



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION, GHANA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate conflict management practices and the main causes of conflict in the university administration in Ghana. The researcher used quantitative methods to classify variables in the study and administered questionnaires as tools to enable accurate data collection. The target population for the research included management staff, senior staff and junior staff at the University for Development Studies UDS central administration in Tamale, Ghana. The study revealed that the causes of conflict at the UDS central administration were conflicting needs, conflicting perception, conflicting goals, conflicting roles, tribalism and nepotism. The strengths and weaknesses of the processes and procedures in conflict management and resolution were discovered with the view to recommend ways of improvement. The findings may draw the attention of policy makers and other stakeholders to various issues in the conflict management and resolution processes in public universities on how to address problematic issues. The study may also highlight the processes and quality procedures for conflict resolution in the tertiary institutions. The paper's originality is reflected by the use of management staff, senior staff and junior staff which have not been previously used, to investigate university conflict management in the study area.

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts have become part and parcel of human organizations world over. This indeed is a paradox because of the amount of energy and resources expended by organizations to prevent and resolve conflicts. As cited in the study of Olaleye, & Arogundade (2013), conflict is a situation of disagreement between two parties characterized by the inability of those concerned to iron out their differences. The inevitability of conflict was also established so managing conflicts immediately could be in the best interest of the conflicting parties in particular and the organization in general (Bazezew, 2014). It is therefore not an aberration to expect conflicts in the Central Administration of the UDS. The nature and types of conflicts that occur in UDS Central Administration vary from one department to another.

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Most recent study identified conflict within an organization to include personal differences, lack of clear job descriptions and responsibilities, role incompatibility and organizational issues such as high levels of stress, resource scarcity and job uncertainty as the most common sources of conflicts (Pavlakis, Kaitelidou, Theodorou, Galanis, Sourtzi, & Siskou, 2011). As such successful conflict management can be beneficial in terms of increasing public trust in decision-making (Young et al. 2012). Conflict is a part of 'doing business' when people work together. Recent research differentiate conflict as either task conflict, or relationship otherwise known as interpersonal conflict. While task conflict is about opposing views of team members towards the task, including viewpoints, ideas, and thoughts, that of relationship conflict is the interpersonal incompatibilities, which include tension, animosity, and annoyance (Jia-Chi, 2010; Bazezew, 2014). Conflict is a part of organizational life and may occur between individuals, between the individual and the group, and between groups. The domain of work and organisation constitutes an arena in which diverging aims and interests provide an inexhaustible