

## **Interpersonal Conflicts between Teachers: Causes and Effects in Teacher Training Colleges, North West Region, Cameroon**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study sought to investigate the causes and effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in the North West Region, Cameroon.

**Methodology:** Using the qualitative research design, data were collected from 16 school administrators and 158 teachers using questionnaires and focus group discussion that were analyzed using the technique of content analysis.

**Findings:** The found out that the causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs were diverse and were categorized under teachers', school and leadership-related causes. These conflicts largely had negative outcomes on teachers, students, school leadership and the school as an institution. From the findings, interpersonal conflicts between teachers does not only hurt individual teachers' level of commitment, productivity and effectiveness but equally, impacts the school climate, students' achievements and school effectiveness in general.

**Conclusion:** The diverse causes and negative effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West if left unchecked has the potential of negatively impacting even the smooth functioning of these institutions.

**Recommendations:** The study recommend that school administrators of the TTCs should receive special training and preparation on issues of conflict management and leadership upon appointment. Also, workshops, seminars, and orientation programmes for principals and teachers of TTCs on conflict management should be organized on regular basis to improve their knowledge on conflict management in schools.

**Keywords:** *Interpersonal conflicts, causes, effects, teacher training colleges*

## INTRODUCTION

The human resources constitute one of the most important pillars that organizations rely on to achieve expected goals and objectives. From this premise, the teachers of the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) of Cameroon invariably constitute the principal human resources responsible for actions aimed at achieving espoused goals and objectives of these institutions. Though composed of different individuals, these teachers are interdependent on each other and are therefore expected to function in some sort of symbiosis for the wellbeing and survival of these institutions. This is more important especially with regard to the accomplishment of the mission entrusted to them by the state of Cameroon.

However, as evidenced by reports of some official documents (minutes of staff meetings, class council reports, beginning and end of year reports) of these institutions, the occurrence of interpersonal conflicts among teachers in the TTCs of the North West Region of Cameroon, is common. Such documents *inter alia*, often paint a picture of dissatisfaction, disgruntlement and conflicts between teachers stemming from certain challenges faced by these institutions. Such challenges include inadequate finance for the school, dilapidating school infrastructures, poor working conditions and inadequate motivation of teachers, teachers lacking in some departments while others are overcrowded, poor coverage of schemes, absenteeism and unruly behaviours of some teachers and so on. This state of affairs, invariably, is an indication to the fact that the TTCs of the North West Region are not strangers to the experience of interpersonal conflicts, especially, those occurring between the teachers.

TTCs have the mission to train teachers of basic education (nursery and primary school teachers) in Cameroon. This implies that the responsibility of educating “young Cameroonians to successfully face life’s challenges and to provide the foundation of lifelong learning” (Titanji, 2017) rests squarely on the shoulders of the products churned out of these institutions. Given the delicate mission ascribed to these institutions, it is not surprising that the government of Cameroon envisages to progressively transform them. This help them to increasingly respond to the country’s realities and needs for sustainable development (Report of the Sector wide Approach to education, 2006).

Teachers of TTCs who are acknowledged as principal actors for the achievement of the goals and objectives of these institutions need an atmosphere of serenity and collegiality to be successful in this challenging task (Etomes & Molua, 2019). This aligns with the provisions of Section 37(1) of Law No. 98/004 of 14th April 1998 that lays down the guidelines for Basic and Secondary education. This law describes teachers as the guarantors of quality education. Consequently, greater attention needs to be accorded to their conditions of service which according to the Report of the Sector-wide Approach (2006) leaves much to be desired. What this *ipso facto* presupposes is the fact that an atmosphere characterized by many dysfunctional conflicts, hostility, strive and other negative sentiments amongst teachers of these institutions hurts rather than helps their ability to achieve laid down goals and objectives.

Admittedly, within an increasing context of change, institutions or organizations such as TTCs must be characterized by values of openness to different perspectives, risks and mistakes. Patterson (1987) cited in Titanji (2017) is of the opinion that schools of tomorrow must be characterized by values of openness to change, mistakes, risks, diversity and opinions. Though these values are likely to increase the frequency of interpersonal conflicts within TTCs, they also have the potential

to enhance effectiveness, creativity, and adoption of necessary innovations. These are prerequisites for better achieving institutional goals and objectives, such as those of teacher training colleges.

From this perspective, interpersonal conflicts between teachers in TTCs must be a critical issue in efforts aimed at creating and nurturing productive teaching and learning environments. As a concept, interpersonal conflict has been variously defined by scholars. Dahrendorf (1959) as cited in Russ (2002) conceptualizes interpersonal conflict as an episodic and instrumental struggle between collective adversaries over scarce resources. According to Nelson and Quick (2000), interpersonal conflict is any situation in which incompatible goals, attitudes, emotions or behaviours lead to disagreement or opposition between two or more parties. Robbins (2001) simply refers to conflict as a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about.

Educational institutions like TTCs in Cameroon, therefore, are obviously not immune to this phenomenon. By virtue of the fact that these institutions harbour people coming from a diverse backgrounds, with different ideologies, cultures, values and role preferences makes them prone to inter-personal conflicts of all sorts. Usually, these are perpetrated through incompatibility of interests, needs, values and ideas among others, emanating into conflicts. Also, the unique characteristics of TTCs in Cameroon provides a greater propensity for teachers' interdependence and interaction than their counterparts of secondary education. Besides the usual statutory general staff meetings, class councils, departmental staff meetings and other staff social meetings, the teachers of the TTCs have other statutory pedagogic encounters. For example they have the pre and post conference meetings to prepare for and assess students' practicum exercise and practicum inquest. During these conferences, these teachers are expected to interact and are dependent on each other for the success of the exercise (Calendar of activities for GTTCs, 2021/22 academic year). These many more interactions and interdependence obviously means a greater propensity for teachers' interpersonal conflicts in these institutions.

In this vein, Premchandani (2014) as cited in Chidi and Chiedozi (2018) point out that interpersonal conflict may arise between two individuals when there is high level of interdependence, having different goals, ideas, needs, value systems, perceptions, expectations, interests or incompatible personalities. These are perfect reflection of what actually prevails in educational institutions like the TTCs of Cameroon. In the same line of reasoning, Rahim (2001) associates the causes of interpersonal conflict to the manifestation of incompatibility, disagreement, or difference between two or more interacting individuals in a social organization.

From this premise, Crossfield and Bourne (2018) espouse the view that interpersonal conflicts between teachers can be the most devastating. Reasons advanced are that the limited time and scarce resources available for these institutions are usually spent on resolving the destructive interpersonal conflicts to the detriment of students' wellbeing and achievement. Furthermore, interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the school milieu is believed to severely damage school climate and school culture thereby rendering the school environment inhospitable for the attainment of espoused goals and objectives (Crossfield et al., 2018). Corroborating this fact Aniefiok, Uduak & Williams (2017) submit that conflicts disable teachers from contributing meaningfully to teaching, the learning process which is central to the provision and actualization of qualitative education and goals of education.

This atmosphere certainly does not only hurt individual teachers' level of commitment, productivity and effectiveness but might negatively impact the school climate and culture and students' academic achievement and the effectiveness of the teacher training college. This invariably has not only culminated to the degrading image of the teaching profession but has also contributed in some ways to students' poor academic performance in classroom and standardized examinations. Interpersonal conflict between teachers can also increase deviant students' behaviours like increased loitering by students, truancy, absenteeism, drug abuse, fighting and so on (Aniefiok et al., 2017; Crossfield et al., 2018). In this vein, it becomes crucial to identify the causes and negative effects of these conflicts in order to effectively manage them to improve the effectiveness of the teachers and the institutions.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study was conceived from the need to understand the major causes and effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West Region of Cameroon.

Specifically, this study sought to;

- i) Identify the major causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in TTCs of the North West Region of Cameroon.
- ii) Examine the effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in TTCs of the North West Region of Cameroon.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The survey research design was used and qualitative data collection method was adopted. The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to select the North West Region out of the ten Regions that constitute the Republic of Cameroon. The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to select teachers' training colleges. Five Government Teacher Training Colleges (GTTCs) and three Private Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) giving a total of eight TTCs were involved in the study. The population of this study was composed of principals, vice principals and teachers of selected TTCs of the North West Region from which sample was drawn. The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to select respondents. All the principals (08) and their vice (08) making a total of 16 school administrators of the selected TTCs were involved in the study by responding to the questionnaire items. However, the convenient sampling technique was used to select six principals (three from the GTTCs and three from PTTCs, giving a total of six school administrators), involved in the focus group discussion. On the other hand the disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select 57 out of 66 male teachers (86.4%), constituting 36.1% of total sample size, and 101 out of 201 of female teachers (50.2%), constituting 63.9% of total sample size. Giving a total sample size of 158 teachers. Likewise, eight teachers from the respective TTCs were purposely selected for the focus group discussion.

Data was collected using two sets of questionnaires and focus group discussion items for principals and teachers of TTCs. The researcher painstakingly constructed the items of the instruments with appropriate care to ensure that they matched the respective objectives under investigation. These were submitted to three classmates (Doctoral students with a background of measurement and evaluation and who have validated courses on research methodology) and some lecturers of the

department of educational leadership of the University of Bamenda, Cameroon. They independently cross-checked the individual items of the questionnaire and focus group discussion items and made further corrections to guarantee that the items were sufficiently clear or unambiguous.. This was a means of ensuring the validity and reliability of the instruments used in gathering the data for the study. The content analysis technique was applied to analyze the data collected.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Research Objective 1: Major Causes of Interpersonal Conflicts between Teachers of TTCs

Table 1 shows different responses of teachers regarding the causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West. Interpersonal conflicts between teachers, according to teachers could be attributed to three category of factors: teachers'-related, leadership-related, and school causes.

**Table 1: Responses of teachers on causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in TTCs**

Themes	Content
Teachers' factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gossips</li> <li>-Competition between teachers</li> <li>-Personality clashes</li> <li>-Jealousy</li> <li>-Domineering attitude of some colleagues</li> <li>-Poor communication</li> <li>-Differences in perception</li> <li>-Disrespect for others</li> <li>-Selfish interest</li> <li>- Encroachment into others period</li> <li>-Dating female students or staff</li> </ul>
School related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Limited school infrastructure</li> <li>-Unfair allocation of school resources</li> <li>-Poor working conditions</li> <li>-Inadequate teaching learning materials</li> <li>- Limited growth opportunities</li> <li>- Disparity in workload</li> <li>-Unfair scheduling of time table</li> </ul>
Leadership related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of motivation</li> <li>-Lack of leadership skills and competences</li> <li>-Unfair task allocation</li> <li>-Unfair distribution of school resources</li> <li>-Poor communication</li> <li>-Tribalism</li> <li>-Intimidation by school leadership</li> <li>-Interference in other's privacy by leadership</li> <li>-Dictatorial tendency of school administrators</li> </ul>

Table 2 shows different responses of principals regarding the causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West. Interpersonal conflicts between teachers, according to principals can be attributed to three category of factors: teachers-related, leadership-related, and school causes.

**Table 2: Responses of principals on causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in TTCs**

Themes	Content
Teachers factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ignorance of professional ethics</li> <li>- Non respect of pedagogic/administrative texts</li> <li>- Lack of cooperation in assigned tasks</li> <li>-Gossips</li> <li>-Lateness to school and absenteeism</li> <li>-Superiority complex among some teachers</li> <li>-Lack of professional competence</li> <li>-Unhealthy competition between teachers</li> <li>-Personality clashes</li> <li>-Poor communication</li> <li>-Disrespect for others</li> </ul>
School related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of adequate funding</li> <li>-Limited school infrastructure</li> <li>-Poor working conditions</li> <li>-Limited growth opportunities</li> <li>-Absenteeism from work</li> </ul>
Leadership related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Inadequate motivation for teachers</li> <li>-Inequitable task allocation</li> <li>-Inequitable distribution of school resources</li> <li>-Strict application of school rules and regulations</li> <li>-Inadequate communication</li> </ul>

### **Findings on the Causes of Interpersonal Conflicts between Teachers in the TTCs from Focus Group Discussion for Teachers and Principals**

This section presents data obtained from teachers and principals during the focus group discussions on the major causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers of the TTCs. Most of the participants expressed diverse views on the causes of these conflicts which equally reflected the views expressed in their responses to the questionnaire items. To corroborate this view, one teacher remarked that; *some colleagues are too full of themselves and often look low on others. This makes some colleagues to feel inferior to them. There is also this tendency of unnecessary competition among colleagues, especially the female colleagues. They seem to compete almost in everything possible, cars, dresses, hairstyle, handbags, and phones. This atmosphere brings a lot of gossips and backbiting among colleagues.*

Another teacher asserted that; *at times the cause of interpersonal conflicts between teachers could come from misunderstanding and misinterpreting other teachers' views and intentions. Teachers at times fail to understand others and tend to interpret their actions from the perspective of their*



*social class and personality and this leads to unnecessary conflicts. Another cause is the partiality of the school administration especially when it comes to management of school resources and incentives to teachers. This always leave some teachers with the impression that they are not treated the same. Thereby giving way to conflicts.*

Principals' responses to this question pretty much corroborated that of the teachers. In this respect, one principal stated that; *the causes of this type of conflict are many. One of the most glaring is the perception of disparity in workload allocation by the teachers. Where teacher A sees that s/he has say 8 hours' workload and teacher B has only 3 hours. This usually gives some teachers a feeling of injustice, favouritism and resentment which usually leads to this type of conflict. Notwithstanding the fact that some subjects are too technical and only particular teachers can teach them. There are also, always clashes in personalities and differences in approaches to pedagogy*

The findings obtained from these instruments revealed that the causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs are diverse. These were grouped into teachers'-related causes, school-related causes and leadership-related causes. Teachers'-related causes are those causes that can be blamed on teachers themselves. In this respect, teachers and principals identified major causes such as; gossips, unhealthy competition between teachers, Personality clashes, jealousy, poor communication, domineering attitude of some colleagues, ignorance of professional ethics and others. Other minor causes were cited such as; encroachment into others personal space, dating of female students and staff, differences in political views and others.

School-related causes refer to those causes that can be attributed to TTCs as organizations and include such things as organization of teaching (for example, time table clashes, disrespect of pedagogic procedures), disparities in workload, inequitable distribution of available resources, limited infrastructure, poor working conditions, non-respect of pedagogic/administrative texts etc. While leadership or administration-related related causes ascribed to those causes of teachers' interpersonal conflicts emanating from the unacceptable behaviours of principals and vice principals as well as deans of studies, non-involvement of teachers in decision making on issues that affect them, perceptions of favouritism, poor motivation of teachers, inequitable task allocation, inequitable distribution of school resources, poor communication, among others.

These findings align with previous studies such as Catana (2015), Engdawork and Thuo (2017), Tshuma, Ndlovu, and Bhebhe (2016), and Crossfield et al., (2018). Catana (2015), for instance, focused on the individual factors of interpersonal conflicts between teachers such as motivations, interests or difference in personal objectives, different perceptions of the same issue or different knowledge concerning a subject, different personal experiences. Engdawork et al. (2017) on their parts categorized the causes of teachers' interpersonal conflicts in school, under three categories; institution related, work related and leadership related. While Tshuma et al. (2016) linked the causes of conflict among school personnel as structural and personal factors involving administration incompetence, specialization, and in-discipline among the teachers, status differences, sharing resources, goal differences and poor working conditions.

Catana (2015) blames the teacher-related causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers to the diverse backgrounds of teachers with equally diverse interests, perceptions, motivations and others. Tshuma et al. (2016) stated that the teaching profession by nature is characterized by increased interaction, interdependence and shared resources between colleagues for the attainment

of set goals and objectives. This invariably, implies that in the course of executing their duties, teachers are bound to get into each other's way at one moment or another resulting to the high prevalence level of interpersonal conflicts experienced.

On the other hand, Crossfield et al. (2018) attribute school and leadership related conflicts to the inability of teachers and principals to identify potential conflicts, and their causes and the lack of knowledge or possession of the skills for addressing them effectively. On his part, Titanji (2017) argues that school administrators function in "social contexts characterized by diversity of stakeholders' interests, grossly inadequate resources and low status of educators. This state of affairs predisposes some actions of school administrators to varied interpretations with a propensity for interpersonal conflicts between teachers. Consequently, those actions of school administrators not consistent with teachers' welfare and functioning like the lack of administrative support, poor communication, perception of misuse of school finances, unfair decisions, favouritism, tribalism etc explains the very high levels of interpersonal conflicts between teachers.

### **Research Objective 2: Effects of Interpersonal Conflicts between Teachers in the TTCs**

Table 3 shows the different responses of teachers regarding the outcomes or effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West. The outcomes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers, according to teachers themselves could be classified into four categories: Teachers'-related, students'-related, leadership-related, and school-related.

**Table 3: Teachers' perception on effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in TTCs**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Content</b>
Effects on Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Indiscipline among teachers</li> <li>-Leads to quarrelling and fighting among teachers</li> <li>-Affects the morale of teachers</li> <li>-Leads to nonchalance towards work</li> <li>-Leads to job dissatisfaction</li> <li>-Results in stress and ill-health</li> <li>-Lowers teachers' self esteem</li> <li>-Laxity at work</li> <li>-Lack of interest in school matters</li> <li>-Strained social relationship between teachers</li> <li>-Blocks communication between teachers</li> <li>-Creates feeling of inferiority complex in teachers</li> </ul>
Effects on Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Poor academic performance of students</li> <li>-Indiscipline among students</li> <li>-Negatively affect students' attitude towards studies</li> <li>-Absenteeism of students</li> <li>-Examination malpractices among students</li> <li>-Drop out of students from school</li> <li>-Truancy</li> </ul>
Effects on School Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of respect for school leadership</li> <li>-Blocks communication between administration and teachers</li> <li>-Wastage of schools' resources in resolving conflicts</li> </ul>



Effects on the School	-Wastage of time and energy in resolving conflicts
	-Difficulty coordinating school activities
	-Poor syllabus coverage
	-Poor achievement of schools' goals and objectives
	-Reduces reputation of the school
	-Deterioration of school climate
	-Disruption in school calendar and school closure
	-Loss of school properties
	-Transfer of teachers
	-Non effectiveness in pedagogic activities

Table 4 reveals the different responses of principals regarding the outcomes or effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West. The outcomes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers, according to principals could equally be classified into four categories: teachers'-related, students'-related, leadership-related, and school-related.

**Table 4: Principals' perception on effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in TTCs**

Theme	Content
<b>Effects on Teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leads to lateness and absenteeism</li> <li>-Affects the morale of teachers</li> <li>-Nonchalance towards work</li> <li>-Leads to job dissatisfaction</li> <li>-Results in stress and ill-health</li> <li>-Lowers teachers' self esteem</li> <li>-Results in psychological/physical injury</li> <li>-Laxity at work</li> <li>-Results in psychological/physical injury</li> <li>-Lack of interest in school matters</li> <li>-Strained social relationship between teachers</li> <li>-Blocks communication between teachers</li> <li>-Indiscipline among teachers</li> <li>-Creates inferiority complex in teachers</li> </ul>
<b>Effects on Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Poor academic performance of students</li> <li>-Indiscipline among students</li> <li>-Negatively affect students' attitude towards studies</li> <li>-Absenteeism of students</li> <li>-Drop out of students from school</li> <li>-Truancy</li> </ul>
<b>Effects on School Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of respect for school leadership</li> <li>-Blocks communication between administration and teachers</li> <li>-Wastage of schools' resources in resolving conflicts</li> <li>-Wastage of time and energy in resolving conflicts</li> <li>-Difficulty coordinating school activities</li> </ul>

### Outcomes on the School

- Poor syllabus coverage
- Poor achievement of schools' goals and objectives
- Tarnishes the reputation of the school
- Damages the school climate
- Disruption in school calendar
- Loss of school properties
- Transfer of teachers
- Non effectiveness in pedagogic activities

### Findings on Possible Effects of Interpersonal Conflicts between Teachers from focus group discussions for teachers and principals

The focus group discussion guide equally solicited responses from respondents (teachers and Principals) about the possible outcomes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs. From the responses made, the respondents identified a myriad of effects that corroborated the views expressed in the responses to the questionnaire items.

In this respect, a teacher opined that; *interpersonal conflicts between teachers bring about unnecessary tension in school which affects the entire staff, students and the administration. First of all, it blocks communication between teachers, disturbs team spirit and collaboration. Students also suffer in that these conflict could affect their academic performance. On the part of the administration, such conflicts makes it difficult for them to effectively pilot the affairs of the school.*

One of the principals added; *teachers involve in interpersonal conflict easily loss concentration and are not focused on their job. You can see it in their work. Their output reduces, the syllabus coverage falls. Students too, lose concentration and focus on their studies. Leading to general indiscipline in the school. It may sometimes bring about individual health problems like gastritis, hypertension and so on.*

However, as opposed to respondents' responses to questionnaire items where a quasi-majority of the outcomes were negative, some of the participants in the focus group discussion were able to identify some positive effects of these conflicts. In this respect, one of the teacher participant intimated that; *my colleagues have already belaboured the negative aspect of this type of conflict. It is said that every dark cloud has a silver lining. So I will be looking at the effects of this type of conflict from its positive perspective. If the conflict is well managed, it enhances interpersonal communication among colleagues thereby strengthening interpersonal relationships, it may also improve positive self-esteem of teachers and an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.*

Similarly, one of the principals pointed out that; *whether we like it or not once there is conflict, this always has a negative impact on the school. But this should not make us lose sight on some of its positive aspects. Any conflict is a learning experience not only to the junior colleagues but to the senior ones and even the administration. So it enables all of us to come up with better ways to handle the conflict when it reoccurs*

In the same line of reasoning another principal added that; *for us, the experience we have is that from the onset these conflict have negative effects because the students, teachers and the school stand to suffer but in the long run when such conflicts are solved it has a big positive effect because a stronger bond is built and there is more harmony in the staff.*

From the analysis of the questionnaire and focus group discussion guide items, it is evidently clear that the effects on interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs were multi-faceted and could be categorized under teachers', students', schools' and leadership related factors. Teachers' related factors embodied low morale of teachers, nonchalance towards work, job dissatisfaction, indiscipline among teachers etc. Students' related factors engulfed factors such as poor academic performance of students, indiscipline among students, absenteeism of students, truancy etc. Schools' related factor involved poor syllabus coverage, poor achievement of schools' goals and objectives, deterioration of school climate etc. While leadership related factors embodied lack of respect for school leadership, blockage of communication between administration and teachers, wastage of resources, time and energy in resolving conflicts.

The findings of this study align with the work of Catana (2015) who posits that teachers involved in interpersonal conflicts may have negative sentiments such as disappointment, insensitivity, stress, sorrow, uneasiness etc. They may also have low morale and motivation, and have reduced performance. Similarly, Bahadur (2015) reported that the major effects on interpersonal conflict between teachers were the development of individualist culture in teachers, lacked teachers' creativity, initiation, encouragement, commitment, devotion and respect to the profession that have significant impact on quality education. Also, Johdi *et al.* (2012) in Ignace (2014) avers that unresolved interpersonal conflicts between teachers can lead to job dissatisfaction, high absenteeism and turnover, prolonged disruption of activities, and lack of concerted effort among school teachers. Owusu-Mensah (2007) argues that conflicts between teachers may result to physical and psychological withdrawals of teachers in schools.

The findings from the focus group discussion equally revealed that some of the effect of interpersonal conflicts between teachers could be positive as well. Some advantages include enhanced interpersonal communication among colleagues thereby strengthening interpersonal relationships, and it improves positive self-esteem of teachers and an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding if well managed. In this regard, this is consistent with some previous studies. For instance, Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) posit that conflict can lead to necessary change in a school such that programmes are renewed, school staff have stronger feelings of unity among them. Schermerhorn (1984) in Titanji (2017) stated that interpersonal conflicts increased creativity and innovation, increased effort and cohesion, and reduced tension in a group as some of the major positive outcomes of conflicts in the school setting.

### **Implication to educational development**

Although this study was designed to understand the causes and effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon, it however, equally has ramifications on conflicts in the school system as a whole in Cameroon. Obviously, the omnipresent and universal nature of conflict in all social organizations invariably, implies that no sector of education be it at the primary, secondary or even university levels of education in Cameroon is spared of this phenomenon.

Therefore, given the inherent nature of conflicts in all sectors of education, in the context of this study, the question of interest is not whether or not interpersonal conflicts exists between the teachers of the TTCs, but the causes of these conflicts and possible effects. A mountain of causes categorized under teachers, school leadership and the institutions related causes were identified as accountable to this phenomenon. These diverse causes identified by teachers and principals of the

TTCs could be explained in terms of the unique characteristics of TTCs. These institutions provide for many more avenues for staff encounters and interaction like during teaching practice seminars, inquests, teaching practice pre and conferences to mention just these, unlike in the other educational establishments. Coupled with the complexities of the staff dynamics of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) of the North West Region, Cameroon. The teachers of these institutions like others are made up of different individuals coming from diverse backgrounds and origins, with equally diverse preferences, cultures, age, religion, and status who are compelled to work in an atmosphere of collegiality, conviviality and harmony for the effective attainment of the schools' espoused goals and objectives.

From the findings, interpersonal conflicts between teachers does not only hurt individual teachers' level of commitment, productivity and effectiveness but equally, impacts the school climate, students' achievements and school effectiveness in general. Accordingly, the diverse causes and negative effects of interpersonal conflicts between teachers in the TTCs of the North West if left unchecked, has the potential of negatively impacting even the smooth functioning of these institutions. This is unfortunate, especially at the backdrop of government's strides in transforming these institutions to respond to the country's realities and goals of sustainable development. (Report of the Sector wide Approach to education, 2006).

### **Policy Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, and in order to minimize the causes and negative outcomes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers of the TTCs as well as to improve on the interpersonal relationship between teachers of the TTCs, the following policy recommendations were made.

- Given the fact that qualification as a teacher trainer is the only basis of appointment in the TTCs, it is important that school administrators of the TTCs should receive special training and preparation on issues of conflict management and leadership upon appointment. This knowledge will permit school administrators to be able nip the bud of these conflicts before they can escalate into violent confrontation between teachers in the school milieu, capable of distorting the effectiveness of the teaching learning process in these institutions.
- Workshops, seminars, and orientation programmes for principals and teachers of TTCs on conflict management should be organized on regular basis to improve their knowledge on conflict management in schools.
- Principals of the TTCs in their leadership practices should ensure better working conditions, fair treatment, and equitable and transparent allocation of school resources among all teachers of the TTCs. So as to minimize interpersonal conflicts between teachers and improve on the academic performance of students of TTCs.
- Considering the fact that the causes of interpersonal conflicts between teachers are diverse, courses on conflict management and resolution, should be included in the curriculum of Higher Teacher Training colleges. This will acquaint prospective teachers and school administrators on the dynamics of conflicts and how to better manage them.
- Effective interpersonal communication among teachers and school administration should be established. This implies that teacher's interpersonal communication should be fashioned in a way that the views, thoughts and feelings expressed are interpreted by others as cordial, friendly and supportive so that it leads to increased mutual respect and a stronger staff interpersonal relationship.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declares no conflict of interest.

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