



## Principals' Team Building Skills: A Strategy Used to Resolve Conflict among Teachers in Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon

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**Abstract:** Conflict resolution is a peace process for resolving disagreement between individuals, groups and nations. This study investigated team building skills as a strategy used by principals to resolve conflict among teachers in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. The objective of this study was to examine the effects of principals' team building skills as a strategy to resolve conflict among teachers. This objective was transformed into research question and hypothesis. Based on the nature of the study, research questions and hypothesis, the mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) approach specifically the sequential exploratory research design was adopted. Data was collected using a questionnaire for teachers and an interview guide for principals. Data was collected from 372 teachers and 40 principals. Participants were sampled using the purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The reliability analysis of the instrument, most especially, that for the teachers, was tested using the Cronbach Alpha test with a coefficient value which stood at 0.873. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 23 with the aid of frequency count and percentages while the hypothesis of the study was tested using the Spearman's rho test. Findings revealed that principals' team building skills ( $R= 0.280^{**}$ ,  $P=0.001$ ,  $far <0.05$  significantly and positively affect conflict resolution among teachers. Qualitative data were thematically analysed and findings revealed as follows: firstly, principals with good communication skills properly handle conflict and better understand teachers' feelings; secondly, principals with good motivation skills makes teachers feel valued and sustain healthy relationships among staff; thirdly, principals with good team building skills help to effectively bring staff together thereby minimizing the rate of conflict among them; fourthly, principals with good goal setting skills properly handle conflict, build teachers' trust and encourage unity among them; fifthly, principals' with good coaching skills properly guide their teachers and effectively resolve conflict among them. It was therefore recommended that principals should be trained on the effective use of the various leadership skills in order to effectively run the day to day activities of their schools and to better manage their teachers, most importantly in times of conflict. Conclusively, findings have shown that the principals' communication skills, motivation skills, team building skills, goal setting skills and coaching skills have a vital role to play in conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Principals' Team building Skills, Conflict Resolution, Teachers, Secondary Schools.

## Introduction

In most cases the reason for conflict is because educational officials, teachers and school principals do not understand the new paradigm underlying and driving transformation and cannot adapt their work style accordingly. This may lead to conflict that may become imminent and inevitable (Steyn J.C., Dekler J. & Du Plessis W. S., 2003). When this conflict occurs especially in the school milieu, there is bound to be conflict resolution in order to create a conducive environment for teaching/learning to take place hence leading to effective schools. Conflict resolution involves the reduction, elimination, or termination of all forms and types of conflicts. However, principals and teachers do involve in conflict resolution and management in the school system (Ownes, 1998). This study explored how principals can use their team building skills to resolve conflict among teachers in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

## Background to the Study

Educational management in secondary schools involves the application of management values and skills in designing, developing and effecting resources towards achievement of educational goals. The effective coordination in management is of great potentialities for provision of quality secondary education (Duncan, 1975). Khan et al, (2009) asserted that the overall responsibility for a school's head is conflicts management in school.

Babyegeya (2002) defined conflict as a breakdown of communication among members of the organization. He added that the more closely people are expected to work together, the more the possibility of conflict to rise. In that case conflict management is perceived as part of school administration problem and has become part and parcel of Cameroon secondary schools and educational institutions. The nature and types of conflicts that occur in secondary school administration vary from one school to another. In that way conflict may have either a positive or a negative effect on school performance, depending on the nature of the conflict and how it is managed (Armstrong, 2009).

Based on literature reviews several types of conflicts are experienced in educational institutions. These include intra personal, intra group, inter personal and inter group. Robbins (2003), intra personal conflicts involve conflicts within an institution set up. This includes conflict between heads of school and the specific member of or any specific individual. Intra group conflicts involve differences within a certain group. This may include conflicts within the staff, the students, parents, the sponsor or any other stakeholders in school. Interpersonal conflicts are the conflicts between persons. This may include conflict between specific staff members and students, specific teacher and parents. Within a group similarly inter group conflicts may include conflict between various groups in educational institution. The group could be between staff and student, and other groups or stakeholders. In general, conflicts at any given secondary school may be beneficial or non-beneficial towards institutions' achievement. Leithwood & Hallinger (2002) depicted that there is an increase of productivity and school effectiveness in institutions whereby there is countable organizational conflict among board members, heads, teachers and students.

## Statement of the Problem

Schools have managers who are judged with the responsibility of maintaining their stability in order to achieve the organization goals. Kochhar (1988) emphasized the importance of the principal who is the key cornerstone in the arch of school management and has the steering wheel in his hands. The author asserted that the principals should be group leaders who knows how to involve people, arrange conditions, and initiate process that bring out the best in each participant. In that aspect, he emphasized that the heads of secondary schools at any given work place (school) stimulate and encourage team work among other working staffs. The secondary school heads are supposed to lead their subordinates in the way that conflict remains theory in the existence of the organization thus the heads of secondary schools are responsibly involved in conflict management directly at their schools. Although by virtue of power, heads of schools in Cameroon have been given power to manage conflicts in schools, it has been observed that most of the schools conflicts between teachers occurred often. Hence, this study aimed to assess the effectiveness of principals' team building skills

as a strategies used in managing conflicts in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

### **Objective of the study**

The general objective of this study is to find out the effects of principals' Team building skills on conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

### **Research Question**

To what extent can principals' Team building skills affect conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools in the South west region of Cameroon?

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Ho:** There is no significant effect between principals' team building skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools.

**Ha:** There is a significant effect between principals' team building skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study would be significant in that the findings would hopefully be useful to principals, teachers, educational researchers, educational planners and other scholars of educational administration as it would hopefully increase their awareness of the values of conflict as well as conflict resolution methods which are constructive and beneficial to the school. Firstly, it would help principals to effectively use their team building skills to smoothly run the daily activities of their institution leading to effective schools. Secondly, the findings would also help principals of secondary schools to adopt measures which could be used to minimize conflicts in schools. It would be helpful to teachers in that they would see the value of working in teams during conflict in order to maintain a free conflict environment leading to successful schools. Furthermore, the results of the study will help policy makers and educational planners as follows; 1) to make adequate adjustments that will enhance performance in management and administration of secondary schools, 2) by providing measures which will help them in their bid to deal with conflicts in the ministry and in schools thereby improving the education standard in the country. It may also aid as a reference and open a door for other scholars to get familiarity and make advanced in-depth research on the topic.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Team Building Skills and Conflict Resolution**

Team building involves a wide variety of activities, presented to organizations and aimed at improving team performance. It is a philosophy of job design that sees employees as members of interdependent teams rather than as individual workers. Team building is an important factor in any environment; its focus is to specialize in bringing out the best in a team to ensure self-development, positive communication, leadership skills and the ability to work closely together as a team to solve problems.

A team is a group of people working towards a common goal. Team Building involves the process of enabling the group of people to reach their goals. It consists of steps like clarification of team goals; identification of hindrances to goal achievements; facing the identified challenges and enabling the achievement of the goals. Fajana (2002) asserted that teamwork is an integration of resources and inputs working in harmony to achieve organizational goals, where roles are prescribed for every organization member, challenges are equally faced and incremental improvements are sought continually.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) noted that a team can simply be defined as a small number of people, with a set of performance goals, who have a commitment to a common purpose and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. The suggestion here is that teams must be of a manageable size and that all team members must be committed to reach team goals. Also, the team members must be jointly accountable for their actions and the outcomes of these actions. There are

two basic skills in the team building process. The first involves recognizing the right issues, and the second has to do with tackling them in an appropriate way and order. Team building has various forms depending on the size and nature of the team. For instance in situations where team composition is continually changing, the emphasis is on developing the skills in individuals to be effective team members and it endeavours to change the skills and abilities of the individual at operating within a team or within multiple teams. However, where team membership is relatively static like in management teams the emphasis is on efforts aimed at improving relationships between team members.

The largest scale is that of organizational team building. With the exception of the senior management team, the ability of individuals to make an impact on the corporate culture is very limited. One of the key aims of the team building is to change the behaviours and attitudes prevalent in the organization, which are almost independent of who actually works there. Team building doesn't just mean getting the team together. It is more than generic activities imposed upon teams without any real consideration for what the team wants or needs. There is need for a more considered approach and above all, something where the objectives are clearly stated and can be met. It is necessary to take into account specific issues that need to be addressed and the sorts or personalities involved in the team. Dianna (2006) affirms that teamwork is a form of collective work that might involve individual tasks, but usually involves some kind of collective task where each member is contributing part of a collectively written document that is supposed to reflect the collective wisdom of the group.

As opposed to group work, which relies on exchange, teamwork relies on discussion. Discussion occurs when each member shares their view, and is heard by the rest of the group. Discussion requires fairness so that each member's ideas are aired and shared in a balanced way in order to avoid conflict. It can take more time than exchange, but with practice, a time keeper, and a few rules, groups can create fair discussions that are also time efficient. Since the tasks are usually collective, the natural outcomes of teamwork discussions are negotiation and compromise. While no members might get all their own way, the outcome always reflects the best thinking and priorities of each group member. Teamwork can be quite efficient since it results in everyone feeling that his or her point of view is adequately represented and accounted for. The discussion helps to identify each person's highest priorities and the negotiation and compromise helps to synthesize these into an outcome that reflects the group's collective priorities for success.

### **Objectives of Team Building**

Team building has several major objectives one of which is enhancing good communications with participants as team members and individuals. There is also increased productivity and creativity. Another objective of team building is to achieve better operating policies and procedures thereby motivating team members to achieve goals. It is also aimed at ensuring clear work objectives and a climate of cooperation and collaborative problem-solving. Furthermore, team building enhances higher levels of trust and support. With team building, diverse co-workers work well together and there are higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment.

### **Stages of Team Development**

Basically, team development involves five stages each with its own special challenges as propounded by Tuckman (1975) in a revision of the four stage model he first proposed in 1965.

**1. Forming:** This is the initial orientation period. The team is unsure about what it is supposed to do; members do not know each other well or are not yet familiar with the way the team leader and the other members function. This stage is complete when the members begin to see themselves as a part of the group.

**2. Storming:** This is a sorting out period where members begin to find their place as team members. The team members now feel more comfortable giving their opinion and challenging the team leader's authority and recommendations. Some members may become dissatisfied and

challenge not only the tasks of the team and how these will be carried out, but also the leader's role and style of leadership. This is the start of intragroup conflicts.

**3. Norming:** Team members begin to use their past experiences to solve their problems and pull together as a cohesive group. This process should result in the team establishing procedures for handling conflicts, decisions, and methods to accomplish the team projects.

**4. Performing:** In this phase the team has achieved harmony, defined its tasks, worked out its relationships, and has started producing results. Leadership is provided by the team members best suited for the task at hand. Members have learned how to work together, manage conflict and contribute their resources to meet the team's purposes.

**5. Dissolving or re-orientating:** The team dissolves when the team has completed the project. It may be reoriented to continue on a next phase of the project.

### Building Effective Teams

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) listed the following requirements for building effective teams: (i) it should be small enough in the number of members. (ii) adequate levels of complementary skills. (iii) truly meaningful purpose (iii) specific goal or goals. (iv) established clear approach to the team's work. (v) a sense of mutual accountability. (vi) defined appropriate leadership structure. Effective team functioning requires finding time, selecting team members, empowering team members, providing training in relevant skills and knowledge, developing shared goals, and facilitating team functioning particularly in the early stages of the team's work. Effective teams are carefully designed. When assembling a team it is very important to consider the overall dynamics of the team.

La Fasto (2001) identifies five dynamics that are fundamental to team success. The first dynamic is team membership. Successful teams are made up of a collection of effective individuals who are experienced, have problem solving ability, are open to addressing the problem and are action oriented. Second is team relationship which has to do with the ability of team members to give and receive feedback. The third dynamic is team problem solving which implies that team effectiveness depends on the level of focus and clarity of the goals of the team. Fourth is team leadership. Effective team leadership depends on leadership competencies. A competent leader is focused on the goal, ensures a collaborative climate, builds confidence of team members, sets priorities, demonstrates sufficient "know-how" and manages performance through feedback. Organizational environment is the fifth dynamic of team success and it has to do with the climate and culture of the organization being conducive to team behaviour. The major components of effective team building are:

**1. Clarity of Expectations and Objectives:** For team building to be effective the objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and have a time frame. As much as possible, input from all members must be included in the design and wording of the goals. All expectations must be clearly stated and this must be clearly understood by team members who must also understand the reason for the creation of the team. There must be clear means of measuring the ongoing effectiveness of the team which should be written down for eventual communication to and discussion with all team members.

Carr (1992) affirmed that team goals should be specific enough to give the team direction while at the same time stating the ends, rather than the means. This gives teams the freedom to work out how best to achieve the goal. Added to the provision of clear goals is the development of meaningful and acceptable performance measures so that the team members can feel confident in their own achievements. Clear performance expectations affect happiness or unhappiness at work. Consequently, management must clearly communicate its expectations for the team's performance and expected outcomes to align each area of the organization with the overall mission and vision. The manner of communication is important in the effective working of teams to bring about an organization where all components are connected and pulling in the same direction. Again, team members need to understand the reasons behind team creation and the expected outcomes. The

higher level goals must be translated into the outcomes necessary for each employee's job within the organization and employees must be clear about their expected contributions.

**2. Perspective:** Perspective has to do with team members understanding the reasons behind their participation on the team and how the team fits within the organization. Team members need to know not only where their team fits but how the team strategy fits in the total scheme of plans and success goals, mission, goals, principles, vision and values.

**3. Dedication:** This involves the willingness of team members to participate on the team and seeing their mission as important. Visions must be shared with employees in ways that compel them to act. The dream and direction of the team should be presented in such a way that other people want to share and follow. The level of dedication of team members is usually dependent on factors like team choice; belief in the importance of the team; team members feeling valued; challenge, excitement and opportunity; as well as recognition. Appropriate environment for team success improves team performance, and reduces dysfunctional behaviour.

**4. Capability:** For effectiveness to be achieved, there is need for the team to feel that participants are appropriate and that its members either possess requisite knowledge, skills and capabilities to address the issues for which such teams were formed or have access to needed help. The team members may need training to learn new skills which allow them to work together effectively, such as effective communication, conflict resolution and problem solving skills. Training and development allows them to take on new responsibilities. Where team members possess inadequate work skills and knowledge, teams are less likely to succeed.

**5. Contract:** Contract involves the team taking its assigned area of responsibility and designing its own mission, vision and strategies to accomplish the mission. Consequently, the team must define and communicate its goals; its anticipated outcomes and contributions; its timelines; and means of evaluating both the outcomes of its work and the process the team followed in accomplishing tasks.

**6. Resources:** Team members must feel that the resources, strategies and support needed to accomplish the stated mission are available. Robbins (1998) affirmed that teams need access to resources such as money, time, equipment, technology, people and information for them to operate effectively. Providing the resources depends on trust on the part of the organisation and responsibility on the part of the team members. Brower (1995) added that as obtains for authority, resources should not, and cannot, be unlimited and should therefore be given to employees gradually.

**7. Power:** For effectiveness teams need authority to take decisions. Consequently, a certain level of empowerment is necessary for them in order to carry out their work efficiently. Without this authority they would need to get approval for their ideas and these ideas may be rejected before they are either proven or not proven. For innovation to occur, teams must be allowed to experiment. Brower (1995) suggested however that to avoid costly mistakes, it is appropriate to give teams this authority within certain boundaries. It may also be necessary to hand over authority on a gradual basis so team members are not overwhelmed by their newly-acquired authority. People are able to empower themselves through a clear focus and the removal of the sense of fear in what they do.

**8. Cooperation:** This has to do with the team members understanding team dynamics and group processes. They must understand the stages of group development, their roles and responsibilities as team members and be able to work together effectively at the interpersonal level. Cooperation also involves the team being able to approach problem solving, process improvement, goal setting and measurement jointly. Added to which team members need to cooperate to accomplish the team contract and obligation. Group norms or rules of conduct in areas such as conflict resolution, consensus decision making and meeting management must be established by the team using an appropriate strategy to accomplish its action plan.

**9. Communication:** Effective team building involves clarity about the priority of team member's tasks with an established method for the teams for feedback. Feedback must however be received with grace and dignity bearing in mind that people hesitate to give feedback to others out of fear of hurting them or having to deal with defensive or justifying behaviour. To obtain feedback there

should be openness to feedback. Nevertheless, it should be noted that feedback is not always right. The reliability of the feedback should be determined by checking with others. There should be important business information regularly with team members communicating clearly and honestly with each other and bringing diverse opinions to the table. Necessary conflicts must also be raised and addressed.

**0. Creative Improvement:** Teambuilding is about change and the interest in change must not only be real, it must value creative thinking, unique solutions, and new ideas while at the same time rewarding people who take reasonable risks to make improvements rather than those who fit in and maintain the status quo. There must also be adequate provision for necessary human resource development to stimulate new thinking. The process of reviewing employee ideas, and encouraging creative thinking from employees, has evolved over the years. Adequate time must be created to read about new ideas, revel in the creative thinking of staff and make changes.

**11. Responsibility and Accountability:** In spite of the obvious value of employee recognition, it is so closely guarded in many organizations and several reasons have been adduced for this including time and the fact that it often results in employee complaining, jealousy, and dissatisfaction. Team members need to feel responsible and accountable for team achievements. Rewards and recognition must be given when teams are successful with reasonable risk being respected and encouraged in the organization rather than team members fearing reprisal. Team members need to spend their time resolving problems not finger pointing and the reward systems must be designed to recognize both team and individual performances.

**12. Harmonization:** Harmonization involves the synchronization of teams by a central leadership team that assists the groups in obtaining what they need for success. It involves the planning of priorities and resources allocation across departments. Cross-functional and multi-department teams should be coordinated to work together effectively. Carr (1992) observed that managers and supervisors who become team leaders experience a significant change of role because team leaders do not direct or control work, but instead work as coaches and mentors. Effective communication, leadership and consulting skills will be required which may necessitate training and development. A new mind set is also required.

**13. Cultural Change:** Culture is the environment that surrounds a workplace at all times. It is a powerful element that shapes work enjoyment, work relationships, and work processes. Culture involves the values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, attitudes, and behaviours shared by a group of people. It is the behaviour that results when a group arrives at a set of - generally unspoken and unwritten - rules for working together. An organization's culture is made up of all of the life experiences each employee brings to the organization.

### **The Concept of Conflict**

We cannot discuss about conflict resolution without examining what conflict is all about. We will therefore discuss about conflict, its types, causes and consequences in schools before discussing about conflict resolutions.

### **Conflict**

The term conflict has been defined differently by several scholars. Molindo (2014) postulated that conflict is a natural disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values, or needs. Thomas (1976) defined conflict as the process which begins when one party perceives that the other is frustrated, or is about to be frustrated. Amason (1996) described conflict as a form of socialization. He stressed that people in organizations have both personal and role preferences about the organizations actions and policies.

Other scholars, Schmidt and Kochan (1972) described conflict as an opportunity for interfering with the other's goal attainment. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) defined conflict (from a communication perspective) as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.

Deutsch and Coleman (2000) argued that conflict exists because people have different needs, ideas, views and values. The challenge for schools, as for the wider community is to find ways of managing conflict constructively so that, those involved can learn and grow from the experience in all kinds of human relationships and social settings. In further more wide range of potential differences among people, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction.

### Causes of Conflict in Schools

There are many potential causes of conflict in the school. Mullius (2010) enumerated the causes of conflict as follows:

- 1. Limited resources:** Most school resources are limited and as a result, teachers and principals struggle to have their own share. The greater the limitation of resources than usually, the greater the potential for conflict.
- 2. Poor communication network:** Poor communication network is highly rated as one of the main causes of conflict in schools (Iwuagwu, 2011). School principals who introduce innovation without first educating the teachers and students of the nature and foreseen benefits of the innovation in the school cannot expect genuine cooperation and participation from them. And this can lead to conflict. Also, when decisions are not disseminated effectively, sources of conflict can this be created for or by teachers and students.
- 3. Task inter-dependence:** Where the task of a teacher is dependent upon the work of another teacher, there is potential for conflict. Also if the work of a department in the school is dependent upon the output of another department, a similar situation could arise. If reward or punishment systems are perceived to be based on keeping up with performance level, then the potential for conflict is even greater.
- 4. Overlapping authority:** When two or more teachers or departments claim authority for the same activities or tasks, conflict is likely to occur.
- 5. Role conflict:** A role is the expected pattern of behaviour associated with members occupying a particular position within the structure of the school. In practice, the manner in which some teachers actually behave may not be consistent with their expected pattern of behaviour. Problems of role incompatibility and role ambiguity arise from inadequate or inappropriate role definition in the school system and can be a significant cause of conflict.
- 6. Inequitable treatment:** A teacher's perception of unjust treatment in the operating of personnel policies and practices or in reward and punishment systems can lead to tension and conflict.

### The concept of Conflict Resolution

Wallenstein (2015) stated the definition of conflict resolution as “conflict resolution is a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solve their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other”. Conflict resolution involves the reconciliation or elimination of fundamental differences and grievances underlying the conflict. Parties involved in conflict resolution in schools include; principals, teachers, students, parents, stakeholders and support staff. Conflict resolution occurs when the incompatibility between the preferences of the various parties to a conflict disappears or when the sources of conflict situation are removed. Conflict resolution is a development process, which includes not only preventing violence but also the removal of source of conflict situation.

### The Process of conflict Resolution

The conflict resolution process will follow one of three paths: win-lose, lose-lose, or win-win (Morrison, 1993).

**Win-lose:** In this situation, one side ‘win’ by dominating the other side through the use of superior power. One group of person is satisfied, while the others are not. Members of the ‘losing’ side may feel hostility and resentment. Future interactions may also be affected. The solution may resolve the



conflict temporarily, for those who lost may become frustrated and unwilling to make the solution work.

**Lose-lose:** With a lose-lose resolution, neither side is willing to objectively consider the other's ideas. The conflict is resolved through the use of avoidance, bribery, coercion, threats, or withdrawal. The conflict remains basically unresolved, and neither side is satisfied with the outcome. Members of both groups are likely to feel frustrated and angry.

**Win-win:** An outcome that satisfies both sides is the main characteristic of a win-win process. Conflict becomes constructive through the use of "open and honest dialogue to examine ideas until decisions are produced that are satisfying to all participants" (Douglas & Bevis, 1983). All involved individuals collaborate to mutually set goals or develop solutions that are satisfying and supported by everyone. Although the decision may take longer to implement, the potential for success is much greater because all sides are enthusiastic and willing to work.

## Theoretical Review

### Interpersonal Relations Theory by Hildegard Peplau's (1952)

Hildegard Elizabeth Peplau (September 1, 1909 – March 17, 1999) was an American nurse who is the only one to serve the American Nurses Association (ANA) as Executive Director and later as President. She became the first published nursing theorist since Florence Nightingale. Peplau was well-known for her Theory of Interpersonal Relations, which helped to revolutionize the scholarly work of nurses. Her achievements are valued by nurses all over the world and became known to many as the "Mother of Psychiatric Nursing" and the "Nurse of the Century."

Hildegard Peplau was born on September 1, 1909. She was raised in Reading, Pennsylvania by her parents of German descent, Gustav and Otyllie Peplau. She was the second daughter, having two sisters and three brothers. Though illiterate, her father was persevering while her mother was a perfectionist and oppressive. With her young age, Peplau's eagerness to grow beyond traditional women's roles was precise. She considers nursing was one of few career choices for women during her time. In 1918, she witnessed the devastating flu epidemic that greatly influenced her understanding of the impact of illness and death on families.

In 1931, she graduated in Pottstown, Pennsylvania School of Nursing. Peplau earned a Bachelor's degree in interpersonal psychology in 1943 at Bennington College in Vermont. She studied psychological issues together with Erich Fromm and Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, at Chestnut Lodge, a private psychiatric hospital in Maryland. Peplau held master's and doctoral degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University in 1947. After graduating in Pennsylvania, Hildegard Peplau then worked as a staff nurse in her place and in New York City. A summer position as a nurse for the New York University summer camp led to a recommendation for Peplau to become the school nurse at Bennington College in Vermont, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in interpersonal psychology. Peplau's lifelong work was largely focused on extending Sullivan's interpersonal theory for use in nursing practice. Peplau was certified in psychoanalysis by the William Alanson White Institute of New York City. In the early 1950s, she developed and taught the first classes for graduate psychiatric nursing students at Teachers College. Peplau was a member of the faculty of the College of Nursing at Rutgers University from 1954 until her retirement in 1974. She was a professor emerita at the said university.

During the 1950s and 1960s, she supervised summer workshops for nurses throughout the United States, mostly in state psychiatric hospitals. In these seminars, she taught interpersonal concepts and interviewing techniques, as well as individual, family, and group therapy. Peplau was an advisor to the the World Health Organization and was a visiting professor at universities in Africa, Latin America, Belgium, and throughout the United States. A strong advocate for graduate education and research in nursing, Peplau served as a consultant to the U.S. Surgeon General, the U.S. Air Force, and the National Institute of Mental Health. She participated in many government policy making groups.

Peplau was devoted to nursing education at full length of her career. After her retirement from Rutgers, she served as a visiting professor at the University of Leuven in Belgium in 1975 and 1976. There she helped establish the first graduate nursing program in Europe. She was the only nurse who served the ANA as executive director and later as president, she served two terms on the Board of the International Council of Nurses (ICN). And as a member of the New Jersey State Nurses Association, she actively contributed to the ANA by serving on various committees and task forces.

Her fifty-year career in nursing left an unforgettable mark on the field and on the lives of the mentally challenged in the United States. During the peak of her career, she became the founder of modern psychiatric nursing, an innovative educator, advocate for the mentally ill, proponent of advanced education for nurses, Executive Director and then President of the ANA and prolific author. And just like any other famous personalities, her life was often marked with controversy, which she faced with boldness, prowess and conviction.

In 1952, Hildegard Peplau published her Theory of Interpersonal Relations that was influenced by Henry Stack Sullivan, Percival Symonds, Abraham Maslow, and Neal Elgar Miller. Peplau's original book from 1952 has been translated into nine languages and in 1989 was reissued in Great Britain by Macmillan of London. In 1989, Springer published a volume of selected works of Peplau from previously unpublished papers. Her ideas have, indeed, stood the test of time. The archives of her work and life are housed at the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University.

Hildegard Peplau's Interpersonal Relations Theory emphasized the nurse-client relationship as the foundation of nursing practice. It gave emphasis on the give-and-take of nurse-client relationships that was seen by many as revolutionary. Peplau went on to form an interpersonal model emphasizing the need for a partnership between nurse and client as opposed to the client passively receiving treatment and the nurse passively acting out doctor's orders. The four components of the theory are: person, which is a developing organism that tries to reduce anxiety caused by needs; environment, which consists of existing forces outside of the person, and put in the context of culture; health, which is a word symbol that implies forward movement of personality and nursing, which is a significant therapeutic interpersonal process that functions cooperatively with other human process that make health possible for individuals in communities.

Peplau stressed that many nursing problems can be overcome through strong interpersonal relations. In the Theory of Interpersonal Relations she developed, she identified four distinct stages in the patient-nurse relationship namely, orientation, identification, exploitation, and resolution. In addition, continuous evaluations should be performed in each stage.

**Orientation:** This is the stage where the patient seeks help, and the nurse identifies the problem and supports the patient in recognizing their problem. It is particularly important at this stage that a relationship of trust be established between the nurse and the patient, as this helps to reduce the anxiety of the patient.

**Identification:** This stage involves the processes of planning and determining goals. With the start of a good relationship, the nurse gives the patient the opportunity to open their emotions and channels their emotions in a positive direction. This is important to meet the needs of the patient.

**Exploitation:** At this stage, assuming that a good relationship has been established between the patient and nurse, the patient needs to be informed to such a degree whereby they can now cope with their problem(s). Furthermore, at this stage, professional cooperation takes place, and the patient-nurse relationship matures. The "Therapeutic relation" develops once the patient takes responsibility and is active in communication.

**Resolution:** At this phase, the patient is expected to be successful in all of the activities discussed. Here it is important to ensure that the patient does not develop any dependency on the nurse. As the patient now has the capacity to make individual decisions, the patient-nurse relationship ends at this stage.

## The Application of Peplau's Theory on Principals and Teachers

The phases of Peplau's theory of interpersonal relations are applicable to the relationship between principals and teachers. During the orientation phase, the principals and teachers come to know each other and learn how to work together as a team. This phase encompasses the principal's communication skills and team building skills. When there is communication and team work between teachers and principals, the occurrence of conflict reduces and even when it occurs, it can easily be resolved. The identification phase is the time to discover opportunities for learning and improvement for the teachers and to recognize their effort through motivation. When teachers are recognized and motivated, conflict among them is bound to reduce, and when it occurs, it can easily be resolved. During the exploitation phase, the teachers use the principals as a resource and support to help meet identified needs. When resolution occurs with the achievement of goals, mentoring also known as coaching can continue as the teachers become more and more competent and continue the transition to be professionals in resolving conflict.

### Methodology

**Research design:** This study adopted the survey research design using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to allow for in-depth exploration of the variables under study.

**Population of study:** The population of the study comprised of secondary teachers and principals in the South-West Region of Cameroon which comprised of six divisions namely, Manyu, Meme, Fako, Kupe Maunenguba, Libialem and Indian Divisions. The target population consisted of teachers from three of the six divisions which are Manyu, Meme and Fako divisions. As for accessible population of the study, teachers and principals were sampled from 40 secondary schools.

### Sample size and Sampling technique

The sample size of the study comprised of 372 teachers and 40 principals and the participants were sampled using the purposive and convenient sampling techniques.

**Table 1: Distribution of number of sample size of teachers per division**

Division	Public secondary schools		Confessional schools		Lay private schools	
	Total teachers	Sample size per division	Total teachers	Sample size per division	Total teachers	Sample size per division
Fako	1684	111	696	46	1581	104
Manyu	446	29	121	8	53	3
Meme	780	52	137	9	527	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,910</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>2,161</b>	<b>143</b>

Statistics on table 1 shows that out of the 398 questionnaire for teachers, 192 questionnaires were administered to teachers teaching in public secondary schools with 111 from Fako, 29, from Manyu and 52 from Meme divisions, respectively. For confessional schools, 63 teachers were sampled 46 teachers from Fako, 8 from Manyu and 9 from Meme division. Finally, for lay private schools, out of the 143 teachers, 104 were from Fako, 3 from Manyu and 36 from Meme divisions, respectively.

The calculation of the sample size by school type and division was free from bias, given that a simple proportion technique was used in distributing the 398 teachers to all the divisions. For instance, to calculate the number of teachers to be sampled in Fako for public schools, the total number of teachers in public secondary schools in Fako was multiplied by 398 and then divided by 6025.

### Sampling Techniques

Two sampling techniques were adopted for this study namely, the purposive sampling technique and convenient sampling technique. These two sampling techniques explain the manner in which participants were recruited in the study. The purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of three divisions out of six from which information/data required for the study was gotten. The reasons for purposively selecting Manyu division, Meme division and Fako division was because

these divisions have the highest number of schools and coupled with the on-going arm conflict in the Southwest Region of Cameroon, it is in these divisions that a good number of schools are operational. So, getting teachers and principals in these divisions that a good number of schools are operational was quite easy.

Within these three divisions, teachers and principals for each school that was visited by the researcher were sampled using the convenient sampling technique. The convenient sampling technique is equally another form of random sampling whereby each participant was given an equal chance to participate in the study.

### **Instruments for data collection**

Questionnaire and interviewed guide were the instruments adopted for the study. The questionnaire was designed for teachers and interview guide for the principals. The questionnaire for teachers consisted of both close and few open ended questions. For communication skills, 10 close ended items were formulated and 1 open ended questions. Team building skills had 7 close ended items and an open ended question. Coaching skill had 6 close ended items and an open ended question with goal setting skill and motivation skills having 6 close ended items each with an open ended question. Also, the teachers' questionnaire consisted of two additional questions with one finding out teachers' involvement in conflict with colleagues and their satisfaction of the approach used by their principal in resolving the conflict. In total, the questionnaire consisted of 37 items.

On the other hand, the interview guide for principals consisted of 14 open ended questions which assesses the occurrence of conflict among staff, the causes of conflict among the staff, the effect of conflict among the staff, how principal handle conflict in their school, their perception of the relevance of communication skills, motivation skills, team building skills, coaching skills and goal setting skills to conflict resolution among teachers. Finally, the interview guide also consisted of different conflict resolution mechanisms which demanded the principals to tick those ones they use in their school during conflict resolution.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

In this study, the measures were adopted to ensure that the instruments are valid and reliable of the study. In doing this, the test items were designed by making use of the theories and concept reviewed in the literature. After that, the instruments were pretested on some teachers and their and the consistency of their responses was measured using the Cronbach Alpha test which yield a coefficient value of 0.873.

**Method of data collection:** The data for the study was collected using the direct delivery technique that is face to face by the researcher.

### **Method of data analysis**

The quantitative data was analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used were frequency count, percentages and multiple responses set which aimed at calculating the summary of findings for each variable where applicable. The hypotheses of study were tested using a non-parametric Spearman's Rho test. This test was used because the data for the variables were not approximately normally distributed as revealed by the Shapiro-Wilk test and the Komogorov test of significance with P-values all less than 0.05. On the other, the qualitative data derived from open ended questions and semi-structured interview guide were analysed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes, groundings/frequency and quotations. Themes are umbrella words which capture the main idea of the participants' statements. On the other hand, groundings also call frequency represent the number of time that a particular theme/concept surface from the direct statements of the participants. Finally, findings were presented using frequency distribution tables and thematic tables with all inferential statistics presented at 95% level of confidence interval with alpha set at 0.05 levels, accepting 5% margin of error.

## Findings

Principals' also identified some of the causes of conflict among teachers in their schools as seen on table 2.

**Table2: Principals' identification of the causes of conflict in their school**

Themes	Frequency	Quotations
Time tables	22	“Time table issues (period allocation, class allocation, etc.” “Time table”. “Misunderstanding over time table”. “Time table distribution”. “Managing time tables”. “Some teachers want the time table to favour them”.
Unequal distribution of workload	18	“Work load of colleagues”. “Workload”. “Conflict over the number of hours to teach”. “Work load”. “Problems with work load”. “Too much workload by some teachers’.
Non respect of teaching periods	6	“Teachers going into other teachers’ periods”. “Number of periods on the time table”. “Use of colleague teaching period”.
Power struggle	2	“Power issues”. “Rivalry in position as HOD or class master/mistress”.
Greed	2	“Greed”. “Self-centeredness”.
Motivation	2	“Motivation” “When their motivation is not coming”.
Disrespect for authorities	1	“Teachers not respecting or responding to calls from vice principals”.
Poor attention to staff needs	1	“When principals do not adequately pay attention to the needs of their staff”.
Jealousy	1	“Backstabbing and jealousy”
Discrimination	1	“Discrimination”.
Accusations	1	“Some colleagues accuse others for poor teaching skills”.

Principals' identification of the causes of conflict among teachers were grouped into 11 categories. The findings show that the frequently mentioned cause of teachers' conflict was timetable problems as stated by many of the principals, followed by unequal distribution of workload. Non respect for teaching period, struggle for power in position like HOD and class masters/mistress, greed, lack of motivation, disrespect for authorities, inadequate attention paid to the needs of staff, jealousy, discrimination and accusations by some teachers were the least causes of conflict among teachers.

**Table 3: Principals' perception of team building skills**

Principals can effectively resolve conflict when they lack team building skills.	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	5	12.5
No	35	87.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings showed that a majority of the principals 35 (87.5%) accepted that principals cannot effectively resolve conflict when they lack team building skills while 5 (12.5%) of them did not see team building skills as relevant to conflict resolution among teachers.

Furthermore, principals were asked to describe how they use their team building skills to resolve conflict among teachers and the responses were presented on table 4.

**Table 4: Teachers’ perception of principals’ team building skills**

Items	Stretched				Collapsed	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	SA/A	D/SD
The principal always works in team with teachers.	113 (30.7%)	223 (60.6%)	28 (7.6%)	4 (1.1%)	336 (91.3%)	32 (8.7%)
The principal always enables teachers working in group to reach their goal.	93 (25.3%)	239 (64.9%)	34 (9.2%)	2 (0.5%)	332 (90.2%)	36 (9.8%)
The principal always does his/her best to sustain a culture of cooperation among teachers.	112 (30.6%)	222 (60.7%)	25 (6.8%)	7 (1.9%)	334 (91.3%)	32 (8.7%)
Principal and teachers are jointly accountable for their actions.	81 (22.1%)	202 (55.0%)	82 (22.3%)	2 (0.5%)	283 (77.1%)	84 (22.9%)
Appropriate team building skills enhance teachers’ trust for the principal.	118 (32.5%)	220 (60.2%)	24 (6.6%)	1 (0.3%)	338 (93.1%)	25 (6.9%)
The principal ensures that teachers work well with each other.	73 (19.9%)	230 (62.8%)	58 (15.8%)	5 (1.4%)	303 (82.8%)	63 (17.2%)
The principal is open at addressing problems.	110 (30.0 %)	216 (58.9%)	38 (10.4%)	3 (0.8%)	326 (88.8%)	41 (11.2%)
<b>Multiple response set</b>	<b>700 (27.3%)</b>	<b>1552 (60.5%)</b>	<b>289 (11.3%)</b>	<b>24 (0.9%)</b>	<b>2252 (87.8%)</b>	<b>313 (12.2%)</b>

Findings showed that a majority of the teachers 336 (91.3%) and 332 (90.2%), respectively, accepted that their principal always works in team with teachers and always enables teachers to work in group to reach their goal. Also, a majority of the teachers 334 (91.3%) also accepted that the principal always does his/her best to sustain a culture of cooperation among teachers.

Findings also showed that 283 (77.1%) of the teachers also accepted that principals and teachers are jointly accountable for their actions. Majority of teachers 338 (93.1%) also accepted that appropriate team building skills enhance teachers’ trust for the principal. Findings also showed that a majority of the teachers 303 (82.8%) accepted that their principals ensured that teachers work well with each other with 326 (88.8%) of the teachers equally accepted that their principal is open at addressing problems.

In overall, findings showed that 87.8% of the teachers indicated that their principal has good team building skills while 12.2% of the teachers do not see their principal as such.

**Table 5: Principals’ perception of team building skills**

Principals can effectively resolve conflict when they lack team building skills.	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	5	12.5
No	35	87.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings show that a majority of the principals 35 (87.5%) accepted that principals cannot effectively resolve conflict when they lack team building skills while 5 (12.5%) of them did not see team building skills as relevant to conflict resolution among teachers.

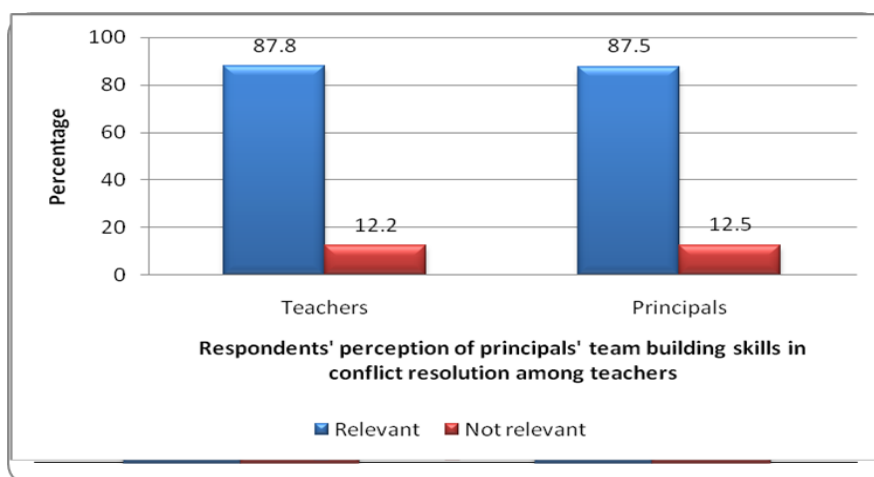
Furthermore, principals were asked to describe how they use their team building skills to resolve conflict among teachers and the responses were presented on table 6.

**Table 6: Principals’ description of team building skills to conflict resolution among teachers**

Themes	Frequency	Quotations
Effectively bringing staff together	22	“If people are not collaborating, there cannot be any possibility to resolve a conflict between them especially if they avoid each other”. “With good team building skill, the principal can effectively make teachers to work together and see each other as a friend thus, minimizing the rate of conflict among them”. “Team work is necessary in the school and when teachers are aware of this, they will easily resolve conflict in order to continue working as a team”. “A principal who is unable to help the staff to work together will always see the staff in disagreement”. ‘Creating team work amongst staff is very essential and important for a principal especially in conflict resolution’.
Proper handling of conflict	5	“Because the principal of synergy tells us that the whole is greater than it sum of part so, if team building is poor, the principal cannot resolve conflicts”. “The principal will easily addresses the teachers’ conflict when they ensure cooperation among teachers”
Instill cooperation among teachers	2	“A principal with good team building skills will always make teachers to work in harmony thus minimizing the rate of conflict among staff”. “A principal who lacks team building skill will not be able even to instill cooperation among colleagues”.
Proper initiation of dialogue	1	“A principal with poor team building skill will always have problems initiating dialogue among the teachers”.

Findings showed that many of the principals stated that the principals’ team building skills help to effectively bring staff together thereby minimizing the rate of conflict among teachers. Other principals said team building skills help principals to properly handle conflict, instill cooperation among teachers and it helps them to properly initiate dialogue during conflict resolution among the teachers.

However, the comparison between teachers’ and principals’ perception of principals’ team building skills were presented on figure 1.



**Figure 1: Respondents' perception of principals' team building skills to conflict resolution among teachers**

Comparatively, findings show that a majority of the teachers (87.8%) and principals (87.5%) indicated that principals' team building skill is relevant in conflict resolution among teachers.

**Testing of hypothesis three (H<sub>03</sub>): There is no significant effect between principals' team building skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools.**

Lastly, the effect of principals' team building skills on conflict resolution among teachers was sought in order to test hypothesis three as seen on table 34.

**Table 7: The effect of principals' team building skills to conflict resolution**

Test	Statistical parameters	Team building skills	Conflict resolution among teachers
Spearman's rho test	R-value	1.000	.280 <sup>**</sup>
	P-value		.001
	N	372	372
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Statistically, findings show that principals' team building skills significantly and positively affect conflict resolution ( $P=0.001$ , far  $<0.05$ ). The positive sign of the correlation value ( $R= 0.280^{**}$ ) implies that principals are more likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they are capable of making their teachers to work together and are less likely to resolve conflict among teachers when they are unable to help their teachers to work together. Therefore, the null hypothesis stated above was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that states there is a significant effect between principals' team building skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools was accepted.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that principals' team building skills significantly and positively affect conflict resolution. The positive sign of the correlation implied that principals are more likely to resolved conflict among teachers when they are capable of making their teachers to work together and are less likely to resolved conflict among teachers when they are unable to help their teachers to work together. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that stated that there is a significant effect between principals' team building skills and conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools was accepted.

The results of this finding agreed with that of Dianna (2006) who affirmed that teamwork is a form of collective work that might involve individual tasks, but usually involves some kind of collective task where each member is contributing part of a collectively written document that is supposed to reflect the collective wisdom of the group. As opposed to group work, which relies on exchange, teamwork relies on discussion. Discussion occurs when each member shares their view, and is heard by the rest of the group. Discussion requires fairness so that each member's ideas are aired and shared in a balanced way in order to avoid conflict.

Hildegard Peplau's Interpersonal Relations theory (1952) supports these findings. He emphasized on the nurse-client relationship as the foundation of nursing practice. It gave emphasis on the give-and-take of nurse-client relationships that was seen by many as revolutionary. Peplau went on to form an interpersonal model emphasizing the need for a partnership between nurse and client as opposed to the client passively receiving treatment and the nurse passively acting out doctor's orders. Peplau stressed that many nursing problems can be overcome through strong interpersonal relations. This can be applied to principals and teachers relationship. In this theory of Interpersonal Relations she developed, she identified four distinct stages in the patient-nurse relationship namely, orientation, identification, exploitation, and resolution. In addition, continuous evaluations should be performed in each stage. The phases of Peplau's theory of interpersonal relations are applicable to the relationship between principals and teachers. During the orientation phase, the principals and teachers come to know each other and learn how to work together as a team. This phase encompasses the principal's communication skills and team building skills.



Teachers' opinion on principals' team building skills to conflict resolution revealed that principals with good team building skills maintain cooperation, love and understanding among teachers and also minimize the rate of conflict in their schools. Improving on teachers' tolerance for others, quick resolution of conflict, building good interpersonal relationships among teachers and enhance teachers' trust for the principal for effective conflict resolution were other relevance of principals' team building skills as stated by the teachers. Finding showed that principals' team building skills maintain cooperation among teachers as majority of teachers said that "with team building skills, teachers can easily settle their differences since there is cooperation". They also revealed that "Teaching is a combine process and so one has to cooperate with other teachers to make leaving easy. Thus principals with good team building skills maintain cooperation among teachers".

Conflict are minimize when colleagues work together as it always give them the opportunity to share whatever grievances they have toward each other. Therefore principals' team building skills help to reduce conflict among teachers. When teachers work in team, it will minimize conflict among the teachers thus; principals should demonstrate good team building skills. Team building skills will help to reduce conflict hence creating a conducive environment for teachers to perform their duties. Some teachers said that "with team building skills, the rate of conflict among the teachers is minimal thus; principal need team building skills to create cohesion among the teachers". Others were of the opinion that "team building skills has an impact on conflict in that principal with such skills are good at creating unity among the teachers thus reducing the rate of conflict among them". Furthermore, then principal encourage teachers to work in team spirit, it helps to reduce the amount of conflicts in the school thereby build up confidence and limit the rate of conflict occurrence. The principals' team building skills help to maintain love and understanding among teachers because helping the teachers to work as a team enables them to understand themselves better. Hence when conflict arises, it is easily handled.

Few teachers were of the opinion that principals with good team building skills Improve teachers' tolerance among teachers. They also said that "when principals help teachers to work as a family, they easily tolerate and accept each other's faults" and "Principals with good team building skills handle conflict without favoritisms". Furthermore, when principals promote team work among teachers, it promotes interpersonal relationship between /among teachers and this to a certain extent helps to reduce conflict. Proper team building skills from the principals make the teachers to have trust for the principal to properly resolve their conflict".

From the principals' point of view, findings showed that many of the principals stated that the principals' team building skills help to effectively bring staff together thereby minimizing the rate of conflict among teachers. However, some principals said that "If people are not collaborating, there cannot be any possibility to resolve conflict among them especially if they avoid each other". Therefore a principal who is unable to help the staff to work together will always see the staff in disagreement. Therefore with good team building skills, the principal can effectively make teachers to work together and see each other as a friend thus, minimizing the rate of conflict among them. Team work is necessary in the school because when teachers are conscious of this, they will easily resolve conflict in order to continue working as a team.

Few principals agreed that their team building skills can help in the Proper handling of conflict. They said that "because the principal of synergy tells us that the whole is greater than it sum of part so, if team building is poor, the principal cannot resolve conflicts". They also said that "the principal will easily address the teachers' in conflict when they ensure cooperation among teachers". A principal with good team building skills will always make teachers to work in harmony thus minimizing the rate of conflict among staff. On the other hand, a principal who lacks adequate team building skill will not be able even to instill cooperation among colleagues. Some principals said that "a principal with poor team building skills will always have problems initiating dialogue among the teachers". Other principals were of the opinion that team building skills help principals to properly handle conflict, instill cooperation among teachers and it helps them to properly initiate dialogue during conflict resolution among the teachers.

## Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, findings have shown that the principals' team building skills has a vital role to play in conflict resolution among teachers in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. Many of the principals interviewed for the study said that team building skills help to effectively bring staff together thereby minimizing the rate of conflict among teachers. Other principals said that adequate team building skills helped principals to properly handle conflict, instill cooperation among teachers, and it helps them to properly initiate dialogue during conflict resolution among the teachers.

## Recommendations

Based on the effects of principals' team building skills on conflict resolution among teachers, principals must be equipped through formal training and in-service training on the effective use of team building skills since it was revealed from the findings that principals with adequate team building skills minimize the rate of conflict in their schools.

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