



MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT:ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

U.Ravikiran

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, PSCMR College Of Engineering and Technology, Kothapet, Vijayawada-1

D.Yedukondalu*

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, PSCMR College Of Engineering and Technology, Kothapet, Vijayawada-1. *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Conflict is part of human existence in groups, teams, and organizations. The complexity of interdependencies within organizations leads to the creation of opportunities, resulting in conflict among groups and teams. Some conflicting situations are constructive for the organization while others can be destructive. However, what matters the most is the management of conflict. Conflict, on one hand, can destroy people, while on the other, can lead to collective upliftment. The fundamental cause behind any conflict is the difference in the feelings and behavior of two or more entities vis-vis individuals, social groups, teams, companies, nations, etc. If not handled appropriately, conflict can lead to a clash between the individuals and the parties involved. It can affect performance and impede the achievement of goals. Kramer (1999) has highlighted that management of conflict requires an ability to diagnose, dissect, and understand it correctly.

KEYWORDS : Conflict, Assertion, Collaboration, Dominance, Opportunities, Resolution.

LITERATURE REVIEW:- Conflict refers to a process in which one party (person or group) perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party (Brown and Clarkson 1998 and Walls Jr 1995). This basically implies a mismatch in the concerns of people involved in a particular event. Conflict is a state of disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values, objectives, and goals. It occurs due to the difference in the feelings and behavior of two sets of individuals (Fig.21.1). Differences in heredity, environment, and personal choices of individuals are also a leading cause of conflict. One of the fundamental reasons of conflict is that most of us are normally concerned with winning rather than achieving. The desire to win at any cost leads to an increase in the intensity of conflict amongst the parties involved in the situation.

Sources of Conflict

- Diverse goals or objectives;
- Different values and beliefs;
- Status: Incongruence, salary differences, education level;
- Decision making: considerations, pressures;
- Role pressure or clarification;

Perceptions:- There might be a lot of differences between what we perceive and the reality. These perceptual variations can result in variations in the way people view causes and consequences of problems. These variations may arise due to differences in self-perceptions and others' perceptions. Therefore, it is important that perceptual variations be resolved based on facts, to develop a common understanding.

Socio-cultural backgrounds:- People's socio-cultural background is reflected in their grooming, attitudes, and values in life. A person's reaction to situations depends largely upon their socio-cultural background. Therefore, in any conflicting situation it becomes necessary to identify individual values that are rooted in their socio-cultural backgrounds and consider them while working out solutions to the problem situation.

Power:- The way power is defined in an organization and the manner in which people use the same, may lead to conflicts. Conflicts also arise when people try to make others change their actions or to gain an unfair advantage. Power also determines how conflict is managed.

Values:- Values or the set of beliefs, principles, norms, or attitudes of the individuals involved in a particular situation are a very important factor in conflict. One of the major reasons for conflicts is

incompatibility between the values of individuals or misunderstanding of each other's values. It becomes necessary to identify the values of individuals involved in the situation and bring them together for the achievement of the common purpose.

Consequences of Conflict:

Conflict need not always be destructive or damaging. If it is dealt with effectively, it works as a potential source for creativity, innovation, and finding different ways for solving the problem. By handling conflict appropriately, not only does the organization set itself on the path of sustained growth but also builds a healthy spirit of creativity and innovation that further helps in the development of multiple and productive options for the management to solve problems. It is important to diagnose the underlying causes of conflict to come out with effective implementable solutions through a democratic process by arriving at a consensus that meets the needs of involved individuals and their organizations. This approach to resolving conflicts results in mutual benefits and, in turn, builds trusting relationships amongst involved individuals/groups. The goal should be for all to 'win' in some way or the other, by meeting their needs.

MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict can be effectively managed in three steps:

1. Define conflict and get concerned about it when it is at latent or felt stage.
2. Identify the root causes behind conflict by diagnosis and analysis
3. Work out an implementable and acceptable management strategy through negotiations.

Conflict management strategies

Collaboration:- When the group has a high level of concern for its own interests and matches it with a high concern for the interests of its other partners, it tries to resolve conflict through collaboration. This method involves strong co-operative and assertive behaviours. It has a 'win-win' approach towards resolving interpersonal conflict. Individuals and groups using this method view conflict as natural, helpful, and a source of arriving at creative solutions to the problem. The greatest advantage of this method is that it develops mutual trust amongst the individuals and groups involved. Conflict is recognized transparently and evaluated by all concerned. Sharing, examining, and assessing the reasons for the conflict should lead to development of an alternative that effectively resolves it and is fully acceptable to everyone involved (Blanchard & O' Connor 1997). This strategy is generally adopted when concern for others is important

to resolve the issue. It is also generally the best strategy to manage conflict and more so when the society's interests are at stake. This approach helps build trust between the groups and commitment on the part of involved individuals in the groups. A major drawback of this strategy is that it is time, effort, and energy consuming. In addition, some partners may take advantage of others' trust and openness.

Compromise:- When there is a high level of concern for a group's own interests along with a moderate concern for the interests of other partners, conflict resolution is approached through compromise. This method involves an intermediate level of cooperation and assertiveness. The approach involves give and take so that a series of concessions for each party is worked out. This style, as against a collaborative style, does not maximize mutual satisfaction. It enables involved parties to achieve partial satisfaction. The outcome is 'win some/lose some'. This strategy is generally used to achieve temporary solutions, to avoid destructive power struggles, particularly in time-pressure situations. One of the drawbacks of this strategy is that partners may lose sight of important values and long-term objectives. This approach can also distract the partners from the merits of an issue and create a cynical climate. This method is usually followed by positive feelings from others (Rahim 1992).

Avoidance:- This style involves neither assertive nor co-operative behavior. In fact, the employees try to remain away from conflict by not caring for disagreements. As ignoring important issues often frustrates others, the consistent use of the avoidance style usually results in unfavourable evaluations by others (Sorenson et al. 1995). In case unresolved conflicts have a direct bearing on organizational goals, the avoidance style would negatively affect the achievement of organizational goals. This style may be effective when an issue has a minor bearing on organizational goals and is not worth worrying about. It may be a desirable strategy when the decision-maker does not have adequate information to effectively deal with the problem situation.

Assertion/dominance:- This strategy results from a high concern for your group's own interests while having less concern for other groups. It refers to assertive and uncooperative behavior. The concern for achievement of self-goals dominates this style, which includes aspects of coercive power and dominance (Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield Superiors 1996, Dana 2000). This method presumes that only one person/party has to win and the other must lose; an attitude that creates an atmosphere of fear and subordinates work more out of compulsion than with willing involvement and commitment. The outcome is 'win-lose'. This strategy includes bargaining and is generally used when basic rights are at stake or to set a precedent so that a similar situation does not recur.

Accommodation/obliging:- It is an approach that results from less concern for an individual's own group's interests combined with a high concern for the interests combined with a high concern for the interests of other partners. This is also referred to as co-operative and unassertive behavior. A co-operative approach towards others may seem purely unselfish, but when used to elicit support from others due to incompetence and non-assertive behavior, then individuals are perceived as weak and submissive. This style is also known as 'buying peace in an organization' by showing concern about the feelings of others at the cost of organizational goals.

NEGOTIATION PROCESS

There are three stages to process of negotiation-pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-negotiation.

Pre-negotiation:- To achieve successful breakthrough of any conflict, it is essential that sufficient groundwork is done before entering the negotiation stage. One out of the two parties needs to take the initiative for negotiation. In case no one is prepared to take this as a first step, a trusted outsider can be brought in as facilitator.

It should be ensured that right conditions have been created and right time has come to initiate the negotiation. Key stakeholders should be identified and present during the negotiation. Above all, it should be ensured that all individuals/groups have the will to collaborate. Reasonable deadlines and adequate resources to support the whole process must be ensured. Spokespersons for each group must be identified and involved.

Negotiation:- During the negotiation phase the interests of the parties involved are discussed openly. Negotiation must aim at the greatest possible satisfaction of interests of all parties involved within the given constraints. A variety of creative solutions that serve the interests of all involved parties, need to be identified and considered. Minutes should be prepared during every stage of negotiation to ensure common understanding. This ensures that the agreements are remembered and communicated clearly. Each should be confident that the agreements will be adhered to. Discuss and agree upon methods to ensure that the parties involved understand and honour their commitments.

Post-negotiation:- Once the negotiation is over, the group will need to implement the decision made. To ensure the smooth implementation of decisions taken, the partners must elicit support for the agreement from the involved parties. Each organization needs to follow its own procedures to review and adapt the agreement. Communication and collaboration should continue as the agreement is carried out over a period of time. A plan to monitor progress, document success, resolve problems, renegotiate terms, and celebrate success should be part and parcel of the implementation process.

CONCLUSION

Resolving conflict, particularly for those issues that have been dragging for a very long time between the groups, requires imagination and creativity. This basically implies that alternative solutions need to be identified by lateral thinking. One has to accept the fact that conflict is inevitable in any human group and, therefore, positive steps need to be taken to resolve it. The issues involved should be discussed openly with the stakeholders and each has to be tackled at a time. Someone needs to take on the role of a leader and identify various issues involved in the conflict. The use of such words by the opposing group need to be overlooked as else it may lead to dissipation of energies without any fruitful outcomes. Never personalize negotiation. There needs to be a focus on the problem rather than on the group(s) or individual(s) involved and ensure the dignity and self-respect of all the involved parties. One should not insist on being right. There is usually more than one workable and right solution to every problem.

REFERENCES

1. BHATT ANIL & ARYA KUMAR: "MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES PROCESSES AND PRACTICES" OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS NEW DELHI
2. HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW JOURNALS
3. STEPHEN.P.ROBBINS"ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR" PHI
4. SUBBA RAO, P "HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT - TEXT AND CASES" HIMALAYA PUBLISHING HOUSE NEW DELHI.
5. KOONTZ AND WIERICH, ESSENTIALS OF MANAGEMENT -TATA MCG HILL. 2008.