

# Impact of Effective Communication Circuit in Conflict Management, Remediation and Prevention in Higher Institutions in Ghana

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**Abstract:-** Strategic corporate governance is important in the affairs of every tertiary institution across the world. These are places where knowledge and scientific truth are generated.

This paper examined the impact of effective communication and its transmission from all levels of an institution's hierarchy as a requirement for good governance and leadership in the area of conflict management and resolution in our higher educational institutions. This paper adopted the following theories: Bales Theory of Group Communication, Social relation and Symbolic interaction theories. Fifteen officers were interviewed and questionnaire was administered on 432 students and 62 academic members of staff. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (ex-post facto) while explanation building through thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data.

Interpersonal communication, electronic-mail informal group discussions and interview were significant sources of communication  $F(5,488) = 265.07$ , ( $R^2 = 72.8\%$ ).

Effective communication and conflict management were significant strategies ( $X^2 = 281.06$ ) to management in solving problems.

Conflict is a natural and vital part of life and inevitable in every human environment and, therefore, Technical universities managers and administrator including all stakeholders ought to genuinely search for reliable communication and knowledge during crises as a panacea to managing and controlling rising crisis and its attendant consequences. Government budgetary allocation is a huge investment on university education. There must, therefore, be peace, order and harmony in these campuses in order that they might accomplish the vision and mission for which they have been established in the quest to contribute to the national development agenda as enshrined in the Technical University (Act 2016, Act 922). This paper recommends that manager, administrators and stakeholders of Technical University should always apply openness in communication and the principles of creative cooperation in human relationships.

**Keywords:-** Effective Communication, Conflict Management, Remediation, Control, Communication Circuit, Technical University.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A higher institution of learning such as a university, polytechnic or college of education maybe put into the category of organisation usually classified as "complex organisation" (Folarin, 1998). As a matter of fact, there must be very few organisations which can be ascribed greater complexity than a full-fledged higher institution of learning, especially a university. Such few comparable organisations are probably spared most of the intractable element in the makeup of a university. Folarin (1998) argued that scarcely any other civil organisation harbour such a large concentration of social non-conformists as a university does, whether you are thinking of students, or of "teaching and non-teaching academic staff".

It, is therefore, imperative to add that scarcely any other organisation thrives as much on many freedoms. Besides, the university cherished freedoms of thought, speech and association which the higher institutions tend to appropriate in large measures than other organisations ever dare to do-there are many other freedoms for which they are envied: administrative and academic freedoms such as the freedom to organise themselves into as many or as few units as they deem fit, the freedom to decline truth in the light of their own knowledge, freedom to attend or not to attend lectures, the freedom to appear in conventional or unconventional outfit. In short the freedom to be yourself, subject only to considerations of society's stability (Folarin, 1998). The connection between such a welter of freedoms and the management of higher educational institution is that no group of people is more difficult to manage than one whose member cherish their freedom as much as members of higher institution of learning do.

Folarin (1998) explained that the scarcest resources in higher institution of learning these days are of course financial resources, even though hardly any of them can boast of an adequate supply of other resources too-manpower, machinery, books and so on and so forth. Conflicts over the deployment of these scarce resources are not unusual in higher educational institution.

Conflict is defined as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concern. That is conflict refers to the differences arising in views, opinions, goals, needs and so on between individuals and or among groups in our search for meaning and during our struggle to meet our basic human needs and desires (Sine anno); (Sine loco). Egbueze (2017) contends that a lot of scholars described River State as a theatre of conflicts and that the issue of conflict management in democratic governance has been a contending one.

This paper, therefore, observes that conflict arises between individuals, organisations or states as a result of a disagreement over the distribution, ownership of valuable human resources such as power, money, prestige and land etc. That is, all social relationship in all social system reveals inequalities in the distribution of these valuable resources. Karl Max (Sine anno); (Sine loco) argued that, conflict is ubiquitous. It is important to note that conflict is a natural vital part of life.

He explained that when conflict is understood it can become an opportunity to learn and create. The challenge for people in conflict is to apply the principle of creative cooperation in human relationship. There will always be a conflict of interest between the haves and have-nots. Those who possess valuable resources naturally wish to retain them and those without resources want to secure them. According to some empirical studies, this social relationship creates antagonism between these two powerful social forces that occasionally erupts into violence, disruption, loss of life, and properties.

Society's tolerance began to show signs of strain as our own higher institutions ceased to demonstrate any appreciable creativity and became increasingly absorbed into the mediocrities and banalities to which they were hitherto considered to be relatively immature and as their traditional freedoms have begun in recent years to scale the thin boundaries between freedom and license, and in a few cases, between sanity and madness (Folarin, 1998).

Folarin (1998) explained that with particular regard to students, it must be remembered that the majority of them enter the higher institutions or the adolescent stage of their development, a stage during which they normally constitute problems to us parents at home. It is on the one hand a period of conflict, confusion and several unanswered maturation problems. On the other hand: it is a period of increasing self-recognition, unbounded optimism and growing self-esteem which, unguided or misguided, can easily degenerate into megalomania of a socially dangerous species. The greater than usual pressure of work at the higher institution only serve to accentuate the tension in this growing organism. Unfortunately, the higher institutions these days have extremely limited provisions to help the students achieve any meaning resolution of that tension.

Folarin (1998) observed that if an average adolescent college student can on the basis of the foregoing analysis be justifiably described as a bundle of confusion then a higher

institution ( The Technical University) that harbours ten thousand such students must realize that it is harbouring ten thousand bundles of confusion, a composition that is potentially more explosive than the proverbial keg of gun-powder given a society with a tradition of near-total parental abdication of their children's training to the universities and in which some home appears to overlook if not actually indulge their wards.

Propensity towards delinquent behaviour (reckless spending, aimless wandering, an inconveniently close acquaintance with drugs and guns) and even towards adult crimes (armed robbery, gangsterism, cultism, etc) the responsibility a higher institution (Technical University) is assuming in admitting these complex organisms in such large numbers must be seen as very grave indeed. The situation is by no means improved by our large self-imposed economic embarrassments in recent decades.

Folarin (1998) posted that when you add these problems created by the traditional conflicts within the higher institution: management-staff conflicts, management and student conflict, teaching and non-teaching staff conflict and not least of all, gender-related conflicts, all of which appeared to be assuming new dimensions and proportions these days, the surprise is that our university in particular can still subsist without snapping. No wonder a relatively young and robust-looking Vice-Chancellor in Ghana sometimes becomes gaunt and grey-headed by the time he leaves office. As if all this were not enough, the quality of university education has plummeted in the estimation of the people in recent years, what with rapidly dwindling facilities and a virtually inevitable decline in students' and teachers' commitment to scholarship. For issues that have developed into conflicts, we resort to conflict management. But first it has to be realized that conflict is not necessary a bad thing it can be both functional and dysfunctional. There is in fact, a general agreement that development is hardly conceivable without some form and measure of conflict. What matters most is the way the conflict is handled. For effective handling, it is first necessary to find out the source and type of conflict Technical University management has on their hands.

This paper suggests that it is better to check perceptions of the conflicting parties/groups (e.g management and staff, management and student, teaching staff and non-teaching staff, etc). Do the conflicting parties understand each other perceptual distortions, it has been pointed out, often aggravate conflicts, making them appear more serious than they actually are. That is why this article advocates that the greater amount of reliable, objective, unbiased, truthful and faithful communication is needed to effectively, efficiently devoid of sentiments and hatred to expeditiously deal with issues that are likely to set things apart in our tertiary institutions

Conflict in the words of Luce and Raiffa (1957) cited in Nwosu and Wilson (2004) is a theme that has occupied the thinking of man more than any other, with the exception of God and love. It occurs in different setting and at different levels of human interaction. The major elements of human

conflict are incompatibility of goals, opposition in human relations, independence and interaction. Walton (1969); Umanah (1982:7); Hocker and Wilmot (1998:21, Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman, (1989:448), Baron and Greenberg (1990:458), Umnotho Development (2000) and Morreale, Spitzberg and Barge (2001:363) all cited in Nwosu and Wilson (2004).

Hence conflict is currently expressed as “an interaction among interdependent people who perceive others as opposing their goals, aims, or values, and having the potential to frustrate them in achieving these goals, aims and values” (cited in Nwosu and Wilson, 2004).

Nwosu and Wilson (2004) observed that closely related to conflict is dispute which is “the tangible expression of conflict”.

Hence, there is the need to develop an indigenous approach to dispute prevention and conflict management in our tertiary institutions.

This paper explains that conflict can occur due to the lack of opportunity, ability or motivation to communicate effectively people sometimes communicate with others in a way that angers or annoys them even when it is not their intention to do so. This often stems from a lack of necessary communication skill, clarity, not being diplomatic or non-confrontational and to criticize in a destructive rather than constructive manner.

Communication is so vital to the existence, survival and growth of any organisation that many experts have pointed out that there can be no organisations without communication Rogers and Rogers cited in Nwosu and Wilson (2004). This is understandable because an organisation as a management or social science concept, refers to interactive relationship among human entities, but also now including interactive relationships among machines or between machines and human entities.

The reason for such an intense focus by scholars is that organisations are critical to the prosperity, well-being, and security and on occasions, even survival of modern societies from this submission therefore managers and administrators in the various Technical Universities in Ghana ought to deem it necessary to plan, coordinate, execute and organise human and material resource for the acquisition of knowledge, truth and skills for which they were established for nation building, academic excellence and the prosperity of those who work in them. Communication processes within organisations are different from those of other kinds of groups and they are a critical part of the way the groups function (Defleur *et al.* 2005:180).

Defleur *et al* (2005: 180) observed that:

an organisation is a human group (Technical University). That is, it is a number of people who have come to act collectively in order to achieve a goal that they could not attain acting alone as an individual. In other words, an

organisation is a distinctive communication context in its own right.

Etzion, cited in Littlejohn *et al* (2005) captured the significance of the phenomenon under study in management communication. Organisational communication can be thought of as “that field that conceptualises organisation as symbolically achieved cooperation.” Individuals connect to others in some kinds of structure, which provides organisational form. But form is more than lines of connection, it also implies directions of influence within a complex system, so that certain individuals exert influence over others, certain groups exert influence over other groups, and certain systems exert forces that control or manage other systems. Littlejohn *et al* (2005:239) therefore, contended that organisations are social units or human and material grouping deliberately blend to achieve specific goals.

The focus of this paper is on how management/leadership in higher institutions ought to use strategic/effective communication to resolve conflict and manage conflict (Nwosu and Wilson, 2004).

According to Nwosu and Wilson (2004), when the communication system or form becomes very faulty, for example, opposing parties in higher institutions of learning engage in harmful innuendos, insinuations, verbal dueling, verbal attacks, in communication wrong or negative use of channels of communication, intentional interdiction or use of channel noise, selective exposure to information, selective recall or selective distortion, and selective retention of communication, use of unnecessary jargons or terminologies that merely introduce semantic noise and barriers to communication understanding, as well as blocking avenues for feedback (Johns:Farb; Lederman; Nwosu, Cited in Nwosu and Wilson, 2004).

Nwosu and Wilson (2004) were of the view that other examples of communication problems that are likely to manifest in higher institution of learning include the fact that chances of conflict usually increase when too little or too much communication are employed by the manager of tertiary institutions.

Nwosu and Wilson (2004) argued that so while little or paucity of communication is dysfunctional in conflict management, excessive communication can also be dysfunctional. In other words, increase in communication is functional only up to a point in conflict management. Manager of tertiary institutions must have the ability to help to bring about better decision, the ability of a conflict to enhance group loyalties, and the ability of conflict situation to increase organisational commitment.

Conflict managers must also know how to pigeon-hole, categorise or classify conflicts in order to manage them properly. This is usually not an easy task because it is not easy to create boundaries between some kinds of conflict and other.

Experts cited in Nwosu and Wilson (2004), classified conflict bearing in mind the fact that these categories are not necessarily or always mutually exclusive or even exhaustive. They argued that it is no longer easy or quite appropriate to classify conflict as positive or negative, good or bad, this must be done with proper conceptualisation to enhance understanding and acceptance of this categorisation.

Similarly, one can also classify a conflict as simple or complex, latent or manifest individual or group, intentional or unintentional and globalised or localised conflict (or international versus domestic conflicts).

Burgers and Burgers cited in Nwosu and Wilson (2004), classified conflict as follows:

Communal conflict, institutionalised conflict, domination conflicts, environmental conflicts (ie, physical or natural environments), ethnic conflicts, generations conflicts, identity conflicts, role conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, intentional conflicts, private sector conflicts, public sector conflict, intra and extra group conflict, labour-relations conflicts, value conflicts, armed conflicts, technological conflicts, personality conflicts.

This article posts that leadership in higher educational institution should understand communication is a double-edged sword (positive and negative). Communication can be used in ameliorating, escalating or exacerbating as well as internalising domestic conflicts.

Management of higher institutions of learning are often accused rightly or wrongly of hoarding information especially of the type that is not too flattering to themselves. Sometime the problem is more of inefficient dissemination of communication. At other times, it may involve the use of inappropriate channels, for example, depending on memos and circulars (alone) where supplementation with or even exclusive use of face-to-face interpersonal communication would better serve the purpose of clearing misunderstanding (Folarin, 1998). Whatever is responsible for communication ineffectiveness, it is a frequent source of conflict in our higher institution of learning.

#### ➤ *Hypothesis (I)*

Effective communication will not significantly impact conflict management related issues in the Technical University in Ghana?

#### ➤ *Hypothesis (II)*

Open and quality communication will not significantly impact/ affect conflict resolution in the management of Technical University in Ghana?

## II. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Management is the process of planning, organising, heading, communicating and controlling an organisation's human, financial, physical and information resources to achieve organisational goals in an efficient and effective manner (Sannie 2001:125). It is against the backdrop of the

relevance of theory in management action. Mullin (1996) noted that an understanding of management theory helps in understanding principles underlying the process of management. Besides it is necessary to view the interrelationship between the development of theory, behaviour in organisations and management practice. Therefore, this study examines the impact of creating and maintaining effective communication circuits in conflict management in our higher institutions of learning.

The indispensable vehicle or conveyor-belt for conflict management is effective communication. Decisions are made at every level within an organisation, utilising varying types and levels of information which must be processed through the prisms of the organisation's mandates, policies, objectives, norms and values. It is in the course of that processing that information produces communication or communication produces information. This article argues that through the conveyor-belt of communication, basic choices are made by the organisation, for instance, the chief executive officer, the Vice-Chancellor and the core management team at the apex, while subsidiary choices are made at the different levels or divisions which have been made necessary in modern organisations by the principles of "Division of Labour" (Folarin, 1998). For the purpose of this paper, Prosser's definition of organisational communication is adopted as cited in (Folarin, 1998):

- The means employed by organisations to tackle and solve their various internal problems (i.e, conflicts); and
- The means by which organisations (higher institutions of learning) try to adopt to their external environments.

This matter to external environment is very important for higher institutions of learning, which are largely the creation of those environments. Writing on the social importance of communication, Oslo cited in Folarin (1998) explained that:

Communication is the life-blood of any organisation, without communication, it is impossible to run any activities of an organisation. No government can meet the needs of its people without a proper system of communication. An educational system would collapse without effectively creating and maintaining communication circuits. Folarin (1998:9) citing James *et al* said that:

Communication also serves, as an instrument of social interaction. It helps us to understand ourselves, to keep in touch with other people, to understand them and predict their response to situations. It is a means by which power is acquired, exercised and sustained.

Rafiu (2017) in a similar vein observed that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a communication driven world where the individual needs communication competence to be relevant in the new world order.



Obilade, cited in Folarin, (1998:9), viewed communication as a means of effecting particular kinds of behaviour while Stevenson cited in Folarin (1998) regarded communication as an instrument of social control and a crucial dimension of national integration.

In a definition reminiscent of Canary and Cody Eisenberg and Goodall (Jr), cited in Soola and Ayoade (2000), they viewed communication as a metaphoric pipeline through which messages and information are transferred from the source to the receiver. In an organisation (Higher education) setting, for example, a boss has communicated when, with minimal distortion, he is able to transfer the instructions, policies and guidelines in his mind to his subordinates. This machine-like concept is in line with the structure or hierarchical notion of organisations particularly of the classical or scientific management type. Eisenberg *et al*, cited in Soola *et al* (2000) had tried to contextualise this perspective as belonging to the “formulatory perspective” phase of development of organisational communication with its emphasis on “impressing and influencing others”.

This paper appreciates the importance of strategic communication in conflict resolution and conflict management in our higher educational institutions. A tertiary institution as an organisation needs communication to run its activities, to solve its internal problems and relate to its constituents to bring about desirable change in their behaviour; to forecast, ascertain and meet their needs; to acquire, wield and sustain power; to exercise social control; to contribute to academic and scholarly excellence.

Longe *et al*, in their reference to Ogundeko and Nwanko Commission, cited in (Erwat, 2004:94) stated that in educational institutions, and tertiary institutions in particular, lack of proper MIS and poor management of communication is believed to be the cause of most management problems they experienced. There is the need, therefore, to improve information management in the educational system (tertiary institutions), so that management would have access to quality and useful communication. This if taken into consideration will help reduce information related management problems in higher educational institutions in Ghana. Sayeda, Rajandran and Lokachari (2010), in their study on total quality management, explored the adoption of quality management practices in engineering educational institutions in India from managements perspective. Sayeda *et al* (2010) findings highlight 27 critical factors/dimensions of quality management, which analysed the relationship between total quality management (TQM) dimensions and institutional performance, which has been formulated using five dimensions. They observed that there are positive and significant relationships among the total quality management dimension and institution performance.

Okonjo (2000:136), in his view buttressed Seyda *et al*’s (2010) argument that Western Liberal society has taken note and is beginning to work to make the necessary modifications in its teaching and work practices. This is evidenced by the recent rush in the application of quality circles and total quality management control (TQM or TQC) to the solution of

practical but hither to difficult problems. This paper, therefore, suggests it behoves to managers of the Ghanaian tertiary institutions with full participation of other stakeholders in the management of our tertiary institutions to adopt total quality management concept as evidenced in Seyda *et al*; 2010, and Okonjo, 2000) for institutional effectiveness thereby meeting and fulfilling the mission and vision for which they were established as enshrined in the Technical university Act 2016, Act, 922) and the Tamale Technical amendment Act 2018, Act 974. Education is one of the key industries in which government invests her scarce resource. Educational institutions, therefore, are expected to justify the resources that government invests in them for the educational development of the society and the nation. The education planners, administration and policy makers need more than ever before accurate, up-to-date and timely information to appropriately manage conflict. However, when communication is poorly designed, problems-solving and decision process to effectively manage conflict would be ineffective and even lack of effective communication is likely to exacerbate or escalate the already conflict-ridden situation. Educational institutions today need to pay more attention to management of their data and information for effectiveness and efficiency. Effective communication sharing reduces uncertainties and facilitates decision making in the area of conflict management (Opeke, cited in Erwat, 2004). Information is one of the resources which a manager controls apart from human resource materials, money and machines (McLeod, Jr: Clare and Stuteley, cited in Erwat, 2004).

In Camble’s study cited in Erwat (2004) information is not a luxury nor is it a fashionable gadgetry. It has become an essential instrument for development. Information is one of the basic needs today after air, water, food and shelter.

The studies that have been carried out in such educational organisations generally agreed that there is the need to improve communication management and also make use of modern facilities in order to provide appropriate information in conflict resolution and conflict management situation. Some scholars are of the view that accurate and timely availability and use of information would reduce the common problem (conflicts) of management in institutions (Erwat, 2004) information access and control today become a veritable power source (Longe *et al*, cited in Erwat, 2004).

Information gives the processor power and influence over and above the authority he may be legally vested. In any organisation, power that is the ability to get things done flows into the hands of those who have the most (as well as the most up-to-date) information. People are more likely to be guided by those who know more and better. Thus, a first principle in achieving managerial effectiveness is to have access to the most reliable and up-to-date information (UNESCO, 1979, Nwankwo, cited in Erwat, 2004:29).

Ibekwe (1992) further observed that studies have been carried out in the developed countries by some scholars to ascertain the importance of effective communication in university governance.

The results of these studies showed that information system lies at the heart of effective management and the efficient operation of any enterprises especially tertiary institutions.

Biobaku, cited in Ibekwe (1992 :) recommended that:

Higher management in universities should comprise the best minds available both within the academic community and without. Vice-chancellors should be chosen amongst the best candidates available with proven qualities of leadership and abiding interest in educational development.

Ibekwe (1992) concluded that increased student enrolment in tertiary institutions led to increased spending and this in turn resulted in greater control of tertiary institution. Consequently, diverse groups within and outside the institutions advance their special interest in different directions. Such action when not carefully handled can lead to serious conflict. If a group and or an individual feels threatened.

There is the use for effective or synergistic communication as a sine qua non for useful, effective or synergistic communication in conflict management in our Technical universities.

The common denominator in the central theme of this paper is synergy. It examines the concept of synergistic communication and organisational synergy, as well as the relationship between the two. Synergistic communication is communication that is guided by the principle that the whole is greater than its various part or units. It is communication that is guided by the principles of team management. It is creative and cooperative communication that is trusting, open, respectful and progressive. Synergistic communication requires the communicators to be less antagonistic, less defensive, possessive, less adversarial, less self-centred, less

“political”, less legalistic, less judgmental and less suspicious. It requires any manager who wishes to embrace it to be more emphatic, more loving, more caring, more altruistic, more interdependent, more interrelational and more friendly (Nwosu and Wilson, 2004).

Total Synergistic Communication (TSC) is an off-shoot of total quality management (TQM). This emphasized the application of synergistic communication in the effective mobilization of the work force or the employees (lecturers, non-academic members, students and the external publics) in our tertiary institutions in Ghana.

For greater productivity involves the adoption of a synergistic approach to employee communication and employee mobilization.

Adopting the emphatic communication strategy or technique can be very effective. It means that as a manager or communicator or Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Dean and HoDs) in our Technical University, you should consider the target audience before yourself. This will help you to communicate in a manner that will make it impossible for you to be misunderstood, or at least less difficult.

Strategic communication emphasizes preventive communication that helps to nip organisational crises and misunderstanding (e.g, Industrial unrests or strikes at the bud, as opposed to curative communication which is more or less a medicine after-death approach to organisational communication.

Communication is the process of transmitting and exchanging ideas, feelings and information through realization, symbols, writing and silence to create mutual understanding between the communicators (Nwosu and Wilson, 2004).

### III. COMMUNICATION CIRCUIT IN A TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

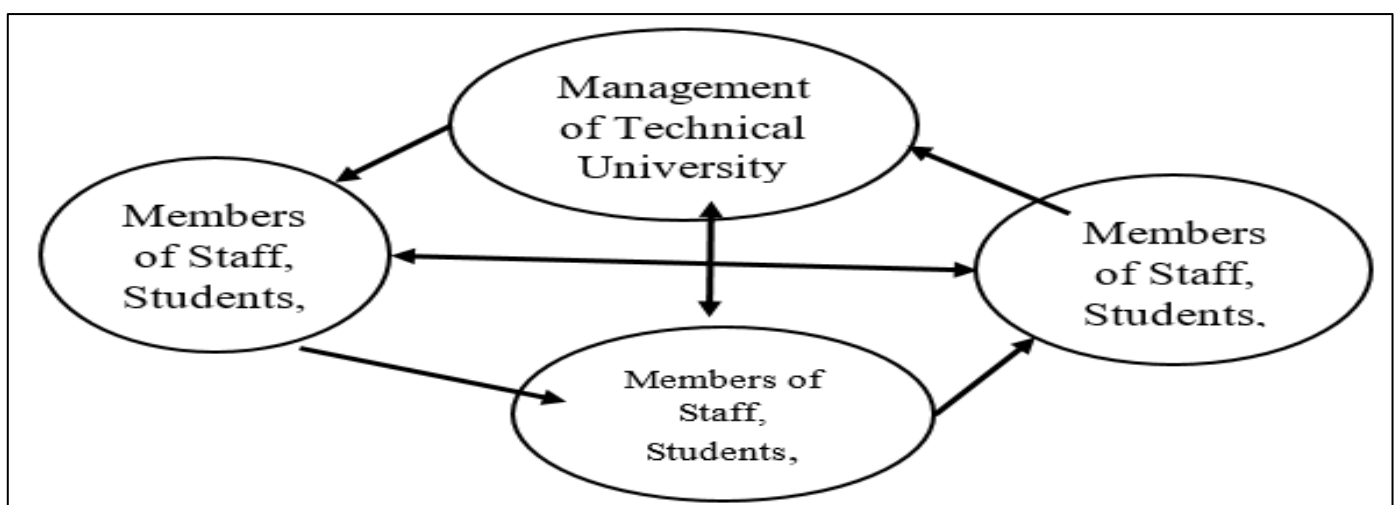


Fig 1: Omni-Directional Communication Traffic in a Technical University  
Source: Adopted and Modified in Folarin (1998)

The circuit stresses the roles and impact of the communication skills, knowledge levels and the attitudes brought by the participants into the communication act or event; the efficiency and sensitivity of the human and material channels; as well as the social and cultural environment in which communication is taking place. Regardless of what is it, associational mode of communication should be preferred to the command mode in conflict resolution mechanism, remediation and prevention.

The objective of this paper is to investigate the impact of effective communication in conflict management, remediation, prevention and resolution in the Ghanaian Technical University.

#### IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kunczik (1984) explained that empirical research without a theoretical basis is as pointless as theoretical speculation that shies away from empirical examination.

Kunczik further argued that the goal of scientific activity is the working-out systems of proofs or evidences based on actual empirical findings.

This paper is anchored on Bale's (Theory of small group communication) interaction process analysis; the social relations theory and the symbolic interaction theory. Bale's (1950) created a unified and well develop theory of small group communication, which aimed at explaining the type of messages people exchange in groups, the ways in which this shape the roles and personalities of group members and the way they affect the overall character of the group. The argument here is that if people do not adequately share information, they would have what Bales explained and cited in Littlejohn *et al* (2005:216) call "problem of communication" and if they do not share opinion, they would experience "problem of evaluation". If they fail to look for and give suggestions, the group would suffer from "problem of control" if the group cannot come into agreement, they would have "problems of decision" and if the group is unfriendly, they would have "problem of re-integration" by which Bales means that the group is unable to successfully build a "we feeling or cohesiveness" within the group.

Suffice to say that functional tradition addresses the ways communication affects each of these elements and it is, therefore, plausible for management of tertiary institutions to work within this matrix in conflict resolution, remediation and conflict management. Craig, cited in Littlejohn *et al* (2005) described the importance of this thought of communication field.

Communication... is not a secondary phenomenon that can be explained by antecedent psychological, sociological, cultural or economic factors rather, communication itself is the primary constitutive social process that explains all these factors.

The social relations theory propounded by Defleur (1970) is more like the social category theory, but the emphasis of social relations is on the relationship or interaction between or among member of the some social category (ie. Vice-Chancellors, ProVice- Chancellors, Registrars, Academic, and Non-Academic Members of Staff, General Administration, Students and actors in the external environment as co-modulators).

This theory also connects us to the two-step flow communication (Anaeto, S-Anaeto and Osifeso, 2008). In a similar view, the symbolic interaction theory propounded by Lakossa, Reites; and other major contributors like Blummer (1969) cited in Anaeto *et al* (2008) post that mental events cannot be understood except in the context of social interaction, social activity becomes possible through the role-taking process and that communication occurs through the creation of shared significant symbols. This paper argues that even though these theories are extant they are still relevant to the subject matter. That is, there should be constant flow of reliable, objective and unbiased communication with sincerity of purpose and openness when superiors and subordinates are caught in a web of conflict in the Technical University to achieve sanity and organisational harmony as might be required.

Group communication necessarily involves interpersonal, and most of the theories of interpersonal communication apply also at the group level Craig, cited in Littlejohn *et al* (2005). Public communication, or rhetoric traditionally focuses on the public presentation of discourse. Little john *et al* (2005) argued that organisational communication occurs in large cooperative networks and includes virtually all aspects of both interpersonal and group communication. It encompasses topic as the structure and function of organisations, human relations communication and the process of organising, planning, execution, coordinating, negotiation and or organisational culture.

This paper suggests that management as a matter of desirability and obligation should make strategic, constructive, scientific and informed resolutions that can stand the test of time at all times. In order that conflict of interest, confrontation, litigation or post decision anxiety might be curbed or minimised, thereby creating a more acceptable, friendly and harmonious organisational culture and good climate in our tertiary institutions.

Rootwell (2000) argued that competent communication is the essence of group work. Some of the key aspects of communication competence particularly relevant to group work are establishing a cooperative environment, empowering group members, exercising a healthy skepticism without showing contempt for different viewpoints, using emphatic listening, choosing the most effective conflict management style, employing situational and competent leadership, and managing anger effectively. In a similar view, Hockett, cited in Adeniran (1987:1116) observed that "the communication system is such a compulsive driving force that not communicating might indeed blight the human spirit and turn such uncommunicating people neurotic".

This article supported the view that communication is more than exchange of words; it is what we say, how we say it and what we neglect to say in a social interaction (Wood, 1999)

## V. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper adopted the descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type aimed at investigating the impact of creating and maintaining effective communication circuits in the management of conflicts in the Technical University. These are the variables (Effective communication, communication circuits, conflict management and control, higher institution).

This paper elicited desired responses through the administration of questionnaire on academic staff members and students in view of their large member. This enabled the respondents to indicate the extent or degree of their disagreement or agreement with the statement or items: the 4-point Likert scale was used in this regard.

SA - Strongly Agreed  
A - Agreed  
D - Disagreed  
SD - Strongly Disagreed

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Polytechnics (Technical Universities)

Name of Technical Universities	Student		Academic staff		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Accra	96	19.4	14	2.8	110	22.3
Kumasi	76	15.4	34	6.9	110	22.3
Tamale	260	52.6	14	2.8	274	55.4
Total	432	87.4	62	12.6	494	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

- **Hypothesis 1:** Effective communication will not significantly impact conflict management related issues in higher institutions of learning in Ghana?

Table 2: Chi-Square was Used to Test Effective Communication in Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management.

Variables	N	df	X <sup>2</sup> cal	X <sup>2</sup> crit	P Value	Remark
Effective Communication	494					
Open and quality communication	494	9	281.06	16.9	0.000	Significant

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

The calculated value (281.06) is greater than the critical value (16.9), therefore, there is significant relationship between effective and quality of information in conflict resolution in the management of the selected Technical Universities in Ghana, X<sup>2</sup> calculated (9) = 281.06 was greater than X<sup>2</sup> critical (9) = 16.9 at P = 0.000 < 0.05

The conclusion, therefore, is that there is a significant relationship (impact) between effective communications, conflict resolution and conflict management in the selected Technical Universities in Ghana.

There was one-on-one in-depth interview session to obtain answers to the hypothesis formulated. The combination of these research approaches is referred to as Triangulation (Berg, 2001).

Poindexter and MConbs, cited in Stom, 2007) argued that one-on-one in-depth interviews are most relevant and beneficial as a research tool when the issue being investigated has to do with the physical reality or form information or uniqueness and the interviewees perform influential or unique responsibilities.

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS

➤ *With Regard to the Formulated Hypotheses:*

- Effective communication will not significantly impact conflict management related issues in higher institutions of learning in Ghana?
- Open and quality communication will not significantly affect conflict resolution in the management of tertiary institution in Ghana?

The views expressed by some of the interviewees during (IDI) also supported this assertion:

Yes, the effectiveness and quality of communication determines the quality of resolutions made during crises. In other words, it enables the two parties to mutually assess and accept the outcome of any mediation. However, lack of knowledge of both the immediate and remote cause leads to decisions and this can lead to mistrust lack of goodwill and distrust (officer from Kumasi and Tamale Technical University- IDI).



➤ *This Excerpt also Supports the Above Assertion that:*

Conflict resolution efficiency and effectiveness of managers, educational planners, policy makers and administrators can be greatly enhanced by the quality of knowledge awareness and the quality of their communication (IDI).

This corroborates Erwat (2004) assertion that good decision (Conflict resolution) can only be made when the right information (Communication) is available to organisation (Higher educational institution).

- **Hypothesis 2:** openness and quality of communication will not significantly affect/enhance management resolutions/strategies during crises/conflict in the selected Technical Universities?

Table 3: Chi-Square Testing Enhancement of Management Strategies and Effective Communication?

Variables	N	df	X <sup>2</sup> cal	X <sup>2</sup> crit	Value	Remark
Enhancement of management strategies	494	9	47.82	16.9	0.000	Significant
Quality and openness of communication	494					

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Since the calculated value (47.82) is greater than (16.9), there was a significant enhancement on management strategies of Technical Universities. That is, quality and openness of communication (Information/ Knowledge) enhance conflict resolution mechanism in the Technical Universities. X<sup>2</sup> calculated (9) = 47.82 was greater than X<sup>2</sup> critical (9) = 16.9 at P = 0.000 < 0.05.

The conclusion, therefore, is that openness and quality of communication enhance management conflict resolution mechanisms.

A respondent had this to say:

although reliable and credible information/communication is supplied, yet some Vice-Chancellors act on rumour mongering, speculations, backbiting, sentiment and prejudice base on the communication they obtain from their internal “carriers” of information. This does not solve/ resolve conflict, but rather it further polarises, escalates and exacerbates the already “poisoned” environment.

## VII. LANGUAGE USE IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

From an anthropological point of view, the phrase “no language without man, no man without language” rightly points out the significance and agelong relationships between man and language (Unoh, 1987).

Our language helps us in understanding, appreciating and tackling some of our knotty problems and issues, particularly in the area of management communication, interpersonal communication, instructional communication and public communication in conflict resolution and conflict management. We cannot, therefore, remain unconcerned not be conscious of our style of expressions in conflict mediation and prevention. Effective and strategic communication is a major ingredient of cohesion. As evidence, we only have to think of the disruptions in societies where the alleged gaps in communication frequently occur, not even to contemplate the

catastrophe that could result in the system of communication in higher education were to finally breakdown.

Who speaks what language to whom and when? Cited in Unoh (1987). Lack of appropriateness use of language in conflict mediation, resolution and remediation can lead to a complete systemic failure in the management of Technical universities in Ghana. The concept of communicative competence in socio-linguistics theory synthesizes the properties and knowledge of linguistic competence with those of the socio-cultural variables in the context of communication. In practical terms, effective human communication, using the medium of language, is achieved only by using the appropriate form of language.

According to Crystal cited in Ogbodo; Otagburuagu; Ogbuehi and Ogeniyi (2010), the social interaction function of language is to maintain a rapport between people. This function of language is used to maintain social balance by indicating friendliness or comradeship.

Adler and Rodman cited in Ogbodo *et al* (2010) discussed how language shapes attitudes in terms of credibility, status, sexism and racism. They say that speech style influences an individual’s perception of the credibility and status of the person speaking (University managers/administrators). Thus, a speaker’s accent, choice of words and speech rate influences the listener (Academic staff; non-academic staff, students and the general publics) either positively or negatively.

Ogbodo *etal* (2010) cited in Adler and Rodman (2010) most language problems are associated with semantics in the sense that we do not understand a message completely or accurately. There is, the language of misunderstandings; Disruptive language and Evasive language.

This article argues that language undoubtedly plays a major role in all human concerns (conflict resolution, conflict remediation, democracy). T.S. Elliot; Wordsworth among others cited in Ogbodo *etal* (2010).

Put a high premium on language use and evaluate it highly. It maintains that far from being incapacitated and incapable of expressing our thoughts, language is a very effective means of performing these various functions. If a language fails to fulfill these functions, the fault does not lie in the language but in the improper, imprecise and ineffective use of language by communicators. This paper contends that in conflict management, resolution, remediation and prevention, the parties involved in conflict should use language in expressing complex emotions, feelings and experiences in depicting human relations and human conflict or problems in all their ramifications.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

The human relations approach views communication as a means of conflict prevention and conflict resolution. This view is favored by businesses where management tries to keep protests and confrontations at a minimum level by ensuring harmony among employees, students etc even where social stratification would normally engender resentment and ill will.

In the light of the above, it is apparent that conflict can only be managed more so, that it is the wheel of progress and an opportunity for change. As long as there are inequitable resources and unlimited desires, denials could not be avoided and conflicts could not be wished away. Conflict then is a permanent phase of human life even at the individual level of the society.

Higher education institutions are bedeviled with numerous managerial problems. There is always a state of anxiety, protests, confrontation, demonstration, industrial strikes, etc lack of compliance or absence of compliance. Management and academic staff, management and non-academic staff, management and students, management and the general publics.

This paper concludes that conflict is a vital natural thing in all human institutions. There is a gargantuan culture of diversities in opinions, interests, welfare breeding antagonism relative to the availability of scarce resources and the lack of transparency in the judicious use or there is a perceived misuse of grants and resource allocation as subverted organisation.

There should be constant and strategic communication flow, vertically, horizontally and diagonally in order that management of these Technical universities can live up to expectation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century vis-à-vis their contributions to national development efforts.

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