CHAPTER 3

MANAGING CONFLICT

3.1   Introduction

According to Barr *et al.* (1993:319) the tactic *"which relies on human resource management to restore organizational stability and direction, may be called conflict resolution."* Organizations should constantly develop good measures of conflict resolution in order to bring about stability and progress. Thus, universities are not exceptions. The central function of a university would be to create a situation that is conducive to learning. In order to realize that, conflict resolution mechanisms should be in place. Cottringer (1997:6) indicates that productivity and success in life would be facilitated by the ability to resolve conflict. In addition, Tjosvold (1991:3) states that the ability to resolve conflict would be disrupted if conflict were poorly managed.

Wherever people are, conflicts will always be experienced. Even in a mono-cultural society conflicts are experienced. *"Conflicts are part of individual relationships and organizational development..."* (Cottringer 1997:6). Thus, given the diversity of cultures in universities, it is inevitable that conflict will be experienced amongst students. Conflict is part and parcel of human life. Hence, Sehgal (1991:5) states that human life cannot be free of conflicts and that it is not possible to have a conflict-free society. As a result, people should empower themselves to deal with conflict effectively.

"Conflict is double-edged. It evokes images of fighting, hostility, and painful divisiveness, but also of people discussing issues deeply and honestly and creating a common ground" (Tjosvold 1991:1). Conflict can either be advantageous or disadvantageous. Crawley (1992:10/11) indicates that

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conflict can either become constructive or explosive, depending on how it is managed. It becomes constructive when people can exchange ideas, which ultimately bring about a workable solution. On the other hand, it becomes explosive when out of it, people experience violence and are affected by it. Conflict can build or destroy, depending on how it is managed. It is therefore appropriate as indicated by Sehgal (1991:38) that it is not true to say that:

- All conflicts are bad and wasteful of energy.
- All conflicts cause suffering and personal damage.
- All conflicts are destructive.
- All conflicts exist, because one party is at fault.

Bercovich (1984:7) echoes the same opinion by indicating that conflict is not only harmful and disruptive, it can also have "... *beneficial consequences – both latent and manifest – for the parties and the environment in which it occurs.*" In corroboration, Walton and Baron (quoted in Barr & Associates 1993:313) state: "*Conflicts arise regularly in any organization where people work and live together and may be destructive or constructive depending on the nature of the conflict and the way it is handled.*" For instance, when interests and feelings of conflicting student parties are ignored or suppressed, frustration and anger take over. Disputants at this stage no longer listen to reason. They will concentrate on the zero-sum approach to conflict and use force to reach their goal. Conflict may bring about serious fighting and divisions among people. To the contrary, it may involve people in genuine processes to establish common interests and solutions to a problem. Thus, conflict may, if properly managed, transform student life for the better because students may be involved in processes which will seek to establish common grounds that will enable various cultural groups to co-exist peacefully irrespective of their differences. Hence, Wedge (quoted in Avruch, Black & Scimcca 1991:3) states that conflict is "... *often an engine of desirable social change.*"

Sehgal (1991:38) further highlights that "*... conflict can be exciting, engaging, and organisationally significant.*" That can be realized provided that sufficient, appropriate and constant communication is effected. However, if poorly managed, conflict may encourage students to strengthen their respective cultural positions against others. Subsequently, an atmosphere which is not conducive to learning, will prevail. Hatred, hostility, fighting and divisions will characterize such an atmosphere. According to Tjosvold (1991:4): "*Poorly managed conflicts pose great hazards because they disrupt the ability to solve problems, including the ability to deal with conflict. In escalating conflict, people communicate in closed impoverished and biased ways. As a result they are unable to discuss the underlying issues and develop solutions to end the conflict. Ill-managed conflict attacks joint problem-solving and, thereby, the very essence of an effective organization.*"

It is of vital importance to take into consideration that successful resolution of conflict depends largely on attitudes of disputants. If disputants value their respective positions as more important than the envisaged outcome, the conflict may not be resolved. For instance, in case of cultural conflict between student groups, enmity and distrust will prevail if the involved students concentrate on their respective cultural norms and values without being prepared to compromise. In such a situation, according to Arrow, Mnookin, Ross, Tverky and Wilson (1995:28) "*The disputants may view their struggle as a `zero-sum' game, one in which any gain achieved by the other side is perceived to be loss, of equal magnitude to their own side...*"

At times when a situation is too ghastly to contemplate, people would resort to avoid addressing it, with the hope that it will resolve itself. Avoidance at times may be caused by the lack of capacity to attend to the conflict. However, avoiding an existing conflict is not the answer. According to Tjosvold (1991:5): "*Avoiding conflict does not make problems disappear, but allows them to linger and fester, and then emerge in more divisive ways.*" It

should also be noted that avoidance should be applied for strategic purposes in case it is necessary. However, an assessment has to be made first. For instance, in the case of confronting an aggressive student in a mass meeting, one should be calm and after the meeting talk to the student on a one-to-one basis, either in one's office or any convenient place.

According to Barr *et al.* (1993:313): "*Managing conflict is a major function of student affairs administration.*" Holton (1995:79) states: "*Conflict is inevitable in higher education, where academic freedom is revered and free thinking is encouraged.*" The fact that conflict is inevitable cannot be refuted. However, that does not suggest that measures for the possible avoidance of conflict should not be instituted. Thus, managers should always strive to identify and understand conflict. According to Holton (1995:79): "*Lack of understanding of conflict leads to an inability to cope with it.*" Consequently, inability to manage conflict effectively leads to chaos.

It is further important to note that conflict will also create a platform for students to talk to one another. It will enable students to share their differences and commonalties from which an understanding can be developed. A practical example observed by the researcher, is when students of a residence at a particular university passed a motion of no-confidence against the chairperson of the house committee. In another a motion of no-confidence was passed against the entire house committee. Both situations were so serious that serious lobbying, which caused frictions amongst students, was done in both cases. However, because of the intervention by the Dean of Students, both incidents bore good fruits because students could sit and talk constructively. Suggestions were made and consequently efficiency and effectiveness of house committee management was reinforced.

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It therefore becomes essential that aspects that will have an impact in the process of conflict resolution be scrutinized before the process of resolving a conflict can be started.

3.2   Resolution of conflict

Starting the process of conflict management will require the knowledge of the above-mentioned aspects and positive consideration of the golden rule of conflict resolution as provided by Tjosvold (1991:116):

- If you want people to listen to you, then listen to them.
- If you want them to take your perception, then take theirs.
- If you want others to compromise, then you compromise.

Sehgal (1991:36/37) provides the following hints for addressing a conflict:

- Identification of the conflict.
- Isolation of functional and dysfunctional aspects of a conflict.
- The application of direct confrontation design techniques.
- A larger (super-ordinate) goal should be preferred to local (group) goal if necessary.
- The size of resources should be increased if possible in the case of resources constraints.
- Letting a conflict cool off, if appropriate.
- Immediate intervention and explanation of the futility of disputing over minor differences.
- Compromising in a spirit of give and take may be resorted to.
- Any group in dispute may be persuaded by the manager to stop fighting in case it is pursuing a wrong issue.
- One group/party may be shifted or transferred.

The process of conflict management is categorized into three stages, namely: Identification and tracking of conflict; Identification of solutions; and Implementation of solutions.

3.2.1 Identification and tracking of conflict

Identification and tracking constitute the initial and crucial step in conflict resolution. Success or failure in conflict management will, to a great extent, be determined by this step. For instance, the process of tracking will enable participants to gather relevant information about the conflict. Azar (1990:32) avers that tracking is essential because it provides good timing for facilitative intervention and it also provides information about grievances, goals, concerns and interests of the disputants. This step will further encompass the following aspects: Is the right conflict identified? Is it timeously identified? Holton (1995:89) emphasizes that it would be easy to manage conflict with less expenses if it is identified earlier. The following six steps, as suggested by Holton (1995:83), should be observed in order to identify a problem:

- **Who is involved?**
  Parties that are involved in the conflict and those that may be directly or indirectly affected by the conflict should be identified. It is also important to assess the relationship between the disputants, their motivations and their sources of power.

- **What is the conflict?**
  In order to identify the conflict, answers should be provided to the following questions as stated by Holton (1995:83/4): What happened? What are the specifics of the conflict? All the details of the conflict such as: Who is involved? How did it start? Is it escalating or dying down? Without the specifics about the conflict, participants will run the risk of arriving at an unworkable solution.

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- **When did it happen?**

  Establishing the exact time of an incident could contribute to developing a solution.

- **Where did it happen?**

  The location of an incident could assist in establishing circumstances that prevailed.

- **Any resolution attempts?**

  Were any attempts made to resolve the conflict? In the case where attempts were made, what was the outcome? If nothing was done to resolve the conflict, what are the reasons?

- **What are the consequences of the conflict?**

  What will happen when the conflict is resolved or not? The gains and losses should be considered.

Answers to the above questions will definitely highlight the nature of the conflict which in turn will help participants to engage in the resolution process with understanding.

Informal proceedings can also be employed for conflict identification. Burton (quoted in Azar 1990:23) in practice used the informal meeting of disputants, without an agenda, as the first step towards problem-solving. However, parties are informed prior to the meeting that the proceedings will be unofficial and that it is just an academic exercise. In such an informal meeting, disputants are offered an opportunity to explore the root of the conflict, the extent thereof and possible solutions to it. Facilitators, except when clarity is sought, make no interruptions.

Azar (1990:30-33) refers to the informal meeting as the forum, which is actually not a formal bargaining situation, but an opportunity to discover mechanisms which can be employed to resolve the conflict. The purpose of the forum is to enable positive communication between the disputing parties so that mutually acceptable solutions can be identified. The forum should also include participants who can take decisions or influence decisions. Without such participants, the forum process may bring about more frustrations and hopelessness to disputants. Therefore, it is on this basis that participants are encouraged to be open and candid, analytical and to search for commonalties and differences. According to Azar (1990:32) the forum process should last at least four to five days and should take place at a neutral and quiet place. Tables should be arranged in such a way that participants will be encouraged to participate. However, it should be noted that the use of a forum will be determined by the nature of the conflict.

Azar (1990:30) further indicates that it is possible and important to create an environment in which representatives of conflicting parties are afforded an opportunity to identify related needs and discuss, clarify and analyze them. In such an environment all parties concerned should be encouraged and guided to positively acknowledge the legitimacy of the needs and aspirations of their opponents. A party should not focus on itself but rather on its opponent's situation. That will enable them to understand their own situation in the light of what the opponent holds dear.

Talks in such an environment will need completely impartial facilitators, or as indicated by Azar (1990:30), "*honest brokers*". Azar (1990:30), further indicates that it is of vital importance for all the parties involved in a conflict to take the necessary risks. Such risks would include firstly, entering into informal discussions with the opponent, which is a serious risk because of the distrust which prevails and which makes chances of negotiating in good faith very slim.

The second risk is the alienation of delegates who may enter into unpopular agreements. However, according to Azar (1990:31): *"Effective mediation by a third party may help minimize the risks involved in establishing communication between the opposing parties."*

Within a university context, student affairs officers can serve as honest brokers in conflict forums. For instance, the researcher has been personally involved as an honest broker in various instances wherein black and white students were at loggerhead. Since the residence management was also to a certain extent implicated, the researcher, as student affairs officer, had to intervene. A meeting that involved many students was therefore arranged. The outcome was that a forum that was constituted by representatives of the two groups was created. Ultimately the problem was resolved.

3.2.2 Identification of solution

An understanding of the conflict will contribute toward the development of an amicable solution. The process of finding a solution requires full participation of disputants as well as the mediator whenever a situation requires outside intervention.

Holton (1995:84) suggests the following process in identifying a solution:

- **Develop a positive attitude**

  It is essential for the parties involved in conflict to develop an understanding which is necessary for them to work together. That will ensure a smooth process of conflict resolution. Therefore, an agreement on how to work together is of vital importance.

- **Establish ground rules**

Before the start of negotiations, knowing exactly what is expected of participants is required. For instance, ground rules may enhance the medium of communication. It is crucial to agree upon the language which is to be used as a medium of communication, particularly in multicultural student communities. Without agreeing on the medium of communication, talks may be disrupted from the outset. A negative start could have a negative impact on the whole process which will lead to the failure of conflict management.

- **Identify interests of the parties**

The disputants should know and be sure of what they want. Their interests should be tabled.

- **Develop alternatives**

The identification of alternative solutions will naturally follow after having acquired an understanding of the conflict. The alternatives have to be identified and discussed. Holton (1995:84) indicates that brainstorming is the best procedure to develop alternatives. However, the possibility of other methods which can facilitate the development of alternatives cannot be ruled out.

- **Identify criteria**

Holton (1995:85) emphasizes that criteria which will be used to determine a suitable solution should be formulated. The ideas that may emerge from the process of brainstorming can also help to formulate criteria. Criteria for

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choosing an appropriate solution may be placed in either rational, logical or emotional categories. Criteria will include aspects such as:

- Time – When should the issue be finally resolved? When should a solution be implemented?

- Financial implications – In case of financial obligations for the implementation of a solution, financial resource which will be used should be determined.
- Legitimacy – Is the process inclusive to render the solution acceptable?
- Authority – will the authorities approve of the solution?

Holton (1995:85) outlines that criteria should be prioritized immediately after they have been developed because they would not necessarily weigh equally. The prioritized criteria should then be used to determine an appropriate solution.

3.2.3 Implement solution

This is the most crucial stage because if neglected it may render the whole process of resolving conflict futile. It is important that those involved in a conflict resolution ensure the implementation of the resolution.

The following strategies for the implementation of the solution are suggested:

- **Develop a plan of action**

A plan of action according to Holton (1995:85-86) includes the following:

- Who should do what – roles have to be clearly defined. In the case where outsiders are involved – how are they going to become involved?

- What exactly should be done?
- When should it be done?
- What are available checkpoints?
- When are the involved parties meeting?

Furthermore, a person should be appointed to mediate in case of differences during the implementation stage. According to Holton (1995:86): *"The plan of action should be written up and signed by all parties including the neutral third party if one is involved."*

- ## Determine how to handle conflict in the future

A common way to deal with conflict should be developed for future purposes. All involved parties should follow-up the implementation of solutions. According to Azar (1990:37): *"Follow-up is also a way of learning to improve the model and for tracking of the conflict itself."* It is essential that the parties that were involved and the mediator continue communicating after the resolution of a conflict. Talks should go on particularly around strategies of curbing conflict. Both the disputants and the mediator should ensure the implementation of identified solutions.

The strategies for conflict management that have been suggested above may be of assistance in resolving conflict. However, sometimes these strategies may fail, perhaps because of the inability to follow them to the letter. Lack of exposure to the procedures in conflict management could further exacerbate a conflict situation. In such a situation where conflict resolution procedures fail, mediation, negotiation or arbitration would be the alternative strategies for managing the conflict.

3.3   Negotiation/Arbitration/Mediation

According to Barr *et al.* (1993:321): "*In conflict resolution, student affairs administrators may approach a settlement through negotiation, mediation, or arbitration.*" The choice of one of the three approaches in resolving a deadlock would be determined by the kind of conflict. It therefore becomes necessary to define and distinguish between the three concepts, namely negotiation, arbitration, and mediation.

3.3.1 Negotiation

Authors provide various definitions of negotiation. However, these definitions mean the same thing, which is that disputing parties will agree that they need to sit and work out a solution to their differences. The following are examples of how the concept *negotiation* is defined:

Fowler (1990:3) understands negotiation as a process of interaction between two or more parties who agree that they need to mutually resolve their differences through argument and persuasion.

Riskin and Westbrook (1988:3) state: "*In negotiation, persons seek to resolve a disagreement or plan a transaction through discussion, which may include reasoned argument.*"

Singer (1990:17) highlights that negotiation is a process, which involves two or more people, entangled in a conflict, in discussions in order to find a solution.

According to Barr *et al.* (1993:321): "*Negotiation may be viewed as joint decision-making that brings about agreement through conference, discussion, and compromise.*"

The above definitions point to the following principles of negotiation which should be observed for effective negotiation, as suggested by Fowler (1990:2):

- Two parties with common interest.
- Different objectives.
- Parties opting for negotiation rather than coercion or arbitration.
- Persuasion for modification of original position is central.
- Hoping for an acceptable final agreement.
- All parties have power to a certain extent.
- Interaction is central.

Observation of the above-mentioned principles of negotiation would require a systematic approach to negotiation. An understanding of the stages of negotiation and the possible methods that can be employed will facilitate such an approach.

Fowler (1990:7) provides the following three stages of negotiation: Preparation, actual negotiation process and implementation.

- **Preparation**

    The actual process of negotiation should be preceded by preparation. Preparing for negotiation will revolve around the following questions:

    - What are the real issues?
    - What parties should be involved?

In addition, as indicated by Fowler (1990:27), preparation would include the following stages: Firstly, subjecting oneself for critical scrutiny in order for the other party to understand you. That will entail, as highlighted by Arrow *et al.*

(1995:4), knowing a great deal about the evidence and arguments that support one's own position. Wrong information may be transmitted to the other party if there is no clear understanding of one's position. Disclosing the truth to the other party will facilitate a situation in which the parties involved understand each other. Secondly, it is essential to study the other party in preparation for negotiations. Avoiding what Arrow *et al.* (1995:4) refers to as optimistic over-confidence (which denotes the tendency not to care and not want enough information about the other side) will assist in facilitating the process of discovering others. It is essential for each party to know a great deal about evidence and arguments that support the position of the other side. That would assist in clearing the perception that the information that one has is perfect. Ultimately the possible bias which may be caused by lack of knowledge about the others and which may disturb negotiations may be cleared. The following questions would facilitate the gathering of information about the other party:

- What is the aim of the other party?

- What are the negotiation limits of the other party? Singer (1990:17) explains that as recognizing constraints. In any negotiation process there are limits such as the authority to conclude the final agreement. For instance, does the other party have the authority to finalize the agreement? Furthermore, some limits may encompass deadlines and budgets.

- Possible facts and arguments to be used by other party.

- Determination of underlying and untested issues or objectives (hidden agenda).

The third step would be the formulation of the objectives. The formulation of appropriate objectives would be facilitated by the adoption of the following approach to negotiation as stated by Bevan (1992:3) that is to attack the actual problem by separating people from the problem and to focus on interests and not positions. According to Singer (1990:18) establishing the interests of all parties to a conflict is a critical form of negotiating. That can be accomplished through separating interests and underlying needs from positions. The underlying needs of parties may be determined through providing an answer to the question. Why do I/we care about the issue? In formulating the objective the following three levels of negotiations as provided by Fowler (1990:19) should be taken into consideration:

- the ideal or best possible deal
- the expected settlement level
- the worst, though still just acceptable deal

- **The actual process of negotiation**

This process is characterized by genuine interaction which is intended to lead the disputants to an agreement about the outcome. It is important to decide on a particular method to be used. The collaborative/problem-solving method as outlined by Singer (1990:17) should be preferred to the competitive method. The competitive method, which may not assist the process of negotiation, employs the win-lose approach. Focus is placed on maximizing one's own gains at the expense of the other party. In such a situation, coercive methods such as threatening to terminate talks may be used. On the other hand, the collaborative/problem-solving method will guarantee successful negotiation to a great extent by promoting the interests of all parties. It is also referred to as win-win negotiation. All parties are assisted to meet their goals. According to Singer (1990:17) this method is extremely important particularly when negotiating parties will

still have to deal with each other in future. An ongoing relationship, which is based on trust, should be developed. This form of negotiation is also characterized by compromise. Parties should be able to give up in order to gain.

The negotiation process would follow the following six-stage pattern as indicated by Fowler (1990:8):

- Defining issues.
- Defining initial positions – what each party wants.
- Starting the argument in order to test initial positions.
- Exploration of possible outcomes.
- Firm proposals are suggested and deliberated upon.
- Defining an agreement, which leads to concluding negotiation.

The end-product of the above process of negotiation is the formulation of an agreement. An agreement should be properly formulated in such a manner that all parties understand it. It should be ensured that it becomes possible to practically implement the agreement. To corroborate that, Fowler (1990:9) states: "*Ill-defined agreements, or agreements which have paid too little attention to the practicalities of implementation, frequently collapse soon after they have been concluded.*" Therefore, an agreement should be written down. It should also include the implementation program. Singer (1990:19) further indicates that the parties should agree on standards, or neutral principles that would be used to govern their agreement. Thus, options should be created in order to satisfy everyone's interests. The details of the agreement should be made available to all the stakeholders.

- **Implementation**

The final stage would be that of implementation. In the first stage preparation for the actual process of negotiation is being done. The purpose of the actual process of negotiation is to reach an agreement which will be acceptable to the involved parties. The achievement of an agreement will lead to the final stage of implementation.

Finally, it is of the utmost importance to consider the following points as indicated by Tjosvold (1991:114) in order to intensify the above strategies of negotiation in a multicultural situation:

- *Value diversity*

  - *Set norms that conflict will occur and can be useful.*
  - *Confront problems and communicate feelings openly.*
  - *Try to understand the views and feelings of others.*

- *Seek mutual benefit*

  - *Define the problem together.*
  - *Understand the costs of fighting against the conflict and the benefit of resolving it.*
  - *Focus on working together to manage the conflict for mutual benefit.*

- *Empower*

  - *Show respect and acceptance of others as people.*
  - *Use approaches that you want others to use.*
  - *Use strategies of cost cutting, logrolling, and bridging.*
  - *Reach an agreement.*

- *Take stock*

  - *Reaffirm the agreement by implementing it.*
  - *Evaluate the solution and look for ways to improve it.*
  - *Celebrate successfully negotiating the conflict.*

3.3.2 Arbitration

When negotiation is about a voluntary interaction of parties who have mutually agreed that there is a need for them to interchange ideas in order to develop an agreement, arbitration requires a neutral person to take decisions for disputing parties. Riskin and Westbrook (1988:3/4) indicated that: *"Arbitration is used extensively in industrial labor relations and in commercial and consumer disputes. Negotiation is used in all manner of disputes and transactions and is common in everyday life."* Various authors define arbitration as follows:

Webster (quoted in Brams 1990:64): Arbitration is *"… the hearing and Determination of a case in controversy by a person chosen by the Parties or appointed under statutory authority."*

Singer (1990:27): *"Arbitration is the most popular form of private, third party Decision-making."*

Riskin and Westbrook (1988:120): *"Arbitration is a form of adjudication in which the neutral decision-maker is not a judge or an official of an administrative agency."*

Barr *et al.* (1993:321): *"Arbitration employs the selection or appointment of a third party to determine final resolution of a dispute."* McCarthy (quoted in Barr *et al.* 1993:321) defines arbitration as *"… a quasi-judicial process in*

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which the arbitrator listens to testimony and renders a decision based on this testimony."

Arbitration should not be confused with adjudication. There is a clear distinction between the two concepts. While only a legal person facilitates conflict resolution in the process of adjudication, any person that disputants agree on would arbitrate. The following definitions of the concept *adjudication* clearly highlight the difference between arbitration and adjudication: Singer (1990:29) avers that the process of adjudicating brings about binding decisions through courts or administrative agencies as facilitators. In addition, Bevan (1992:11) describes adjudication as "...*dispute resolution by litigation, and it takes place in the High Court, County Court and various tribunals*".

In the case of arbitration, disputants would agree that they have reached a deadlock and that as a result they need a third party to resolve their problem. According to Riskin and Westbrook (1988:3) it is a prerogative of the disputants to agree upon a third party and submit their dispute to her/him. In this case, the third party is empowered to take a decision on the issue. Or they may agree in advance to set aside certain aspects for arbitration. At times they may attempt to take up the issues, but in the case they reach a dispute, then arbitration would be opted for.

However, it is important to note as rightly indicated by Bevan (1992:7) that disputants would be bound by the decision of the arbitrator. Disputants will be required to submit their differences right at the beginning. An impasse is not accommodated in the process of arbitration. A solution is guaranteed and conflicting parties are obliged to comply with the resolution.

3.3.3 Mediation

The concepts *negotiation* and *arbitration* as explained in paragraphs 3.4.2 and 3.4.2, differ from mediation because mediation is about a third party who facilitates the resolution of the conflict. When it becomes necessary for a third party to facilitate the discussions during a negotiation process, then the process is called mediation. Mediation is considered when it becomes apparent to both parties that they have reached a deadlock. *"Mediation is an informal process in which a neutral third party helps others resolve a dispute or plan a transaction but does not (and ordinarily does not have the power to) impose a solution,"* (Riskin & Westbrook 1988:4). According to Mitchell (quoted in Bercovich 1984:13) third party intervention is required when:

- *a conflict is long, draw-out and complex.*
- *the parties have reached a deadlock with their own conflict management efforts.*
- *continuation of the conflict is seen as an exacerbating factor by all concerned.*
- *some communication or cooperation exists between the parties.*

Furthermore, mediation, which according to Barr *et al.* (1993:321) refers to third party intervention, is essential in conflict management. In corroboration, Bevan (1992:18) indicates that: *"Mediation is the use of a third party to help those in conflict to do things and reach agreement which, unaided, they may never do, or may do so much later in the conflict that each side will have suffered further harm."* The following authors further provide an understanding of what mediation entails.

According to Gibson (1995:27) student conflicts can best be resolved through mediation by various authority figures on campus, including a dean of students. Waters (1995:74) indicates that: *"Mediation involves a neutral party*

(or parties...) who assists disputants in finding a mutually satisfactory resolution to their conflict." Bercovich (1984:9) conceives mediation as *"... an aspect of a conflict management mechanism designed to arrest possible destructive consequences and inhibit a dysfunctional conflict cycle, as well as help the parties to find a proper, and satisfactory, basis for an agreement."* Harbotle (quoted in Bercovich 1984:3) defines third party intervention as *"... the intervention into a dispute of a person or an agency whose purpose is to act as an instrument for bringing about a peaceful settlement to that dispute, while creating structures whereby the foundations of a lasting settlement may be laid."* Bercovich (1984:9) further indicates that mediation may be attitude-oriented or behavior-oriented. Thus, the type of third party intervention will differ from one situation to the other because both parties to a conflict, their interests, perceptions and expectations will determine that. According to Gibson (1995:27) mediation can be categorized into *"... peer mediation, a campus mediator or mediation office, and mediation offered by student affairs."* Thus it is important that student affairs professionals be trained in mediation.

A mediator, according to Bercovich (1984:13) is someone who would come from outside a conflict situation to intervene by way of assisting the disputants to resolve the conflict.

Thus, the process of mediation is characterized by the involvement of a third person/s or an agency in a conflict, which is protracted and cannot be settled because of differences between the parties to a conflict. The mediator should be neutral and not an accessory to any aspect of the conflict. The parties to a conflict should have trust and full confidence in a mediator. Trust is central because, according to Bercovich (1984:13): *"A third party brings with it certain ideas, knowledge, and assumptions, as well as interests, all of which are designed to influence the likelihood of achieving a successful outcome."* Without trust, disputants may not open up in the process of mediation. That

will most definitely have a negative impact on the process. The likelihood would be failure to resolve the conflict or the outcome may not last.

The relationship between a third party and parties to a conflict should be characterized by:

- Temporariness: The relation would exist as long as the conflict is not yet resolved.
- Trust: mutual trust should prevail between all the parties to a conflict and the third party.
- Preparedness by all the parties, including the mediator to resolve the conflict.
- Neutrality of the mediator.

The role of a mediator is further clarified. According to Arrow *et al.* (1995:41) a mediator can:

- facilitate proposals that are relevant to the goals and priorities of the disputants;
- encourage a problem-solving approach;
- neutralize tendencies of reaction devaluation;
- create deadlines, incentives, and other pressures that encourage concessions or compromise;
- help create trust and goodwill;
- dispel the idea of a zero-sum struggle; and
- help disputants to realize that mutual as well as opposing interests exist.

Singer (1990:20) further provides the following ways in which a mediator could facilitate the resolution of a conflict:

- by soothing ruffled feelings;
- by acting as a neutral discussion leader and ensuring that all the parties have ample opportunity to speak;
- by helping to distinguish interests from positions;
- by working with the parties to devise creative solutions for meeting their needs;
- by earning enough of the parties' trust that they will share confidential information about their interests and alternatives;
- by communicating selected information back and forth, often translating it from negative to positive language;
- by serving as an agent of reality, helping the parties to be more realistic about their alternatives to agreement;
- by keeping negotiation going when the parties are ready tio give up;
- by acting as a scapegoat when things go wrong.

The role of the mediator can further be intensified through observance of the following stages of effective mediation as provided by Singer (1990:22):

- the encounter between the mediator and the disputants;
- the involvement of the mediator in setting ground rules for talks;
- agreeing on the agenda;
- establishing alternative solutions;
- evaluating the established alternatives in comparison with the parties' alternatives;
- reaching the final or partially final agreement and concomitantly developing a plan for the implementation.

In conclusion, student affairs should have mediation structures, such as the Dean of Students in place. It is not suggested that mediation will always be employed in conflict resolution, but only in situations where disputants cannot resolve the conflict, or where productive and healthy relationships between

parties in conflict have been disrupted. The disturbance of the confluence will result into a deadlock. When feuding parties have reached a deadlock, a third party intervention should be resorted to. It should also be borne in mind that not only mediation will be used. The circumstances will determine an appropriate strategy to be used, either negotiation or arbitration or mediation.

Finally, in the case of a deadlock, undesirable tactics to force the resolution of a conflict should be avoided because they have the capacity to intensify and prolong a conflict. Such tactics, according to Sehgal (1991:37), will include:

- *Manipulating a superior into working a conflict reducing decision.*
- *Changing the organisational structure.*
- *Strategy planning to disprove the other's case.*
- *Generating irrelevant data to prove one's own case.*
- *The maintenance of minimum possible contact.*

However, before any attempt is made to resolve conflict through the use of the above-mentioned strategies, insight into the following aspects, which would further empower the conflict manager as discussed in the subsequent paragraphs, should be acquired:

- results and types of conflict;
- causes of conflict;
- elements of conflict;
- approaches and framing a strategy;
- stages of conflict;
- levels of conflict;
- factors for constructive management of conflict.

3.4   Results and types of conflict

Knowledge, insight and understanding into the possible results of conflict and the types of conflict should be established. That will facilitate good skills for conflict management. Consequently, effectiveness in resolving conflict may be realized. The following results of conflict could be identified:

3.4.1 Results of conflict

It may seem that there are many different results of conflict. However, results of conflict can be categorized into two groups, namely positive (advantageous, beneficial, constructive) and negative (disadvantageous, harmful, explosive). A particular result of conflict will either be constructive or explosive.

Crawley (1992:10-11) further provides more information on constructive and explosive conflicts. Explosive conflict consists of the following components:

- Ingredients: Experienced differences in culture, norms and values, age, beliefs, gender.
- Combinations and conditions: According to Crawley (1992:10) this component denotes: "*The contact that people have, the structures that surround them and the environment in which they live and work.*"
- The spark: This component refers to clashes that come up because of differences.
- The burning fuse: Crawley (1992:10) states that this component is: "*Smouldering of the conflict, including defensiveness, confusion, jockeying for positions, proliferation of issues and inability to find a resolution.*"
- The explosion: People experiencing violence and being affected by it.

Constructive conflict will consist of the first three components as in explosive conflicts, namely Ingredients, Combinations and Conditions as well as the Spark. However, constructive conflict will, by way of involving all affected parties to a conflict resolution process and encouraging positivity of disputants, ensure that explosion is not experienced. According to Crawley (1992:11) it is very difficult to realize constructive conflict because of the pursuit of the interests of individuals and competition in life. That will also include the pursuit of group interests.

Despite difficulties in realizing constructive conflict, the reality is that it is realizable. Crawley (1992:12) indicates that it is necessary for people to be effective and not ineffective because of the perception of opponents as diabolical enemies. Such a perception leads to a situation where people become passive and condone wrong and unfair decisions. However, passiveness leads to frustration, which would surface elsewhere. In such a situation creativity is never thought of.

Constructive conflict requires activism, creativeness and effectiveness. For a person to be involved constructively in conflict management, a constructive attitude is indispensable. In order to develop a constructive attitude, introspection has to be made. You have to establish your being and attitude towards others. And as indicated by Crawley (1992:12) it is important to be able to balance knowledge about you and perceptions that emanate from it with those of others.

Furthermore, many different types of conflict which would either be categorized as constructive or explosive conflicts, appear in two forms, which according to Holton (1995:5), are: Firstly conflict can be manifest – which means it becomes public. In this case people are aware of the existing

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conflict and they will speak out and challenge whatever situation through legislation, formal laws and public laws. Secondly conflict can be latent – that refers to hidden conflict. People who are affected may pretend to be happy because of various reasons, which may include fear of victimization.

Various types of conflict as indicated in the next paragraph bring about the above-mentioned results of conflict.

3.4.2 Types of conflict

It is crucial to distinguish between various types of conflict because that would enable conflict managers to develop an appropriate strategy to resolve conflicts. The many different types of conflict should be understood within the context of the results of conflict. That implies that despite the many different types of conflict, their results can, however, either be explosive or constructive. The following are examples of types of conflicts:

-       **Interpersonal conflict**

Elsaye-Ekhouly and Buda (1996:72) state: "*Interpesonal conflict involves two or more individuals who perceive themselves as being in opposition to each other regarding preferred outcomes, attitudes, values and behavior.*" Furthermore, it is essential to differentiate between personal differences and task-related differences. However, as highlighted by Sehgal (1991:9) conflict, which is caused by task-related matters between two individuals, should actually be regarded as technical conflict rather than interpersonal conflict. Thus, task-related matters constitute a causal factor to conflict between individuals. Competition may also be the source of interpersonal conflict. When individual students compete for certain positions, the loser may mobilize students against the successful candidate. In addition, such conflicts can be attributed to various factors such as competing over resources or

control, culture differences, incompatible needs, different goals, antagonistic actions, personality clashes and unfairness in the application of resources. Furthermore, negative attitude toward the other person may also cause interpersonal conflict. Hence, according to Sehgal (1991:9): "*An interpersonal form of conflict occurs mostly due to personal dislikes or personality differences.*"

- **Intrapersonal conflict**

Van der Westhuizen (1991:304) explains intrapersonal conflict as the conflict that emanates from within the person and that it is intimately linked to his personality. This type of conflict is basically caused by conflicting alternatives within an individual. For instance, Sehgal (1991:8-9) offers the following examples of intrapersonal conflict: Firstly, approach-approach – Being attracted to two equally important and appealing alternatives. For example, choosing between accepting a lucrative offer, which will require terminating full-time studies, or rejecting it in order to complete studies. Secondly, approach-avoidance - Having a good job offer in a place where you cannot go. Thirdly, avoidance-avoidance - Being faced with two equally unpleasant alternatives, or, as connoted by Sehgal (1991:8), a person may be attracted to two equally appealing alternatives.

- **Individual-institutional conflict**

An institution like a university accommodates individuals from the broader society. Despite an individual belonging to a particular cultural group, he/she has his/her own individual expectations which may contradict those of a university. A university has basic rules and regulations that govern student life. When a student contravenes such rules, a conflict may likely arise. According to Van der Westhuizen (1991:305): "*When the ideals and aims of the two parties concerned differ greatly, an ideal climate for possible conflict*

is created." An example of such conflict is between students and lecturers. Both students and lecturers may cause such conflict. For example, if a lecturer announces at the beginning of a semester that there are too many students for this particular course. You may not be aware that it is extremely difficult. Please, ask student so and so, who is doing it for the third time.

- **Intergroup conflict**

A university comprises of various student organizations and societies. Various ideologies and beliefs characterize such organizations. In spite of their differences, they are interdependent and interrelated because of belonging to a university which has as its mission to educate all registered students irrespective of their cultural background. They all have to contribute to the existence of an atmosphere, which is conducive to learning.

However, conflict may arise between various student groups or between student organizations and management. For instance, in the residences racial conflict may be experienced because of the following background: Residences are central and very important for white students in particular. In the past when traditionally white universities were exclusively designated for whites, white cultures and traditions within these institutions developed and flourished over time. Residences were perceived as platforms from which white political persuasions and interests could be advanced. For instance, at the University of Natal, as indicated by Phillips (1996:114), various activists of NUSAS (National Union of South African Students) expressed the following perceptions of the university's residences prior to 1989.

Residences:

- are bastions of whiteness;
- accommodate typical stereotyped racist white South Africans;

- are the support base for Rag events and orientation week; and
- bond socially around beer clubs and rugby teams, parties, initiation rites, conformity, conservative and political views.

Thus, white cohesion was promoted by the above activities. Consequently that resulted in the development of a particular ethos. The influx of black students into these universities threatened the established ethos.

3.5   Causes of conflict

Lemmer and Squelch (1993:17) stress that cultural conflict is unavoidable particularly when the cultures of people differ. As a result, it is essential that precautionary measures be taken in order to deal with conflict effectively. Exposure to various causes of conflict would assist in managing conflict effectively. According to Bercovitch (1984:12): *"The causes of conflict may generally be found in (a) the individual organism, (b) the social system or environment, or (c) in the interactions between individuals and groups of individuals."*

General causes of conflict will be investigated. However, focus will also be placed on specific causes of conflict within multicultural universities.

Gibson (1995:27) indicates: *"Students' exposure to academic stress, frequent challenges to their beliefs, fatigue, shared living quarters, and other trying facets of campus culture make interpersonal and group conflict an inevitable part of student life."* It should be noted however, that even though there are various factors which cause conflict amongst students, the basic causal factors according to Gibson (1995:27) would be incompatible goals and needs and the use of scarce resources.

The following aspects are considered to be some of the causes of conflict:

3.5.1 Power struggle

In accordance with the researcher's experience as student affairs officer, various student organizations compete for control and governance of student activities. A majority culture may be unprepared to share power. It may as a result opt for cultural assimilation. The majority culture may want minor cultures to reject their cultural heritage – beliefs, norms and values - and disappear within the majority culture. In the process, serious conflict may arise.

3.5.2 Norms and values (traditions)

The established norms and values, which resulted in traditions in the traditionally white universities make it extremely difficult for equal accommodation of other races. The accommodation of other races in these universities presupposes the changing of expectations and roles in student communities which is a recipe of conflict.
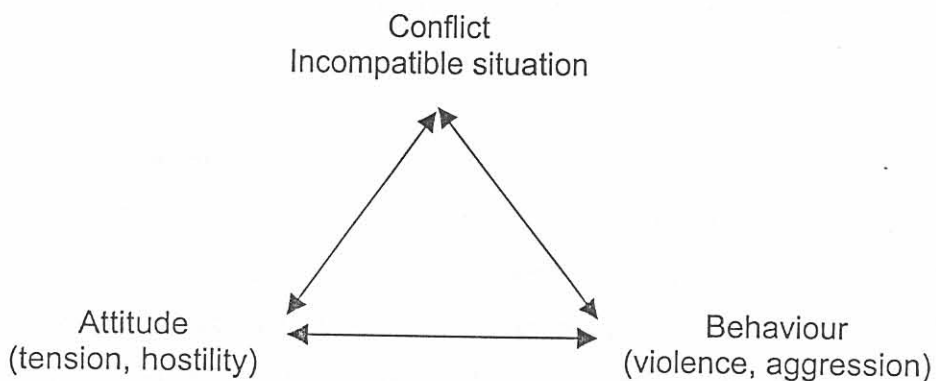
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                    Conflict
            Incompatible situation



        Attitude                          Behaviour
    (tension, hostility)            (violence, aggression)
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Figure 3.1: Gultung's conflict triangle

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Gultung's conflict triangle (quoted in Bercovich 1984:6), as reflected in figure 3.1, expresses the fact that due to contradictory norms, values and traditions, obstructions occur. Consequently, negative attitudes that are characterized by anger, frustration, tension and hostility develop. These attitudes are publicly exposed through aggressive and violent behavior. In corroboration, Azar (1990:29) indicates that: "*Mutually incompatible goals among parties amidst a lack of coordinating or mediating mechanisms give birth to conflict.*"

3.5.3 Barriers

According to Arredondo (1996:179) within a culturally diverse organization there are three basic barriers which can cause conflict, namely the initiative, the organizational culture and human elements.

- **The Initiative**

An initiative within a culturally diverse organization is often viewed as something which will immediately address the needs of all people in the organization. Hence, according to Arredondo (1996:179): "*Viewing an initiative as a dumping ground for complaints or treating it like Aladin's magic lamp leads to major disappointments.*" An initiative should actually be perceived as a process.

- **The organizational culture**

An organizational culture within a student community would comprise of the kind of social activities, sport, and religion. Arredondo (1996:180) states: "*Change is naturally going to cause discomfort, but if a change leader does not understand the culture and subcultures of the organization, she or he may misread or overreact to symptoms of discomfort. Some intervention may be necessary, but you have to know*

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what to do and when." Manifestations of an organizational culture within a student community would be the kind of social activities, sport and religion.

- **The human elements**

Any process will be accepted by some and rejected by others. However, even those that may have accepted it may change as the process unfolds. The human elements are mainly based on a group's requirements. Even though it may start within individuals, they end up identifying with a particular group in which they have trust that it may cater for their needs.

Goldsmith (1977:30) offers the following additional factors that may possibly cause conflict amongst students in a multicultural student community:

- ignorance of differences;
- the perception that anger is only destructive;
- when students are neither allowed nor enabled to know, understand and care for one another;
- lack of information;
- when leaders are not role models for intercultural interaction;
- the absence of common language for communication;
- violation of confidentiality;
- when a cultural group is not affirmed to have some power and control over their own environment, for instance if access to certain facilities is denied to a particular cultural group;
- when the consequences of change affect students differently;
- personality clashes; and
- conflicting ideas, norms and values.

According to Sehgal (1991:22) "… *conflicting ideas or values stemming from differences in background skills or training produce unproductive relationships.*"

Identification, acknowledgement and understanding of the above causal factors of conflict provide the means to deal with conflict strategically. A positive attitude toward handling conflict by way of identifying appropriate factors for conflict management will also be promoted.

3.6   Elements of conflict

The processes of conflict management will, according to Cottringer (1997:6) involve the following basic preparations:

The assessment of critical elements of conflict, namely:

- **Issue elements**

  In this case the importance of the issue at hand should be established. That is essential because the time and energy of participant in a particular situation may be wasted. For instance, if students are to be involved in resolving a particular conflict, the importance of the conflict should be established. Students themselves should be convinced that it is a worthwhile exercise to be involved in. The extent of the importance of conflict will determine the extent of the involvement.

- **Investment of the issue**

  The investment of the issue should be determined. An answer should be provided to questions such as, is it really necessary to put effort, energy and time into a particular issue? Will students and the entire university

benefit from the exercise? Will the exercise contribute to shaping a better university for all?

Finally, Barr *et al.* (1993:322) provide the following factors which will bring about successful management of conflict:

- sensitivity to organizational culture;
- insight into internal and external forces including change;
- understanding of organizational behaviors;
- knowledge of organizational functioning;
- vision about the organization's future;
- the capability to plan for alternative futures;
- the talent to formulate unambiguous policies and procedures;
- the provision of leadership in implementing policies;
- a talent for personnel supervision and evaluation; and
- a respect for fairness.

3.7   Approaches and framing a strategy

3.7.1 Approaches

Bercovitch (1984:4-5) provides the following approaches to conflict:

- **Narrow approaches**

These approaches will firstly be motivated by an understanding of conflict as provided by Lewis Coser (quoted in Bercovitch 1984:4) that conflict is "*... a struggle over values, entailing behavior that is initiated with the intent of inflicting harm, damage, or injury on the other party.*" Secondly, adherence to the following characteristics of conflict phenomena as provided by Mark and Snyder (quoted in Bercovitch 1984:4):

- the existence of two or more parties;

- their interaction arises from a condition of resource scarcity or position scarcity;

- they engage in mutually opposing actions;

- their behavior is intended to damage, injure or eliminate the other party; and

- their interactions are overt and can be measured or evaluated by outside observers.

Conflict within this approach is characterized by coercion and it is further contrasted with co-operation.

- **Wider approaches**

Bercovitch (1984:4) highlights that wider approaches to conflict are essential because they will enable researchers to determine the relationship between social systems and social conflict, because they encourage the study of "… *those structures or situations which promote mutually incompatible interests and values.*" Thus, wider approaches focus on unearthing the latent and underlying ground motives – the root causes of the conflict. These approaches will expose perception of disputants, and that will facilitate conflict resolution. Hence, Bercovitch (1984:5) indicates that: "*Conflict can be most profitably examined only when we are aware of the different perspectives and the fundamental assumptions that dominate each perspective.*"

- **Subjective approaches**

According to Bercovitch (1984:5): "*Subjective approaches to conflict assert that, at the most basic level, conflict are about values and values are ultimately dependent upon perceptions.*" As a result, the end-result of

conflict will depend on the perceptions of disputants. However, it is most possible that contradictory perceptions may be changed into collaborative values, in the case of an effective third party intervention. Hence, as indicated by Bercovitch (1984:5): *"Subjective approaches to conflict are concerned with the parties' orientation and with devising tools and strategies for rectifying conflict-producing misperceptions."*

- **Objective approaches**

These approaches attribute the existence of social conflict to incompatible goals. Bercovitch (1984:6) states an objective approach understand and defines conflict not according to the group's perception but according to how an individual objectively perceives it. Such an approach would focus on addressing contradictions within a social structure and the extent to which misunderstanding is caused by contradictions of this kind.
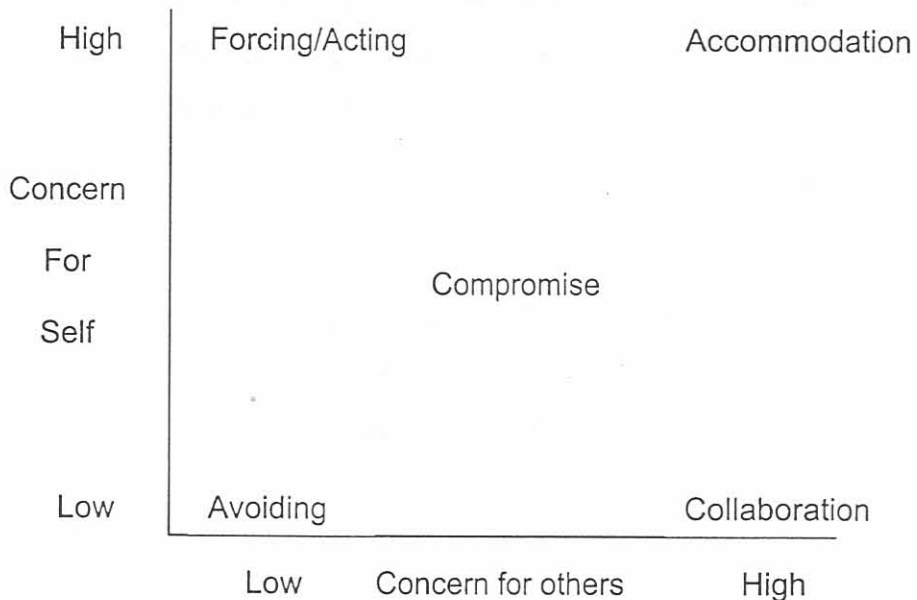
3.7.2 Framing a strategy

The following four basic strategies, as outlined in Figure 3.2, may be used in the context of the above-mentioned wider approaches to conflict:

- **Forcing/Acting**

The two concepts namely *forcing* and *acting* would imply the same activity, which is using one's own position of authority to resolve conflict. Production-oriented managers often use such an approach. According to Avruch *et al.* (1991:86): *"It involves competitive behaviors and the use of power to have one's position accepted, even if it means ignoring the other's concerns."* Cottringer (1997:6) further indicates that acting is *"... exercising an authoritative position to resolve a conflict quickly and effectively without discussion or input."* This strategy may be suitable for

urgent decisions or when unpopular decisions are required. However, one should not act without having weighed the consequences.

High	Forcing/Acting	Accommodation
Concern		
For		Compromise
Self		
Low	Avoiding	Collaboration
	Low Concern for others **High**	

Figure 3.2:   A two dimensional model of five interpersonal conflict management style (Avruch, Black & Scimecca 1991:87)

Hence Cottringer (1997:6) suggests that when you act, "... *anticipate any likely fallout and potentially destructive consequences beforehand and to have a contingency plan. Tell people calmly and precisely what you are going to do and why.*"

- **Accommodation**

According to Avruch, Black and Scimecca (1991:86) as reflected in Figure 3.2 accommodation "... *represents overlooking or playing down the existing differences and trying to satisfy the other party's wishes.*" Cottringer (1997:6) states that accommodating "... *requires getting the*

other person to admit error either by confrontation of factual proof or the careful introduction of humor, and separating thoughts from feelings to allow objectivity to set in." Accommodating would enhance the exercise of giving in particularly when being wrong. Acknowledging one's own mistake would encourage the other party to be constructively involved in the process of conflict management.

- ### Avoiding

Avruch *et al.* (1991:86) indicate that avoiding is the style that reflects "… *low concern for self and others, takes the form of withdrawal, side stepping the issue, or shying away from its open discussion.*" According to Cottringer (1997:6) avoiding is "… *withdrawing, sidestepping, or postponing the issue.*"

It may be appropriately used in complex situations when all the facts cannot be established or when the issue "… *may just be symptomatic of something bigger…*" However, before an issue is postponed, the following aspects should be determined: the urgency of the issue – is it possible that it be postponed? What will happen when it is postponed? Are there any serious threats if the issue is postponed? Furthermore, according to Cottringer (1997:6) it is important to make disputants aware of the fact that they are being afforded an opportunity to cool down so that they can be objectively involved in the resolution of conflict.

- ### Compromising

It is explained as "splitting the difference". According to Avruch *et al.* (1991:86) in this case both parties give up "… *something in order to find a middle ground.*" Compromising can also be understood as adjusting which is defined by Cottringer (1997:6) as "… *splitting differences, exchanging*

concessions, and giving and taking to get to a middle ground with a positive outcome." It may be used for expedient and temporary settlements. Cottringer (1997:6) further indicates that adjusting "... *often requires mediating the conflict with an impartial, objective third party 'referee' who identifies the pros and cons of all the giving and taking and gets opposing people or groups to buy into the exchanges and concessions.*" At the end it becomes important to summarize agreements, to recommit disputants and set a target date. All parties should feel that they are gaining something. A situation where a particular party turns to be the absolute loser should be avoided.

-   **Collaboration**

Avruch *et al*. (1991:87) indicate that collaboration "... *involves facing the conflict, bringing all pertinent issues and concerns out into the open, and as a result, reaching a solution that integrates the different points of view.*"

3.8   Stages of conflict

Sehgal (1991:41) and Holton (1995:80) describe the process of the unfolding of conflict as follows: The first stage, which is called antecedent conditions, enhances potential antagonism. There are factors in this stage that can possibly cause conflicts. The next stages would be perceived conflict and felt conflict. These stages enhance what people think and understand about the prevailing conditions, and what their feelings are towards these conditions. Action will result from the two stages. Hence, the next stage is called manifest conflict. It is in this stage that reactions in various forms, such as emergency meetings, demonstrations, boycotts, and violence will be experienced. The next stage will be conflict resolution. It will be followed by the final stage, which is the aftermath of conflict.

The following paragraphs shed more light on the above-mentioned stages of conflict:

3.8.1 Antecedent conditions

According to Holton (1995:81): *"Antecedent conditions are the characteristics of a situation that generally lead to conflict, although they may be present in the absence of conflict as well."* Sehgal (1991:40) indicates that this stage *"... includes the potential antagonism."* Sehgal (1991:5) further indicates that antagonism at this stage may be caused by scarcity of resources; heterogeneity of members and diversity of goals, values and perceptions; desire for more prestige and power over available resources and facilities; voicing of competing ideas; voicing of recentment; and personality differences and defects. Levinger and Ruben (quoted in Holton 1995:81) provide the following three types of antecedent conditions: (1) Physical context of conflict (site location, communication opportunities, time limits and so on, (2) Social context (number of disputants, openness of the conflict site to various observers or third party interveners, aspects of the disputants' relationship, individual expectations, personality considerations, and so on), and (3) issue context (the number of issues in dispute, their sequencing, packaging, and so on). If any of the antecedent conditions is ignored conflict may escalate. However, as indicated by Sehgal (1991:44): *"The antecedent conditions may or may not lead to cognition and personalisation of conflict."*

3.8.2 Perceived or felt conflict

Filley (quoted in Holton 1995:81) distinguishes between perceived conflict and felt conflict, by defining perceived conflict as *"... a logically and impersonally recognized set of conditions that are conflictive to the parties;"* and felt conflict as *"... personalized conflict relationship, expressed in feelings of threat, hostility, fear, and mistrust."* According to Sehgal (1991:43)

misunderstanding between individuals or groups causes perceived conflict. It may as well be caused by miscommunication, particularly in a multicultural university where other students may not understand the ways of communication of others.

It should also be noted, as stated by Sehgal (1991:44) that felt conflict is not automatically caused by perceived conflict. Feelings will actually influence perceptions of conflict. Sehgal (1991:44) states that in this level people are emotionally involved and feel threatened.

3.8.3 Action or manifest behavior

Sehgal (1991:45) indicates that: "*Manifest conflict means, that any of the several varieties of conflictful behaviour occurs (which includes an open aggression) in an episode.*" He further indicates that a behaviour is considered conflictful if it is perceived by some or all participants. For instance, at a university, a student's or a group of students' behavior may be considered conflictful if it amounts to disrupting an academic atmosphere. In the case of students at universities violent behavior manifests itself in the form of intimidating other students who may not want to engage in class boycotts, the burning of property, etc. Holton (1995:81) indicates that the result of perceived or felt conflict is action which may be based on concern for people or concern for production or concern for both people and production. According to Blake and Mouton (quoted in Holton 1995:81) there are five distinct styles of manifest behavior, namely avoidance, accommodation, collaboration, competition and compromise.

3.9   Levels of conflict

It is important to take cognizance of different existing levels of conflict and further distinguish between these levels. That will help conflict managers

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decide on an appropriate approach of conflict. It is also important to attempt keeping conflict at a low level or to stop it before it becomes destructive. According to Holton (1995:81): *"The level of conflict also determines the appropriate resolution or management of the conflict."* Therefore, having knowledge and understanding of various levels of conflict is indispensable for the effective management of conflict.

Holton (1995:86-88) refers to the following levels of conflict:

3.9.1 No conflict/Pseudo conflict

Holton (1995:87) defines pseudo conflict as "… *conflict that results from unsuccessful communication exchanges."* No key differences in goals are experienced at this stage. However, in the case of a multicultural university, due the fact that there are different cultural groups within a student community, differences exist. It is therefore necessary that there be effective communication at this stage in order to realize productive conflict management.

Rhenman, Stromberg and Westerlund (quoted in Holton 1995:87) provide the following three causes of pseudo conflict:

- semantic difficulties;
- insufficient exchange of information; and
- noise.

Student affairs officers should be aware of this level of conflict so that they are always conscious of the importance of effective communication.

3.9.2 Latent conflict

Sehgal (1991:40) refers to the following types of latent conflict:

- Competition for scarce resources

When resources are fewer than participants, competition for resources will most definitely ensue. In the case of multicultural universities, such competition will quickly be construed as racism, particularly by a cultural group, which will loose in the process of competing.

- Drives for autonomy

Sehgal (1991:40) indicates that the need for autonomy forms the basis of conflict because one party may want to have exclusive control over a particular activity which might be regarded by another party as its own territory. For instance, in multicultural universities a major culture within a student community will be tempted to control all student activities. In the process minor cultures will object to that, consequently conflict may be experienced.

- Divergence of subunit goals

Different goals may make it impossible for different parties to reach consensus. The moment consensus cannot be reached because of different goals, then goals become a source of conflict. Holton (1995:87) points out that in this level of conflict, one person may, after having diagnosed a problem, believe that there are goal differences while on the other hand the other party does not share the same sentiment. It means that one party will believe that there are differences when the other party does not. In such a situation it is essential that the effective

communication that will facilitate intense interaction be effected. The likelihood is that the parties may successfully deal with the problem, provided that they are both convinced that some common ground does exist. In the case that fails, an intervention of a third party will be required.

3.9.3 Role conflict

According to Sehgal (1991:40): *"Conflict arises when the focal person receives incompatible role demands or expectations from other persons in his role set."* People may expect more than a person can deliver. As a result, frustration on the side of the person in a particular position of delivery and anger on the side of those who await delivery may cause conflict. Again, if no clear distinction is made between the existing roles, role confusion may be experienced, leading to conflict.

3.9.4 Problem to solve

Holton (1995:87) states that at this level of conflict people are aware of issues that will need their authentic attention. They decide to set emotions aside and seriously address the issues for their own interests. The spirit of finding a solution prevails in this level. A third party may also be brought in to facilitate the prccess through guidance.

3.9.5 Dispute

The conflict at this level, according to Holton (1995:87), is need centered. Focus is placed on personal needs rather than the problem. Conflict at this level may be destructive. Thus, the involvement of a third party is indispensable. However, it should be a person who is neutral, not directly or indirectly involved. The most important step to take at this level is to help disputants to identify and to acknowledge the needs of others. In the process,

as indicated by Holton (1995:87), both parties should distinguish between facts that are based on emotions and objective facts. Then disputants should be guided to pursue the objective facts.

3.9.6 Help

At this level both parties acknowledge having failed to resolve the conflict and that they need a third party to intervene. The third party has to earn the confidence of both parties in order to realize effective intervention.

3.9.7 Fight or flight

Anger and emotions characterize this level. According to Holton (1995:88) the parties are not prepared to negotiate but to fight and destroy the opponent. Every party wants to emerge as the victor. In this case, intervention from outside has to be urgently employed. Furthermore, it is vital for the third party to hear individual sides first and understand the needs of both parties.

3.9.8 Intractable

At this level as indicated by Holton (1995:88), involved parties generally talk negatively about the conflict to anybody, including the press. Such a situation would also urgently call for the intervention of a third party who would be acceptable to all the disputants.

3.10 Other aspects for constructive management of conflict

Positive observance of the following factors will yield good results in a process of conflict resolution:

3.10.1 Understanding conflict

Holton (1995:79) recommends the understanding of conflict because it ensures positive management of conflict and the avoidance thereof. The fact that conflict is inevitable cannot be refuted. As a result, developing strategies for effective management of conflict is essential. Identifying and understanding conflict will be the starting point for effective conflict management.

3.10.2 Conflict-positive student affairs

It is important to turn student affairs into a conflict-positive division because such an attitude would empower them to manage conflict positively and effectively. According to Tjosvold (1991:11): *"Positive conflict is an ideal to which managers and employees of an effective organization must aspire."* It would mean that all student affairs officers should use conflict to bring about unity amongst students. For instance, if there are serious differences between black and white students which result in conflict regarding the use of the TV-room, a meeting facilitated by a completely neutral party should be arranged. Students from both sides would actively state their case. An argument that is characterized by emotions and frustrations would ensue. In the process, students get more information about each others feelings. As a result they learn more about the others. Consequently, wrong perceptions about other people are cleared up and stereotypes are dealt with.

Tjosvold (1991:10) outlines characteristics of a typical conflict-positive organization as opposed to a conflict-negative organization:

Conflict-positive organization	Conflict-negative organization
• Group centred	• Emphasizes individuality
• Meetings deciding on particular actions	• Written rules and procedures determining the what and how
• Open relationships encouraged	• Impersonal relationships encouraged
• Participative leadership	• Non-participative leadership

Student affairs officers should have a constructive attitude towards conflict management. It is possible that conflict can bring about unity amongst students from different cultural backgrounds because it will enable them or force them to talk to one another. According to Tjosvold (1991:41/2) "... *the key to managing conflict is to discuss differences openly with the understanding that people have overlapping goals and are seeking 'win-win' solution.*"

The positive end-result of the process of interaction is the establishment of differences and commonality. Thus, developing positive attitudes towards conflict and the eradication of the fear of conflict will contribute to the development of unity within a culturally diverse student community.

However, to realize unity in time of change and conflict might be a very difficult exercise, one that seems to be impossible to students if the student affairs division does not reflect to be conflict-positive. For the student affairs division to become a conflict-positive team, the following four steps as suggested by Tjosvold (1991:12) should be taken into consideration:

3.10.3 Developing a positive shared conviction about positive conflict

All stakeholders should be educated about conflict and be made aware of the fact that progress can be made out of conflict. Such education regarding conflict will instill the importance of a positive attitude in conflict resolution in various participants. Negative attitudes will exacerbate the situation. It is therefore extremely essential that the feelings of disputants are established at the beginning of conflict resolution.

3.10.4 Acquiring a common knowledge base about managing conflict

Consensus on how the existing conflict will be handled should be reached before any attempt to resolve conflict is made. That would include aspects such as who should participate, what procedures will be followed, is mediation required, and the time-frame.

3.10.5 Working together for maximizing acceptance of diversity

Participants should be encouraged to be aware of the variety of people in terms of cultures, ideas, age, race, economic situation, political orientation, language, gender and disability. They should also be assisted to acknowledge the importance of being different because of enriching ideas which will be shared within a diverse group.

3.10.6 Managing anger

According to Tjosvold (1991:127) "*Anger is based in part on the experience of obstruction, but anger is more than frustration.*" Thus, obstruction will cause anger. Because of being angry, people resort to confrontational measures, which bring about conflict. Hence, Tjosvold (1991:128) indicates that: "*Anger brings about life to conflict and conflict to life.*" If anger is ignored or

suppressed, it brings about violence. Acknowledging the fact that in a conflict situation there is anger will contribute to managing anger constructively. Consequently, a positive impact will be made in conflict management.

3.10.7 Pitfalls to avoid

Tjosvold (1991:118) suggest the following pitfalls which should be avoided in conflict management:

- We don't have time.
- Assuming others' goals oppose yours.
- Using one strategy for all circumstances.
- It's your fault.
- Me…Me…Me.
- Us vs. Them.
- Either-Or.
- Got ya!

3.10.8 Inclusiveness, transparency and honesty

A broad spectrum of diversity in terms of race, class, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion should be involved in a process of conflict resolution. A diverse group of people will need to trust one another so that progress can be enhanced. Openness and honesty will promote the element of trust. People should be exhorted to be involved in the process of conflict management without any hidden agendas.

3.10.9 Productive and healthy relationships

It is essential to note that the resolution of conflict will be easily facilitated by productive and healthy relationships between disputing parties. Productive

and healthy relationships between parties in conflict imply a situation wherein the parties are prepared and able to talk to each other. According to Sehgal (1991:37): "*Productive and healthy relationships between individuals and groups are characterised by authentic confluence or a meeting and functioning together.*" The disturbance of the confluence will result in a deadlock. When feuding parties have reached a deadlock, a third party intervention should be resorted to.

3.10.10 Positive attitude

The right attitude, which is characterized by warmth and consideration of other people's views, will contribute immensely towards resolving a conflict. Hamlyn (1997:20) indicates that it is important to develop a selfless attitude in order to be able to reach others. A selfless attitude means consciously forgetting about yourself, your ambitions and impressions and placing yourself in the position of the other person. According to Tjosvold (1991:2): "*Dealing effectively with conflict requires intellectual understanding, honest self-examination, reaching out to others, and mature management of feelings.*" Crawly (1992:16) advises that a manager should always maintain a "*... constructive attitude even when people are unreasonable, unreliable and combatative, as they often are during conflicts.*" It may not be easy to maintain a cool position when others are aggressive. However, Crawley (1992:16) provides the following guidelines which may contribute to maintaining a constructive attitude under pressing circumstances:

- Be clear about what you see, how you judge, and how you react to people and situations.
- Understand and take charge of your own feelings and behavior.
- Step back and take a balanced view.
- Respond positively.

The four guidelines imply a balance between a manager and those that are involved in a conflict. The importance of this balance is that it may contribute to constructive conflict management

Assessing one's attitude in relation to the existing conflict is essential because that will help the establishment of an attitude, which will facilitate constructive management of conflict. Answers to the following questions raised by Crawley (1992:39) could help disputants and conflict managers to know exactly what their attitude is in relation to the existing conflict:

- Do you believe in win-win resolution?
- Are you like fire or ice?
- Do like to be in control and in charge?
- Are you prosecutor, rescuer or victim?
- What are your 'people hooks'?
- What are your 'situational hooks'?
- What are you good at and what would you like to change?

Furthermore, to handle conflict effectively will require of the disputants to avoid arrogance and close-mindedness. Such attitudes can be avoided if the following realities as indicated by Tjosvold (1991:3) are acknowledged:

- Conflict pervades organizational life.
- Poorly managed conflicts cost a great deal.
- No one wins when conflicts cost a great deal.
- It takes two to get tangled into conflict; it takes two to untangle.
- Conflict is not the problem; it is part of the solution.
- Diversity of opinion and information are mandatory to solve problems.
- Conflict reconciles opposing tensions and directions into workable solutions.

3.11 Summary

The following aspects of conflict have been dealt with in this chapter: Conflict resolution processes, types of conflict, causes of conflict, factors for constructive management of conflict, elements of conflict, approaches to conflict management, stages of conflict, levels of conflict, and other factors as indicated in paragraph 10 were highlighted. Insight and understanding of these aspects will facilitate constructive management of conflict. Furthermore, insight into the above-mentioned aspects would empower conflict managers to assess any conflict situation effectively. For instance, before any attempt to resolve conflict is made, an understanding of the type of conflict and the causes thereof is indispensable.

Therefore, an assessment before the actual engagement in resolving conflict is essential. That will facilitate the establishment of the type of conflict which in turn would lead to the development of appropriate strategies that can be employed for the resolution of the conflict.

Furthermore, the situation in resolving conflict was examined. It has been acknowledged that it is not always possible to resolve conflict successfully. As a result, the question of negotiation, arbitration and mediation were closely examined. The importance of mediation lies in the fact that even in the case of a deadlock there should be a way to resolve conflict. Involving a neutral third party has been indicated as a strategy to resolve deadlocks.

This chapter has laid the foundation of the practical assessment regarding the management of conflict by means of a literature review, i.e. what various authors believe regarding the management of conflict which would assist in establishing how conflict is being managed at historically white universities in South Africa.