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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS

Management

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People differ in values, perceptions, needs, attitudes, temperament, approaches, and in so many other ways. They are the most precious resources of an organization, as it is the level of their willing contribution to the achievement of organisational goals that provides it a real and enduring edge over its competitors. It is accepted that employees will to work cooperatively and productively depends on their perception that by doing so they are advancing simultaneously toward their own goals. A manager's success in directing depends on his ability to create such a healthy human relations climate. He can do so by :

(i) providing appropriate leadership;
(ii) creating conditions conducive to the development of satisfying interpersonal relationships:
(iii) motivating employees by providing them challenging and meaningful work and scope for growth, and achievement, and
(iv) establishing a healthy and effective communication system.

Most manager are, however, deficient in the art of human relations. Human relation covers the area of management practice that is concerned with the integration of people into a working situation. It is concerned with motivating people to work together cooperatively and productively. !t is disappointing that even the most effective manager- leaders face human relation problems, but the magnitude and complexity of human relation problems is much more in ease of managers who treat employees as inanimate objects.

CONFLICT BETWEEN PERSONAL AND ORGANSIATIONAL DEMANDS

Chris Argyris[1] argues that there is a basic conflict between the needs of a mature person and organizational demands. He contends that as an individual grows from infancy to adulthood, he develops the following continuum:

1. From a state of passivity to a state of increasing activity
2. From a state of dependence on others for need gratification to a state of relative independence, and acknowledgement of healthy dependencies.
3. From a state of responding to environment in only a few ways to responding in several alternative ways.
4. From a state of having shallow, short time and erratic interests to deeper long time and challenging interests.
5. From a short time perspective to a long-time perspective of his work, environment, life goals, etc.
6. From a state of sub ordinary to a state of search for equality, in interpersonal relationships
7. From a sense of unawareness of 'self to a sense of identity as an unique individual.

Thus, an employee seeds a work environment which permits him to act like a mature person. That is to say, the wants; scope to utilize and develop his abilities; to be creative and innovative; to develop deeper interest in his work; and a long-time perspective about his job and situation work which is challenging; autonomy and independence in work performance; predictable management policies, behaviour and responses; and to be treated as a unique person with needs, abilities and a sense of responsibility.

Dubin stress that work is not of central life interest to most people

and they can seek satisfaction of the job and in the community and home, they do not deny the existence of conflict between the individual and organization. This conflict results in frustration and causes human relations problems[2]. Individual difference in needs and patterns of responses to need fulfillment, attitudes and perceptions create human relations problems. Role and status incongruities and conflicts are another source of human relations problems.

Interpersonal conflicts based on personality differences serve some useful purpose as they force re-examination of data and approaches and resultant modifications may benefits the organization as a whole. But persistent conflicts cause damage to it. Informal groups serve many useful functions by providing opportunities for fulfillment of security, social and esteem needs of their members, but at the same time create a number of human relations problems. They put pressure on deviants and isolates if they produce more than group norms of production, do not easily accept new employees in the groups and resists transfer of group members. Inter group conflicts also create problems.

Differences in the means for goal attainment may also cause conflict. A manager and his subordinates may run into conflict about work priorities, or determination of activities that will lead to goal accomplishment. Competition for allocation of funds or other resources may also cause conflict. Competition for status and status symbols is yet another sources of conflict.

PEOPLE ARE UNIQUE

People are unique in their need patterns and the manner in which they seek fulfillment of their needs. Some generalizations about human needs have been advanced by behavioural scientists like Maslow, Herberg, Vroom, etc. but people differ from one another in their need patterns. Every worker does not seek specialization on the job, challenge, creativity, recognition autonomy, etc, and certainly not to be the same extent. People also differ in their need patterns even within themselves from time to time. At one time an individual may be seeking satisfaction of his security need, at another time, he may be hotly pursuing opportunities for advancement. Moreover, people also differ in the way they handle their needs. One may be keen on advancement yet patient, hardworking and persevering, while another with the same degree of keenness for advancement may be impatient, aggressive and politicking.

Role conflict and role ambiguity both cause dysfunctional behaviour and result in decline in need fulfillment and job satisfaction with adverse consequences to healthy human relation at work (Keller, 1975)[3]. Another problem of human relations arises from status incongruity. Status incongruities create human relations problems at work. Whyte (1949)[4] found in a restaurant study that when relatively low status waitresses passed their customer order to high status counterman, it caused much wrangling and bickering. The problems was showed by proceeding a spindle for order slips or a high warning compartment which reduced much content between waitresses and countermen. Maier (1 957)[5] report a similar situation of status conflict in a public utility.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB STRUCTURE AND SATISFACTION

Sexton (1968)6 found that there is positive association between satisfaction and job structure. The greater the extent to which the job is structured in terms of activities, methods repetitiveness and reutilization, the greater is the satisfaction of need for achievement, affiliation autonomy and recognition. It may, however, be concluded from this discussion that organisational demands for conformity and reutilization of work do frustrate the needs of a mature person for growth, autonomy and challenge. This frustration, particularly true in the case of blue collar employees, lies at the root of many human relations problems. The boss wants more production, subordinates wants more considerations. customer want faster deliveries, peers request schedule delay. consultants suggest change, subordinates resist change. the rule book provides a formula, the staff says it will not work (Boss and Ryterband, 1999)7. In a classical organisation, there may be four types of facilities : hierarchical conflict, functional conflict, line-staff conflict and formal-informal conflict8. In an organizational setting, there may be several forms of intrpersonal conflicts, such as hierarchical conflict between various levels of management, functional conflict between occupational specialists, professional vs professional conflict and so on9. Inter group conflict is visualized more when people come from different socio-economic backgrounds and have different political and religious views (Prasad, 2011)10.

CONCLUSION

When conflict does not lead to solution of a problem, it is unproductive and the investment of time and effort goes waste. It is seriously harmful if it detracts attention from basic organizational objectives and makes people work for their defeat. Organizational coping strategies are designed by management to eliminate and control organizational-level conflicts. Along with social, emotional, behavioural, leadership, team and communication skills are becoming increasingly recognized as important to management of not only conflict, but also effective management in general.

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