make sure the indicators were adequately labeled and could appropriately measure the characters under study. Generally, above 0.75, CVI is satisfactory (Nana, 2018) and in the context of this study, the supervisor and the statistician validated the final instrument making a CVI of 1.

To ensure face validity which is the kind ascertained when little or nothing is known about the research variables, the questionnaire was checked by the researcher, his supervisor, colleagues, the statistician and student teachers during the trial testing of the instrument for clarity and visibility.

The reliability of the questionnaire was measured using the estimate of internal consistency or internal reliability. To ensure high reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (α) which is the most appropriate reliability test to use when items are not dichotomously scored, was used.

Data collection process

An authorization to carry out the study was obtained from the Faculty of Education of the University of Buea. This authorization was presented to the heads of institution for administrative clearance. Student teachers were then briefed on the objective of the study, their consent sought, and they were then given the questionnaire for response.

Table 2: Reliability analysis for the final study

Conceptual components	Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient	Variance	Ncases	Nitems
Problem-solving	0.716	0.001	120	6
Smoothing	0.801	0.000	120	6
Forcing / win-lose-negotiation	0.910	0.013	120	6
Compromising	0.932	0.004	120	6
Withdrawing	0.736	0.003	120	6
Competency development	0.805	0.040	120	6
IVM	0.839	0.034	120	36

The internal consistency assumption was not violated for all the conceptual components including the IVM. The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.716 to 0.932, all very satisfactory considering the 0 - 1 standard range for Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. This therefore implies that the items on the questionnaire were understood and answered to a satisfactory level of objectivity. The variances were close to 0, thus implying that we are more likely to be faced with skewed distributions, with participants' responses tilting more toward positive or negative views or perceptions. In the other senses, student teachers are more likely to be homogenous in their perceptions of the study indicators (Table 2).

Method of data processing and analysis

Quantitative data was entered using EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData Association, Odense Denmark, 2008) and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Standard version, Release 21.0 (IBM Inc. 2012). The questionnaire was made of categorical variables and data were analyzed using counting techniques namely frequency and proportions while Multiple-Responses- Analysis was used to calculate the aggregate score for conceptual components (Nana, 2018). Correlation test was used to assess the influence of awareness of conflict management strategies on teachers' competency development. But we had to choose between a parametric correlation test and a non-parametric correlation test following the statistical data assumption requirements. All the variables involved in the study (Competency development, Problem-solving negotiations, Smoothing, Compromising and Withdrawing) have violated the normality assumption from both Kolmogorov – Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk perspectives ($P < 0.05$) in all instances. The non-parametric Spearman's Rho correlation test was then used to test the hypotheses.

Findings



Figure 2: Student teachers' awareness of problem solving approaches

Figure 2 depicts that students generally mostly were aware of problem-solving negotiation as problem solving approach with weight of 100%, followed by smoothing (99.4%), withdrawing (98.6%). It is to a very low extent that they were aware of compromising (17.9%) and win-lose negotiations (3.8%).

The table below (table 3) appraises teachers' perception of their competency development in teaching, which is the dependent variable of this study.

Table 3: Description of student teachers' perception of their competency development in teaching

Teaching competency	Stretched				Collapsed	
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree and agree	Disagree and strongly disagree
I use focusing questions to focus students' attention and guide them on the subject matter currently being discussed	95.0% (114)	5.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I give waiting time to allow students to reflect on a given question before asking them to respond	95.8% (115)	4.2% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I use probing which whereby I ask students questions in order for them to give an in depth answer	94.2% (113)	5.8% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I give silent time after a student has finished speaking or responding to my question in order to help students to understand the answers of their classmate	93.3% (112)	6.7% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I give group work by dividing the class into small groups, and have students tackle a short problem together, as to improve team spirit and mutual acceptance	87.5% (105)	12.5% (15)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I use introductory statement in order to draw and create readiness among my students to pay attention to the point I am explaining explained as to raise awareness on what is to be taught on that day through a clear beginning statement.	79.2% (95)	20.8% (25)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I ask students to reflect on a new concept on their own through brainstorming before I start my own explanation	75.8% (91)	24.2% (29)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I employ the systematic or explicit approach in teaching, whereby lesson is presented in a step-by-step manner to facilitate understanding and enhance in students the sense of logical and systematic reasoning	76.7% (92)	23.3% (28)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I make lesson interesting and concrete by giving examples from daily life	75.8% (91)	24.2% (29)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I pay attention to social and emotional approach, by paying attention to good teacher-student relationship, student-student relationship as to build a positive inter-personal relationship and to promote a positive socio emotional climate among learners in the classroom	78.3% (94)	21.7% (26)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)

Teaching competency	Stretched				Collapsed	
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree and agree	Disagree and strongly disagree
I employ motivational strategy which consists of using various approaches such as praise, gifts or other gratification to stimulate learning and discipline	78.3% (94)	21.7% (26)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I adjust my classroom sitting arrangement by properly planning and organizing my classroom in order to create a good classroom climate and shaping the behaviour of my learners	83.3% (100)	15.8% (19)	0.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	99.2% (119)	0.8% (1)
I use isolation and exclusion strategy when faced with major student's undisciplined or misbehaviour	11.7% (14)	0.8% (1)	13.3% (16)	74.2% (89)	12.5% (15)	87.5% (105)
I use soft reprimands that is, mild type of punishment when learners break any classroom rules or show disruptive behaviours	94.2% (113)	5.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.8% (1)	99.2% (119)	0.8% (1)
I enforce disciplinary rules in the classroom	93.3% (112)	6.7% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I take some times to counsel students on good conducts and behaviours in school and in the society	93.3% (112)	6.7% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I implement inclusive teaching as to make sure that all categories of learners are taken care of and participate	90.0% (108)	10.0% (12)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I can better identify my own conflict management style, reflect on my teaching, reflect on my thoughts, and feelings and behavioural reactions conflict.	90.8% (109)	9.2% (11)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
I feel more confident in handling my learners	90.8% (109)	9.2% (11)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
This will shape the mindset of my students by improving their socialization and peace settlement ability thus enhancing their contribution for a peaceful and developed community.	90.0% (108)	10.0% (12)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (120)	0.0% (0)
MRA	83.4% (2001)	12.2% (292)	0.7% (16)	3.8% (91)	95.5% (2293)	4.5% (107)

Students generally were satisfied with their competency development following the indicators considered in this study, with weight of 95.5%. These indicators were based essentially on classroom management skills, since they rime better with problem solving approaches, which is the independent conceptual component for this study.

Table 2: Influence of awareness of problem solving approaches on teachers' competency development

Research questions	Statistical tests	Comments
Research Question One: To what extent do students who are aware of problem – solving negotiations do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?	Descriptive: Frequency, proportion and MRA. Test of hypothesis: Spearman's Rho (P<0.05, significant relationship).	Student teachers were all aware of problem-solving negotiations with weight of 100% for those that agree or strongly agree. Students generally were satisfied with their competency development following the indicators considered in this study, with weight of 95.5%. These indicators were based essentially on classroom management skills, since they rime better with problem solving approaches, which is the independent conceptual component for this study. There was a significant positive correlation between student teachers' awareness of problem-solving negotiations and competency development (R=0.381; P=0.000). This therefore implies that the more students are aware of problem-solving negotiation, the better their competency in teaching or their ability to manage classroom.
Research Question Two: To what extent do students who are aware of smoothing do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?	Descriptive: Frequency, proportion and MRA. Test of hypothesis: Spearman's Rho (P<0.05, significant relationship).	Student teachers generally were aware of smoothing as problem solving approach with weight of 99.4% for those that agree or strongly agree as against just 0.6% for those that disagree or strongly disagree. There was a significant positive correlation between student teachers' awareness of smoothing and competency development (R=0.209; P=0.022). This therefore implies that the more students were more inclined to smoothing, the better their competency in teaching or their ability to manage their classroom.
Research Question Three: To what extent do students who are aware of forcing / win-lose negotiation do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?	Descriptive: Frequency, proportion and MRA. Test of hypothesis: Spearman's Rho (P<0.05, significant relationship).	Student teachers generally were not aware of win-lose negotiation approach in problem solving with a weight of 96.3% that disagree or strongly disagree. There was a significant negative correlation between student teachers' awareness of win-lose negotiations and competency development (R= -0.331; P=0.000). This therefore implies that the more student teachers were more inclined to win-lose negotiation, the lesser the positive impact on teaching competency or their ability to manage their classroom.
Research Question Four: To what extent do students who are aware of compromising do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?	Descriptive: Frequency, proportion and MRA. Test of hypothesis: Spearman's Rho (P<0.05, significant relationship).	Student teachers generally were not aware of compromising approach in problem solving with a weight of 82.1% that disagree or strongly disagree. There was a non-significant positive correlation between student teachers' awareness of compromising and competency development (R=0.125; P=0.174). This therefore implies that awareness of compromising does not really favour competency development in teaching or classroom management.

Research questions	Statistical tests	Comments
Research Question Five: To what extent do students who are aware of withdrawing do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?	Descriptive: Frequency, proportion and MRA. Test of hypothesis: Spearman's Rho (P<0.05, significant relationship).	Student teachers generally were aware of withdrawing as problem solving approach with weight of 98.6% for those that agree or strongly agree as against just 1.4% for those that disagree or strongly disagree. There was a significant positive correlation between student teachers' awareness of withdrawing and competency development (R=0.447; P=0.000). This therefore implies that the more student teachers were aware of withdrawing, the better their competency in teaching.

Discussion

Research question one: To what extent do students who are aware of problem – solving negotiations do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?

The findings revealed that student teachers were all aware of problem-solving negotiations and that it correlated significantly with teaching competency development whereby, the more students are aware of problem-solving negotiation, the better their competency in teaching. Though many public relations experts would argue that negotiations have no place in a crisis, McGuire (2017) points out that if the only communication that does occur consists of both sides asserting their positions and demanding that the other side take certain actions, little progress will be made. Instead, try construing exchanges with angry parties as negotiations in which the primary goal is to search for trade-offs that will lead to a mutually beneficial agreement. Even when an agreement seems impossible, parties often can work together to create value. This aligns with the vision of teachers in this study and the Cognitive Evaluation Theory by Deci E.L. & Ryan R.M. (1985) that argued that when, looking at a task, we assess it in terms of how well it meets our need to feel competent and in control, which a major corollary of values. Creating room for parties to develop values intrinsically in conflict management process increases the potential of parties to absorb shocks thus implicating the Self-Determination Theory; Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation by Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M (2012). Schulte (2020) explained that Self-Determination is a theory of human motivation developed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. Motivation, in this context, is what moves us to act. The theory looks at the inherent, positive human tendency to move towards growth, which could be better argued as self-development or emancipation in this study context. Efemini (2017) in a more concrete perspective align with this theory as he argued that trainee teachers could possibly benefit from identifying their own conflict style. Part of the assessments could be done through journaling which could include reflecting on their teaching, reflecting on thoughts, and feelings and behavioural reactions. Jehan (2017) also stressed the importance of creative problem solving and mobile learning in helping teachers to solve different classroom management problems, ongoing conflicts or future conflicts. Burce (2011) concluded that the same way conflict management skills can impact pedagogical approach, pedagogical approach or classroom instructional methods can also help in developing conflict management strategy, a typical example here being peer teaching which is a component of group work.

Rahayu and Setya (2020) acknowledged that problem-solving negotiation can be used in managing conflicts that occur in schools, thus emphasizing on the importance in educational milieu. Saduman (2010) findings showed that peer mediation provider to students found the process and effects of the process highly satisfying whereas the peer mediation receiver group found the process moderately satisfying experience in all assessed dimensions. The study revealed that conflict resolution in education impact several skills in students as they become more aware of their responsibilities towards themselves; with respect to social responsibility, the students acknowledged that that they had more fully realized that helping others was a fundamental; As far as the impact of implementation on emphatic communication is concerned, the peer mediators stated that they felt more comfortable in communicating others; given the Impact of implementation on self-confidence of peer mediators, the peer mediators thought that the programme increased their self-confidence, For the impact of implementation on academic achievement and working habits, students thought that the conflict management programme affected their success positively; for the implementation dimension, peer mediation application was assessed by the views of service user students. The service user students stated that peer mediation application were useful for their classes (89.7%). They stated that it created a positive classroom atmosphere; following the impact of

peer mediation programme on personal responsibilities, They stated that they started to fulfill their responsibilities more after the programme, the programme helped them develop healthy life habits, and the programme helped them use time effectively. Nayereh (2014) was also of the opinion that using the mediation approach can be very beneficial especially for those schools situated in suburban areas of cities with behavioural disciplinary problems.

Research Question Two: To what extent do students who are aware of smoothing do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?

The findings revealed that student teachers were to a very high extent aware of smoothing as conflict management strategy and that it correlated significant with teaching competency development whereby, the more students are aware of smoothing, the better their competency in teaching. Vallone et al. Dell' Aquila, Cledia Zurlo² and Marocco (2019) explained that people adopting this style display an attitude to refuse to openly face conflicts. Compromising style as they concluded is characterized by attempts to splitting the difference, exchanging concession, or seeking a quick, middle ground position to reach mutually acceptable decisions; however, both parties involved in the conflict need to agree in giving up something to solve the conflict. The authors then resolved that educational systems play a pivotal role to prevent social exclusion and discrimination and to promote equity, mutual understanding and respect. Teachers, in particular, are required to take an active stand in supporting social inclusion, adapting their practices and developing new skills to successfully deal with the increasingly diverse range of learners in their classrooms. Therefore, enhancing teachers' intercultural skills and competencies represents a key priority in the contemporary challenging educational context. By emphasizing that users of smoothing in conflict management approach requires both parties involved in the conflict be ready to give up something to solve the conflict, there is therefore a need to compensate this loss and this explains why in the context of this study, motivation as support to conflict resolution process was highlighted by principals. This aligns with Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation theory whereby though Deci (1997) cautioned that using extrinsic motivation will work with certain individuals rather than others; hence, as added by the author, identifying the orientation of their Personal Locus of Causality (PLOC) is fundamental, prior to carrying out any intervention. In the same vein, Valence - Instrumentality- Expectancy (VIE) theory by Vroom (1964) argued in his paradigm that motivation refers to three factors valence: what we think we will get out of a given action/behaviour (what's in it for me?). Extrinsic motivation is when one is motivated by external factors, such as rewards, social recognition or fear of punishment. This kind of motivation focuses people on rewards rather than action. On the other side, intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to the desire to do things because we enjoy doing them; hence it is a stronger motivator than extrinsic motivation. Three needs lead to intrinsic motivation. Self-Determination Theory; by Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M (2012) emphasizing on the ability to opportunistically use these two types of motivations.

Research Question Three: To what extent do students who are aware of win-lose negotiation do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?

The findings revealed that student teachers were to a very low extent aware of forcing/win-lose negotiation as conflict management strategy and that the more students were aware of win-lose negotiation, the lesser the positive impact on teaching competency.

Vallone, Dell' Aquila, Cledia Zurlo² and Marocco (2019) explained that the psychological framework underpinning the development of an original e-learning tool created for teachers and educators was aimed to self-assess and to improve their intercultural skills and competencies with respect to interethnic conflicts within realistic school context scenarios. Their mode equally considered the Win-Lose" strategy; The author revealed that people adopting this style are willing to win/defend their position, even if it means adopting forcing behaviours and ignoring needs and perspectives of the other party, thus falling thus falling under forcing strategy. The authors then resolved that educational systems play a pivotal role to prevent social exclusion and discrimination and to promote equity, mutual understanding and respect. Teachers, in particular, are required to take an active stand in supporting social inclusion, adapting their practices and developing new skills to successfully deal with the increasingly diverse range of learners in their classrooms. Therefore, enhancing teachers' intercultural skills and competencies represents a key priority in the contemporary challenging educational context. Smoothing is an aspect of conflict management strategy recommended in their work, thus aligning with the findings of this study.

The authors as already said revealed that people adopting this style are willing to win/defend their position, even if it means adopting forcing behaviours and ignoring needs and perspectives of the other party, thus falling thus falling under forcing strategy. This applies to both students and teachers. But Attribution theory by Heider

(1958) state that when dealing with students who categorically see their failure in others prompting them to refuse to compromise, it should not be quickly resolved that it is their nature, but rather attribute it more to other factors under their control and by this approach, this will create cognitive dissonance and may have an impact on their attitude. By so doing, we increase their chance of adjusting; especially if they are shown strategies that may help them improve in the problematic area(s). This strategy can also be applied by administrators to reverse the forcing mind in conflict resolution of their teachers, which in turn will have a positive repercussion on the learners. This also rimes with the Cognitive dissonance by Leon Festinger (1957). The author explained that cognitive dissonance is a very powerful motivator which, as the researcher shall discuss in a future repost, is often used in transformational change programmes both in the business and educational world. The reason why it is so powerful is because, when used effectively, Cognitive dissonance creates a sense of discomfort in an individual which in order to be resolved results in one of two outcomes: first, the individual changes behaviour (possibly replacing the existing behaviour with the newly modelled one), and second, the individual does not adopt the new behaviour and justifies his/her behaviour by changing the conflicting cognition created by the new information, instead.

Research Question Four: To what extent do students who are aware of compromising do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?

Students generally were not aware of compromising approach in problem solving with a weight of 82.1% that disagree or strongly disagree. There was a non-significant positive correlation between students' awareness of compromising and competency development. This therefore implies that awareness of compromising does not really favor competency development in teaching. Rahayu and Setya (2020) acknowledged the importance of compromise, accommodation, collaboration, competition in managing conflicts that occur in schools but emphasize that one should be contextualize conflict management strategy to the type of problem faced with. The authors to some extent align with the findings of this study, as they did not outlined negative impact of compromising on teaching competency but rather highlight a weak effect. Rahayu and Setya (2020) further explained that the choice of effective conflict management styles varies because the conflicts faced by each school also differ. With the existence of good conflict management by the school it will have a good impact on the sustainability of the school and can help in achieving its goals and can improve its performance, can help make conflict resolution decisions through consideration based on various information thinking and perspectives. Through conflict management we can increase effectiveness in the field of education in achieving its goals, so that every conflict that occurs does not go on without a clear solution because it takes time. Schools that are active in resolving conflicts can create a harmonious school climate and atmosphere. Compromising is an aspect of conflict management that could be very complementary to others. Besides smoothing, Vallone, Dell'Aquila, Cledia Zurlo² and Marocco (2019) also highlight the positive role compromising can play in conflict resolution in the school milieu, though they placed emphasis on smoothing. They also presented compromising as aimed at an intermediate concern for self and for others, and perceived some advantages of smoothing in them. Nayereh (2014) concluded that prominent conflict handling styles include; competing, avoiding, collaborating, compromising, accommodating and mediation. Among all mentioned styles, using the mediation approach can be very beneficial especially for those schools situated in suburban areas of cities with behavioural disciplinary problems. Once more the authors consider compromising though teachers in the context of this study were not aware of.

Research Question Five: To what extent do students who are aware of withdrawing do better in competency development in teaching than those who are not?

Students generally were to a very high extent aware of withdrawing as problem solving approach. There was a significant positive correlation between students' awareness of withdrawing and competency development therefore implying that the more students are aware of withdrawing, the better their competency in teaching. The results of Tayebheh *et al.* (2018) showed that all the techniques and strategies used and teachers' challenges in dealing with students' disruptive behaviours were included in conflict management strategies, which were classified into three categories, i.e. cooperative and problem solving strategies, avoidance strategies and punishment strategies. Moreover, the studies mostly emphasized the use of cooperative and problem solving strategies, and the most highlighted methods were making effective mutual communication with students to correct their negative behaviour, training and preparing the teachers for dealing with the students' disruptive behaviours and using various teaching methods and approaches based on the classroom situation. Though the authors emphasized the use of cooperative and problem-solving strategies, which equally the case in this study, they did downgraded withdrawing in their conclusions and recommendations. According to Fisher (2002), when

the goal is not important to the student and neither is the relationship, a student may wish to give up their goal completely and avoid the issue with the person. Sometimes it is good for both students to withdraw from the conflict until they have peace. So withdrawing is a conflict management strategy to reckon with in school milieu.

General Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating the extent to which conflict management skills could impact on the teaching competency of teachers. This was in recognition of the growing conflicts and violence in our schools and society at large. Tayebhet *al.* (2018) are of the opinion that students' disruptive behaviours and classroom management are the most important challenges and concerns of the teachers. Teachers were to a very high extent inspired by problem – solving negotiations, smoothing and withdrawing that correlated highly with good teaching competency. To a very high extent as well, they dissociated with forcing/win-lose and compromising that did not correlate significantly with competency development. In fact, forcing is not an official recommended pedagogical approach for teaching or educational institutions in school, as teachers are called upon to always do their ultimate best to recover bad learners, using the pedagogical skills they were taught. The fear being that abandoning those recalcitrant students to themselves could be more detrimental to the entire society. Teachers mostly perceived that at school level, more reconciling conflict management approach like problem – solving negotiations, smoothing, and withdrawing will be adequate in building in the young learners the sense of mutual understanding, patience and objectivity in handling crises, tolerance and in general a more peaceful oriented rather than a radical mind-set.

The qualitative findings of the study saliently reveal the importance school directors placed on conflict management. They were generally of the opinion that it could be included in the curriculum of teacher training college and highlighted several reasons to support their stance. They argued the positive impact on classroom management, teaching approach, peaceful, collaborative and morally-fit school environment. They also highlighted the importance in good supervision for school administrators.

They went beyond the school environment to emphasize on the importance of the understanding of conflict management culture in good living in the society. Inclusive education is more and more emphasized upon at international and national level and has been a salient issue in pedagogy and social life over the past decade. Directors pointed out that conflict management skill could help teachers in better handling inclusive classroom. In fact, teachers are generally faced with learners of diverse characteristics and behaviours, some very violent, while at the other extreme, some are very shy. Tricia (2014) in this vein argued that conflict resolution skills could help educators including parents in the following ways: Increased perspective taking, improved problem-solving abilities, improved emotional awareness and emotional management, reduced aggressive orientations and hostile attributions, increased use of constructive conflict behaviours in schools and in home and community contexts.

The findings highlighted that conflicts management could help, not only in reconciling such extremes in the classroom, but also in changing learners with bad behaviour into good citizens and potential leaders. In this vein, Nayere (2014) explained the fact that teaching students' conflict management and resolution skills may provide them with necessary tools to solve their own conflict in a productive and practical way. Benyamin (1996) in this line stressed that world peace may be somewhat beyond our scope for the school term but creating little peacemakers who can sort out their own disputes is certainly possible. This, in turn, begins to change our communities. The author substantiated his conclusion by saying 'Imagine the difference a little sprinkle of Salt makes to a casserole or soup. Sprinkling the skills and ideas of peace making into the school can do the same'. This perceived importance of conflict management in educational programmes by the directors is highly supported by McAuslan (2015) who resolved that schools cannot do everything but the everyday rows and disputes that spring up take time and energy to sort out. It can be exhausting simply dealing with people and looking at conflict as an opportunity to teach and thereby lessen its fall-out can only be a good thing the author concluded.

Four of the conflict management styles were highly perceived by teachers as significant, thus emphasizing the importance of integrative style of conflict management recommended by Lidija (2013).

This study therefore emphasized the importance of conflict-resolution-based competency development in the educational milieu as earlier stressed by Jackson (1990) who explained that competencies are the skills and knowledge that enable a teacher to be successful. To maximize student learning, teachers must have expertise in a wide-ranging array of competencies in an especially complex environment where hundreds of critical decisions are required each day. The author contrasted that few jobs demand the integration of professional judgment and

the proficient use of evidence-based competencies as does teaching, before concluding that transformational power of an effective teacher is something many of us have experienced. Babu&Mendro (2003) and Sanders & Rivers (1996) aligned with Jackson (1990) as they confirmed this common perception of a link and reveals that of all factors under the control of a school, teachers are the most powerful influence on student success. The authors then resolved that it is important to lay inter-personal relationship between teacher and learners, which conflict management is part of the daily routine.

It is however important to contextualize conflict management strategy to the type of problem faced with, as supported by Rahayu and Setya (2020).

A proactive strategy could however be more beneficial as emphasized by directors and supported by Spangler (2003). The author is of the opinion that teaching children social and emotional skills during the early childhood years is critical for later success in school and in life. Research substantiates that healthy social emotional development is an essential ingredient for future academic success. To teach children social and emotional skills, most teachers use one of two approaches to classroom management or a combination of them both: 1) proactively teaching children how to manage their relationships and environments by teaching social and emotional skills, or 2) discouraging children’s misbehaviour with consequences and punishments such as “time out” or stoplight (red light, green light) systems.

With regard to the findings of this study and from literature review, the following recommendations were made based on the research questions:

Including conflict management in the curriculum of teacher training college; this will instil in teachers conflict management skills that will help them in better managing their classroom, in their interpersonal relationship in school and in their social life as a whole.

Conflict management in school will also help directors in their supervising exercise.

Teachers will indirectly impact conflict management skills and peace-oriented mind and behaviour in the pupils and students. These moral and ethical qualities are important for good social life, leadership and entrepreneurial abilities.

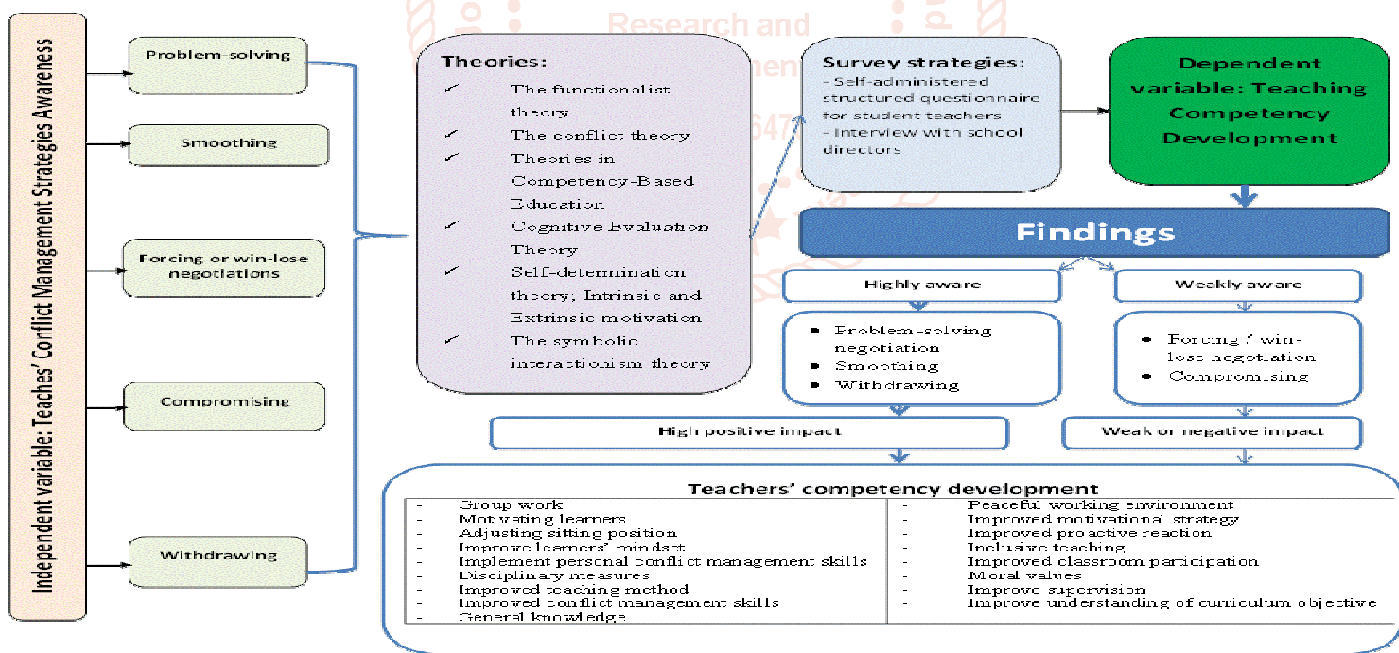


Figure 1: Conceptual diagramme depicting the influence of teachers’ awareness of conflict management strategies on the development of teaching competence

Acknowledgements

I am exceedingly indebted to my supervisors Professor AgborMichealNtui andBesong Joseph Besong (Associate Professor) for their guidance, patience and tolerance.

Special thanks to all the teaching and administrative staff of the department of Educational Foundations and Administration, Faculty of Education and to the University of Buea for giving me the opportunity to do this Ph.D. I heavily acknowledge the advice, support and encouragement from the jury

members of the thesis proposal, namely Professor Nnane Peter (Chairman), Dr. Nekang Peter (Examiner), Prof Agbor Micheal Ntui (Supervisor) and Besong Joseph Besong (Co-supervisor).

I am also indebted to all those that taught me up to this level and my classmates for their sense of sociability.

I am grateful to Mr Nana Célestin (Prof.), the statistician, for his assistance and encouragement.

I am indebted to the administrators, staff, teachers and students of teacher training colleges who made data available for this study. I would like to acknowledge the librarians of the University of Buea for helping in sourcing materials for this study and the authors whose works contributed in building up this thesis.

I am appreciative to wife, children and my family for their encouragement and love and financial support. I would like to thank all friends and relatives for their moral support.

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