Culture and conflict in urban Tanzania: Professionals' voices in educational organisations

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Abstract

This article is interlinked with an article that has previously been published in this Journal (Mayer, Boness and Louw 2008). Since the previous article focused on value-orientations in cross-cultural encounters and mediation in the Tanzanian educational system, this follow-up article provides an overview of cross-cultural conflicts and their professional management in educational organisations in Tanzania. It firstly gives an insight into current theoretical discourses and will, secondly, present selected empirical data and findings from an ethnographic, qualitative study that has been conducted in selected urban areas in Tanzania.

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By presenting qualitative findings, this follow-up study provides further insights into the context-specific professionals' views on conflict and its management in urban educational contexts, and thereby deepens our understanding of the quantitative findings on values and mediation gained and presented in the previous study. The conclusions drawn from the presented findings lead to recommendations for scientists conducting research on the above-mentioned topics and for practitioners working in educational, cross-cultural contexts in Tanzania.

1. Introduction

Educational organisations undergo radical changes globally. They need to transcend national boundaries and accept growing intra-national diversity at the beginning of the new century and therefore face rapidly changing challenges with regard to cross-cultural conflicts and their professional management. How professionals in the educational field experience and manage cross-cultural conflicts in a world with minimised geographic, economic, political and cultural limits is of importance, particularly for African countries.

In this article, it is argued that cross-cultural conflicts and their management require a comprehensive, context-specific assessment of conflicts experienced and professional management strategies to resolve the occurring conflicts effectively and constructively.

This study at hand is linked to a previously conducted study which was published in the *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* (Mayer, Boness and Louw 2008; cf Boness 2002). Since the previous article focused on value-orientations in cross-cultural encounters and mediation in the Tanzanian educational system from a rather quantitative viewpoint, this follow-up article provides an overview on cross-cultural conflicts and their professional management in educational organisations in Tanzania from a qualitative research perspective.

The aim was to present findings by providing emic perspectives of the professionals involved. Regarding this aim, the following research questions will be answered:

- Which cross-cultural conflicts are experienced in Tanzanian educational organisations?
- How are these cross-cultural conflicts managed professionally?

This article provides insight into the culture- and context-specific conflicts experienced and is narrated from an *emic* perspective of interviewees working in selected educational organisations in Tanzania. It, therefore, contributes towards extending an in-depth understanding of conflicts and their management across cultures in Tanzania.

In the academic field, research on conflict and its management across cultures has increased constantly since the past century (Galtung 1996). With special regard to African contexts the body of literature on cross-cultural conflicts and their management has grown (Mayer and Louw 2007; Mayer 2008), but the topic is still underrepresented. At the same time, the need for assessing and understanding experiences of and views on cross-cultural conflict and the management thereof has increased globally (Kriesberg 2003) and specifically also in the Tanzanian context (Mayer, Boness and Louw 2008:39).

There is evidence that diversity, if not well managed, can contribute to cross-cultural conflict (Church 1995:3). Diversity encompasses differences in visible characteristics such as race, gender and ethnicity, but also includes differences that are not necessarily visible, such as religion, professional background and sexual preference (Francesco and Gold 2005:194). In the Tanzanian educational context cultural and religious aspects and their management are important.

The body of literature on conflicts in Tanzanian educational organisations and schools is very small (Mayer 2001; Mayer, Boness and Louw 2008). However, when described, conflicts are often bound to issues of language, class, poverty, economic circumstances, health (particularly HIV/AIDS) or environment (e.g. Rubagumaya 2004; Wijsen and Mfumbusa 2004; Wubs et al. 2009).

This article presents a review of literature on conflict across cultures and its management in the Tanzanian educational context. In addition, the article highlights the research methodology and discusses the empirical research

findings. Finally, a conclusion is drawn and recommendations for researchers and practitioners in the educational context are provided.

2. Conflict across cultures

The early 21st century with its complexities of globalisation and the deconstruction of national cultures in organisational environments requires fundamental transformation in organisational management, thinking and practices (Voelpel, Leibold and Tekie 2006). Due to increasing trends of internationalisation and globalisation – also in educational organisations – conflict and the management thereof need further attention (Kriesberg 2003; Mayer and Louw 2007).

Conflict research, particularly since the 1970s, has been embedded in (social) constructivist theories which view reality as a construct created by the mutual inter-relationships between individuals and the environment (Applefield, Huber and Moallem 2000; Coy and Woehrle 2000; Lederach 2000). In these theories, conflict is viewed as a 'disagreement, a real or perceived incompatibility of interests', different worldviews, or sets of behaviours (Mayer 2000:3). It is defined as episodes that lead to the recognition of the existence of multiple socio-cultural realities (Lederach 1988:39) and are simultaneously connected to intra-personal processes (Rahim 2002:207), created by different parts of the psyche, the value system and the behaviour (Folger, Scott Poole and Stutman 2001:45) as well as affective and cognitive intra-personal dynamics (Mischel and Shoda 1998:251). Conflict begins when an individual or a group perceives differences and opposition between the self and the other about interests, beliefs, needs and/or values (De Dreu, Harinck and Van Vianen 1999).

Conflicts are shaped by individual and cultural meanings (Augsburger 1992; Avruch 1998; Lederach 2000) which are again constructed by 'perceptions, interpretations, expressions and intentions' (Lederach 1996:9). Therefore they are linked to the inner processes of individuals and their relationship with the environment and are accordingly an inevitable part of organisational life.

A wide range of theories and practical tools have been developed for the management of conflict, both internationally (Miall, Ramsbotham and

Woodhouse 2000) and locally. Conflict management is the art of appropriate intervention to achieve conflict settlement (Nye 2005). It is the positive and constructive management of difference and divergence. Rather than advocating methods for removing conflict, conflict management 'addresses the more realistic question of managing conflict, namely, how to deal with it in a constructive way; how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process; and how to design a practical, achievable and cooperative system for the constructive management of difference' (Ghai, Bloomfield and Reilly 1998:18). Accordingly, conflict management does not necessarily imply the avoidance, reduction or termination of conflict. Rather, it helps to design effective strategies both to minimise dysfunctions and enhance the constructive functions of conflict, thereby enhancing learning and effectiveness (Rahim 2002:208).

Due to recent global trends, managing diversity becomes a relevant topic in conflict and its management (Horwitz, Bowmaker-Falconer and Searll 1996; Human 1996; Wood and Mellahi 2001), as presented in the following.

3. Managing conflicts cross-culturally

Cultural diversity encompasses differences in visible characteristics such as race, gender and ethnicity (Francesco and Gold 2005:224). Its constructive management includes finding creative solutions for integrating these characteristics, while simultaneously overcoming discriminatory practices and social division by valuing people according to their cultures, economic growth and development (Jackson 2002). According to Horwitz, Bowmaker-Falconer and Searll (1996), diversity management needs to be conceptually integrated to raise the consciousness and awareness of various organisations. This focus can help change individual attitudes and values and create better understanding and tolerance among employees from different societal, cultural and economic backgrounds within each (educational) organisation.

Managing diversity can be understood as having an acute awareness of characteristics common to cultures, races, genders or ages, while at the same time managing employees as individuals (Overman 1991). The complexity

in managing diversity, as well as the restructuring processes in international organisations investing in a country, will impact on cross-cultural conflict experiences and create new challenges for cross-cultural communication and diversity management.

The role of diversity management and its influence on the individual, small groups and management effectiveness have been well documented (Pelled, Eisenhardt and Xin 1999; Thomas and Bendixen 2000). There is evidence that diversity, if not well managed, can contribute to cross-cultural conflict (Church 1995). The often contradictory processes of globalisation have led to wide-ranging changes in identity formation, particularly in teachers' identities in Tanzania (Barrett 2006). These social identity changes are often bound to the changes in perception, experience or definition of social identities (e.g. Korf and Malan 2002) as well as to issues of identity constructions, social norms and power shifts (Booysen 2007; Cilliers and May 2002). In organisational contexts, individuals face the challenge of attempting to bridge differences and conflicts which might be based on societal conflicts that spill over into organisations (Booysen and Nkomo 2007; Chrobot-Mason et al. 2007).

In order to face the challenges of cross-cultural conflicts, understand them and reduce their potential in globalised educational work environments, it is suggested in this article that cross-cultural conflicts and their management need to be assessed.

4. Conflicts and their management in Tanzanian educational organisations

Tanzania is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society which is often held up as a 'success story', having 'forged a national identity' based on accommodation and tolerance (Tripp 1999:37). Most of the Tanzanian citizens are of African extraction. The Tanzanian government is secular and is not affiliated with any particular religion. However, in the Tanzanian society, there are three major religious traditions: indigenous, Christian and Islamic. Jews, Buddhists and Hindus form a small minority in Tanzania (Wijsen and Mfumbusa 2004:13–14).

In contrast to its neighbours, Tanzania has enjoyed relative peace during the past years. So far, the 120 ethnic groups have lived without serious friction since independence. In Tanzania, however, 'religion is proving to be quite another matter' (Wijsen and Mfumbusa 2004:15). Another conflictual topic in the Tanzanian educational sector is the matter of language, particularly English and Kiswahili. Rubagumaya (2004) argues that those who are in a better socio-political/economic position have more control of, and better access to, English.

Besides the cultural and religious aspects, students in Tanzania experience 'dating violence' and conflicts in student relationships which are linked to HIV/AIDS issues (Wubs et al. 2009:75). Also, issues such as population growth and internal migration, which are coupled with land tenure and highlight factors such as poverty, alienation from land and resources, drought and lack of local participation, impact indirectly on schools and can cause social and class conflicts in Tanzanian schools (Mwamfupe 1998: 3).

Further conflictive aspects are related to health (Wubs et al. 2009:75), language conflicts (Rubagumaya 2004), management issues and resources (Mayer, Boness and Kussaga 2010). These conflictive issues also impact on the educational context.

5. Research methodology

In this case study it is asserted that human beings inhabit different realities that are socially and culturally constituted and which may, therefore, vary quite dramatically across cultures, time and context (Gonzalez et al. 1994). Multiple selves are individually and socio-culturally constructed by constantly changing relationships (Becvar and Becvar 2006). In this article, conflicts and their management in the educational Tanzanian context are presented, analysed and discussed.

The phenomenological and interpretative paradigms were considered the most relevant approaches in this case study (Collis and Hussey 2003) by referring to the epistemological tradition of constructivism (Berger and Luckmann 2000) and interpretative hermeneutics (Habermas 1999). Thereby, constructivism

implies that all stories or interpretations are equally valid and that no single truth or interpretation exists (Dickerson and Zimmerman 1996).

This qualitative research focuses on exploring a research issue and gaining a deeper understanding of it (Cheldelin, Druckman and Fast 2003) by means of deep data and 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1987). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the above-mentioned topics, an exploratory study approach was used. This approach was used to assess conflict and its management in the Tanzanian organisational context. Altogether eighteen in-depth interviews were conducted, five of them in educational contexts.

Table 1: Societal contexts of research

Tertiary sector	Organisations	Number of interviewees
Governmental	educational organisations	5
	governmental executive organisations	4
Non-governmental	ecclesiastical organisations	4
	private enterprises	5

Source: Mayer, Boness and Kussaga 2010:58

The interviews were used to achieve a deep understanding of new insights into the issues of conflict and its management in cross-cultural contexts of educational organisations. The interviews were guided by using predetermined research questions, which focused on the subjective experiences of interviewees; thereafter, useful explanations were developed and interpretations of the described subject were given according to four levels of text reconstruction (Ricoeur 1979; Wolff 2000:87). The findings cannot be generalised, but they give an explorative in-depth insight into the described Tanzanian contexts, and they might be replicated in other African countries or in different contexts in Tanzania.

The research aims at analysing cross-cultural conflicts and the management thereof in different societal organisations in Tanzania. Therefore, educational organisations were chosen to study the described phenomenon. The organisations were chosen due to findings of a study that had been conducted in Tanzania (Boness 2002; Mayer, Boness and Louw 2008) and which showed that cross-cultural (value) conflicts occur and can be managed through mediation. The present study was meant to gain deeper insight into the educational contexts and into selected organisations.

The selection of the organisations was based on the following criteria:

- The importance of these educational organisations for the Tanzanian society and the Tanzanian citizen with regard to cross-cultural mediation and conflict management
- Organisational structures in urban Tanzanian contexts
- Permissible access to the organisations chosen
- Representability of organisations in Tanzanian society

From the organisations meeting these criteria a randomised sample was chosen. Altogether 18 interviewees from three different urban centres – Arusha, Moshi and Dar es Salaam – all of them working in Tanzania were interviewed. The sample comprised twelve male and six female interviewees. All interviewees are Tanzanian citizens of different ethnic background. Within the educational organisations, there were teachers and heads of school involved.

The interviews were conducted by a German-Tanzanian research team. An interview structure was developed containing ten questions. Ten interview questions were asked, referring to (managing) cross-cultural conflicts cross-culturally. In parallel to the interviews, organisational documents and secondary literature were also analysed to guarantee triangulation of data. The interviews were recorded in full to ensure precise transcription. The transcripts were viewed as selective constructions that reproduced aspects of the conversation which were transcribed, according to Steinke (2000:327), in a 'manageable' way which is 'simple to write, easy to read, easy to learn and to interpret'. The transcription procedure focused mainly on the verbal aspects

of the communication in the interest of analysis and evaluation controlled by factual words.

To ensure a transparent process of data analysis and reconstruction, data analysis was conducted according to the five-step process of Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006:322–326):

Step 1: Familiarisation and immersion

Step 2: Inducing themes

Step 3: Coding

Step 4: Elaboration

Step 5: Interpretation and checking.

Following these steps in data analysis enhances the 'thick description' (Geertz 1973).

Content analysis involves a subjective process between the text and the person coding the text: 'Verifying the reliability of content analysis is primarily done by inter-individual and intra-individual verification' (Yin 2002:45), as in this explorative study. Objectivity in analysis should therefore be attained by inter-subjective validation, such as adhering to particular rules and regulations and/or verifying that the same (or similar) findings have been attained by different researchers. In this study, the coding of the text and its analysis and re-categorisation are considered this way.

Four major concepts – conformability, credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness – were defined as criteria for judging this qualitative research. Johnson (1997) supports the approach that constructivism may facilitate the aim of qualitative research – which is fundamental to this research – to create a deeper understanding of the research objective with regard to changing multiple-reality constructions (Hipps 1993). Parallel to the interviews, organisational documents and secondary literature were analysed to guarantee triangulation of the data.

With regard to the research methodology, limitations of this research study need to be mentioned. This study is an exploratory pilot study which does not

provide generalisable findings, but rather context-specific insights from which meaningful inferences can be drawn. Research conclusions can be only drawn with regard to the specific context. However, on the base of these explorative findings, in-depth insights can be gained and new research interests can be developed.

6. Research findings

The research findings presented a focus on the Tanzanian interviewees' perspectives with regard to conflicts and their management across cultures in selected educational organisations in three urban centres in Tanzania.

In Swahili, the terms generally used for 'conflict' are 'mapigano' which means 'hitting each other' and 'vita' which means 'war' (Johnson 1995:108). The official translation for 'conflict' in publications by the Tanzanian Government is 'mgogoro' which means 'obstacle' or 'difficulty' (Mayer, Boness and Kussaga 2010).

In the following, the narrated conflicts in Tanzanian contexts will be presented.

6.1 Conflicts in Tanzanian contexts

In total, 40 conflicts were narrated by 18 interviewees. These narrated conflicts were related to the different organisational contexts of:

- Educational organisations (10 narrations)
- Governmental executives (9 narrations)
- Ecclesiastical organisations (6 narrations)
- Private enterprises (15 narrations)

Five types of cross-cultural conflicts can be categorised through content analysis of the 40 interviews: ethnic, religious; gender-oriented; organisational; and internationally based conflicts.

In this article, as a follow-up to the previously published research study (Mayer, Boness and Louw 2008), the focus is put on the educational organisational context. In educational organisations the ten collected narrations mostly

show ethnic, religious and gender types of cross-cultural conflicts. Conflicts narrated by interviewees of the Ministry of Education were mainly ethnically, religiously or internationally based.

Table 2: Educational contexts and conflict categories and topics

Organisation	Conflict Type	Conflict category	Issue of conflict
Educational organisations	Ethnic	Territory/land	Maasai on school compound
Educational organisations	Ethnic Religious/gender Religious/gender Ethnic	Culture differences	eating from the floor decorated hijab hijab Western fashion style
Educational organisations	Gender/ethnic Gender Structural Ethnic/racial Structural/gender	Education and Socialisation	girls don't study girls prostitution for food in a sec. school poor performance of teachers socialisation on race priest abuses student
Ministry of Education	Structural	Personal resources	shortage of teachers no educational questions
Ministry of Education	Religious	Culture differences	hijab covering
Ministry of Education	Ethnic	International relations	school partnership with Finland

Source: authors' own construction

The educational contexts in this research can be divided into educational organisations, such as schools and colleges and the Ministry of Education.

In what follows, selected excerpts of the conflict narrations are presented as examples of the various types of conflict and the particular issue(s) that had caused each conflict.

Firstly, the issue of territory is bound to a conflict between a school and a group of nomads. These nomads use the school compound for religious purposes. The interviewee, a deputy head of a school in Arusha, states that there is a huge conflict between the school and the nomads. The nomads, who were allowed to worship once a week on the compound, erected a building and moved into the newly erected building to live on the school compound on a regular base. This fact led to a conflict about how the use of the territory was divided between the school and the nomads.

[…] The school and the farmers and the […] herdsmen, like Maasai. Ah, sometimes there is conflict regarding […] the plots, the farms. Sometimes […] the farmers claim the, the land is being used by the herdsmen. […] Sometimes the, the herdsmen destroy the, the, the farmers' crops. That's the type of conflicts.

[…] Yeah […] in the college in Arusha there is a place where these Maasai people were allowed to […] to do, to worship [emphasis] […] it was that they should come at least once in a week depending on […] on their time. But, but they were supposed to have that time once a week, but they decided to build, […] to erect a, a building there, […] permanently, which is the land of the gov, for the government, the land for the college, but they, they didn't have the power[…]to do that. The building is there [...] but it has never been solved, to date.

The conflict described is based on the controversy of traditional land use practices of the Maasai on the one hand and the definition of governmental ownership according to the Tanzanian law. The interviewed deputy head of school is very angry about the situation and desperate due to the fact that he does not see any possibility of conflict resolution through legal action. However, he is now involved in mediation sessions between the different parties, trying to resolve the conflict. The different interests and political influences

on this conflictual topic have led to an ongoing discussion concerning the issue of land, education and rights of cultural groups in schools and educational environments.

Secondly, there are the issues about the eating behaviour and school dress codes of people from different ethnic cultures and religions. In the following, a male Christian teacher from a secondary school in Moshi explains what he views as conflictual with regard to religious or cultural behaviour in schools.

You know, the Muslim female students demand covering their heads with a piece of cloth called 'Hijab' as part of their religious practice. But we do have school regulations that these students should look like the others and [...] this school regulations require all students to be equal and dress up in the same uniform [...] There are these customs and fashion styles in schools nowadays which, ah, you know, reflect Tanzanian cultures...and most of the youth is influenced by Western fashion styles and as a result they...you know, they, they tend to change their appearance in schools, as, as, as students. And the way they put on their uniforms [exclamation!], and, and...how they cut their hair...but we manage, we managed to solve this conflict and we just include the Hijab as optional part of uniform. This was not a big conflict. It is just an option now.

This teacher describes the issue of adequate school clothing of students and the difficulties of integrating exceptional religious, cultural or ethnic clothing. As in this example, many schools face the conflicts of integrating diverse cultural and religious influences and try to resolve them with a maximum of tolerance and acceptance, promoting the values of peace and harmony across cultures in educational contexts.

In another interview, a teacher refers to conflicts caused by differences in cultural behaviour between different ethnic groups and their perception of taboos:

There is conflict between diff, I mean between, ah, behaviour. The way, the way we as a Tanzanian act [emphasis] or as, lets say, we as a certain tribe act sometimes is a problem to the, to the other tribe. For some people they do opposites to the other according to their tribe taboos or tribalism. So such problem, [...] it is...

taboo to give someone thing […] using this left-hand side. For some people it is not their taboo, […] but you find such people, in such, ah, such rural area, you find some people will give you with using their left-hand side. So if you find such already there is a conflict.

The taboos of different ethnic and cultural groups are well-known by individuals across the country. They are aware of the conflictual potentials and are able to avoid them. In communication situations individuals exchange ideas on the effects of differences in behaviour. This interviewee highlights particularly the contrast between urban and rural preferences in behaviour – based on taboos and resolved through third party mediation.

Thirdly, with regard to education and socialisation, there is the issue of gender-related education, and the ways that girls earn money to buy food. In the following excerpt, the teacher's performance is described, and issues of race and sexual abuse that cause conflicts in educational organisations in urban Tanzania are pointed out.

Parents, carrying a big burden of assisting the education system. Al, also, the government, due to the lack of poor economic incomes from the parents which can make the schooling to be late or come to school or come to school with the hungry stomachs. How can you expect, there the… some of the girls in our schools, when we talk, why yesterday you are not in school they said, I was finding […] food, for the parents. A form two girl, a form one girl, talking to that stage. And when you go and dig what do they, you know what does it to me, finding food for the pa, for the family. Maybe she's living with the grandparents, the grandmother, who's not able to find something. Then a girl finding a food for the parent means making a prostitute way of finding it, you see [question]. A girl, going anywhere, walking from the house to anywhere [emphasis] provided he, she is supposed to come back at home with food, you know that [question]. And who is the, who is the source of that conflict [question]. Is the government, because our system is different to other systems.

In this short excerpt, a headmistress from a school in Dar es Salaam describes why there is conflict about girls not attending school on a regular basis, and how this conflict is structurally implemented by the governmental and social

system which does not support parents and families regarding their regular income and provision of food and nutrition for the families. She views this conflict as a structural conflict in which mediation does not play a major role. Rather, this conflict needs to be resolved through a radical change in educational and governmental systems.

Interviewees from the Ministry of Education refer to conflicts regarding the shortage of teachers, discourses on educational questions, religious ways of dressing up in schools, girl's education and the way of managing international school partnerships.

Okay, in the working place […] as a head of school, I can say that we have a lot of conflicts, cause I mean, most of the culture conflicts, for example, most of the parents do not like their girls to study. We still, some parents they think that a, a woman is just a, a person to stay at home, being fed by the parent or being fed by the husband and the others are focusing to the traditions of wearing. When you say that a girl should wear a uniform which is planned as a school uniform, they say, no that is my girl, I want, I don't like […] her to be exposed to the uniform so that we must, she might wear a clothes which is not exposure to the boys or so.

Due to religious beliefs there is conflict about the role of women and girls in the society and with regard to education and clothes – as an interviewee from the Ministry of Education explains in the above-mentioned interview excerpt. She defines the role of the headmistress as being mainly involved in mediation on girl's rights in education between school representatives and parents. The debate on gender rights and equality is interlinked with the discussion on human and educational rights and is emphasised as an important issue in mediation across gender.

In the following section, the findings show how the described conflicts are managed in the educational contexts.

6.2 Managing conflicts cross-culturally

Interviewees indicated that maintaining and building peace is of most importance with regard to cross-cultural conflict management in educational organisations. They also highlighted that individuals need to learn how to

reach a consensus and how to shape good and enduring relationships. Cross-cultural conflict management needs to emphasise the promotion of mutual understanding, tolerance, reconciliation and the creation of similar ideologies.

Thereby, interviewees of educational organisations connect conflict management to the objectives of the curricula, such as peacebuilding, consensus, tolerance, fighting against segregating ideologies and racial discrimination ('ubaguzi wa ngozi').

With regard to the educational context, interviewees strongly support the promotion of values, such as understanding, respect, peace, tolerance and non-violence in conflict management processes and mediation situations. At the same time, they regard the value of humility which includes devoted and respectful interaction of individuals as outstandingly important.

Individuals who help to manage conflicts in organisational contexts are expected to hold specific positions in the educational organisations or in the Ministry. They have to have a high social status, such as heads of schools, board members or leaders. They should not be biased towards one party. They, also, should be in a good and healthy condition. They should be able to accept and respect both parties and should be fast in resolving the conflict. They should manage the conflict responsibly, perform their duties faithfully, and be scrupulous, impartial, educated and convincing. Referring to the personality of the mediator, characteristics, such as being self-confident, being wise, being empathetic and sensible for gender balance, are mentioned.

With regard to the characteristics of individuals managing conflicts, being wise is of main importance. Therefore, elderly individuals who have already retired from their jobs are often chosen as conflict managers, because they are expected to have the right knowledge and experience to resolve conflicts (Mayer, Boness and Kussaga 2010).

Interviewees from educational contexts explain that the conflict management structure should reveal the following characteristics: It should be based on the needs of the parties, and the mediator should guide the conflict parties according to their needs and the underlying values of the process. Basically,

conflict management is viewed as a process which represents a special kind of 'team building process', a kind of a 'negotiation or counselling' situation. Elements of mediation, negotiation and counselling are therefore defined as integral parts of cross-cultural conflict management. This means that the conflict manager needs to have different skills which are all integrated in the process of managing cross-cultural conflicts, and that the transitions from one role to the other should flow smoothly. Important aspects in cross-cultural conflict management in educational contexts are therefore:

- bringing people involved to one table;
- identifying key persons in the conflict;
- creating a safe environment;
- treating parties equally; and
- working towards mutual understanding between the parties.

These aspects build part of the base of the conflict management process in educational contexts in urban areas in Tanzania, which is often led by elderly individuals. The cross-cultural aspect in the conflict management sessions is not of outstanding importance. Rather it is viewed as one aspect of the conflict management process amongst others.

7. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the article was to assess cross-cultural conflicts and their professional management in selected educational contexts in Tanzania. Cross-cultural conflict situations in educational contexts could be identified in the areas of territory, culture diversity, education and socialisation, personal resources and international relations (see table 2 above).

Generally, it can be concluded that interviewees from the educational context in Tanzania have to deal with a broad variety of cross-cultural conflict. These conflicts are influenced by local diversity issues (such as cultural, ethnic, religious and professional ones). They are very much bound to the local cultures and issues of land/territory (economic resource distribution) (Mwamfupe 1998), culture and ethnicity (ways of ingestion of

food, and clothing fashion styles) and religious aspects (religious clothing) (Wijsen and Mfumbusa 2004). The cross-cultural conflicts experienced are bound to particular types of conflicts which were grouped by the interviewees as ethnic, religious, gender-oriented, organisational or international conflicts. Generally, most of the cross-cultural conflicts narrated are interlinked with religion and gender, while fewer are related to ethnicity, organisational or international aspects.

However, diversity aspects and conflicts are linked to the organisational culture, particularly the education of teachers, and organisational aspects of school development and international partnerships. Interviewees confirmed definitions and views found in the literature (e.g. Francesco and Gold 2005; Lederach 2000; Mayer 2000). They define cross-cultural conflicts as shaped by their individual and cultural meanings, particularly in culture diversity and territory/land conflicts.

Referring to the professional management – and resolution – of cross-cultural conflicts in educational contexts it can be concluded that values of peace and harmony, and a constructive approach, are of utmost importance in dealing with such conflicts (Ghai, Bloomfield and Reilly 1998). Therefore, tolerance, mutual understanding and reconciliation build the base for the conflict management process, as described in other words by Jackson (2002) as 'valuing people'. This process of managing cross-cultural conflicts is needs-based and should be guided by an outstanding person with mediation, negotiation and counselling skills and a high degree of professional, educational and life experience.

In conclusion, the cross-cultural aspect does not play an outstanding role in the narrated conflicts. Rather, the religious and gender-oriented aspects are highlighted in detail. However, the individual – not the cultural person – is the focus of the conflict management process, as described in the selected literature on conflict management (Overman 1991). This leads to the assumption that in the described educational contexts, culture is important, but only as an aspect of the individual and not as an outstanding part that needs to gain more attention than other identity aspects of a person.

8. Recommendations

Referring to the aims, the findings and the conclusion of this article, the following recommendations can be given to educational organisations in Tanzania, individuals and institutions working in the field of cross-cultural encounters in the Tanzanian educational sector. They may also apply to cross-cultural trainers, consultants and conflict managers. At the same time, the findings may have implications for scientists and researchers working in conflict management and cross-cultural communication in Tanzanian contexts:

- Researchers and scientists who plan to run research projects on managing cross-cultural conflicts in Tanzanian educational contexts need to be prepared to become pioneers in this field of research. More exploratory research on conflict and its management, and on cross-cultural interaction is needed. The research methodology used with regard to the described issues and contexts should focus on qualitative research methods to gain deeper culture-specific insights into the values within conflict management processes and within the structural components of managing cross-cultural conflicts in education. Particularly, the views of culture and cross-cultural understanding of Tanzanian interviewees need to be explored with regard to concepts of ethnicity, gender, organisation, internationality and with regard to the scientific concepts of (managing) conflict across cultures presented above. Similarities and differences with regard to these concepts need further conceptual and linguistic exploration (Mayer, Boness and Kussaga 2010).

- Cross-cultural conflicts narrated by the interviewees show that the conflicts experienced are mainly influenced by local cultural issues (Maasai conflict), as well as local religious groups (Hijab conflicts) and local economic circumstances (female student prostitution). Therefore, researchers as well as cross-cultural trainers, conflict managers or consultants need to gain contextual and specific cultural understanding to conduct research or trainings with regard to the described contexts.

- Cross-cultural conflict management processes in Tanzanian educational contexts focus on the needs of the individual person involved in these processes and do not focus on culture as a particular aspect that needs to be highlighted. In the centre of the process stands the individual, not the cultural person.

- Cross-cultural trainers and consultants should therefore be clear about the fact that culture as a general issue is a subordinate topic with regard to Tanzanian educational contexts. Rather, aspects of gender and gender equality as well as religion and religious expressions – mainly focussing on Christian and Muslim religious aspects – are experienced as conflictive in educational settings. These aspects are not necessarily highlighted in the Western conflict (management) literature and therefore should also be elaborated in cross-cultural conflict management research with regard to the Tanzanian research context.

- Individuals and groups meeting in cross-cultural encounters in the Tanzanian education contexts should – with regard to the above-mentioned aspects – be trained in managing cross-cultural conflicts with special focus on gender and religion. These trainings should become part of the school curriculum to ensure proper preparation for cross-cultural interactions and exchange as well as globalisation and internationalisation processes in educational organisations and Ministries.

Implementing these practical implications can contribute to advance cross-cultural conflict management research and build a base for fundamental research on the mentioned issues in Tanzanian educational contexts. At the same time it could lead to improving interactions and conflict management across cultures in internationalising and globalising educational contexts.

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