

Uganda Christian University In-house Library staff Workshop

How to manage conflict in a Library work place

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Overview

- ✓ Descriptive view
- ✓ Define conflict/ introduction
- ✓ Precedents of conflict
- ✓ Causes of conflict
- ✓ Solutions to resolve conflict
- ✓ Conclusion

Descriptive view

Conflict is part and partial of a relationship. Every hour or day human beings are confronted with cases of conflict. Either between individuals or in groups, it is inevitable in this world. Therefore, there is always need to understand and develop a relationship among us as human beings. (Hamlyn, 2009). Conflict should be accepted as a reality of management and institutional behaviour. If it is properly managed, it can vitalize and energise force within groups and the institution. Do you think the negative aspects of conflict arguably outweigh the potential benefits? (Mullins, 2007).

Introduction

Conflict is a scenario where discrepancy in values, attitudes and power rise to a contention and opposition between two or more parties. This is due to increased emphasis on participation, innovation, teamwork, diversity and creativity in an environment which has an extraordinary competition. Pondy (1967: 891) defined conflict as the process which starts from when one group detect that another has blighted or is about to discontent; then, some concern is raised.

The increasing roles, assumptions and enticements, which creates ambivalence and dilemma. Conflict can result into calamitous consequences for teams, institutions and individuals. However, it can be profitable to the institution. This means that the leading managers/ employers and team members should know how to resolve and manage conflict in a way that becomes a steering force for change and achieving the institution's goals. Nelson and Quick (2006: 422) identified the capacity to manage conflict with demonstrative intelligence. Any employer with high levels of enthusiastic intelligence is able to control his/her emotions. He/she must be able to understand the variance perspectives that people bring to a situation and can accelerate or assist the search for a common ground.

The introduction to autonomous team work in a University library environment locates the burden or authority of conflict resolution enduringly in the hands of a work team. Members in the library team must learn how to identify conflict and assign with it instantly and directly. Conflict has a number of problems raised for many work teams, which raise a need for actual / accurate training of team members to have a resolution.

Precedents of conflict

When a University library team members and employers understand the causes of conflict, they are better able to detect or recognise, administer and anticipate conflict effectively. The precedent of a conflict can be defined as a situation where certain elements exist that can cause conflict. In other words, there is always a conducive environment for conflict (Wagner-Johnson, 2003).

The causes of conflict

Ambition differences: Competitive ambitions promote competitive behaviours, hence creating room for conflict. Business people always want to gratify the needs of consumers and may make devoted promises to them only to be discontented when the pledges are not met by the manufacturer. For example in the library it comes to procurement of print materials from suppliers if they do not deliver on time it can course conflict.

Shared resources: when there is a greater demand than distribution of resources. For example, two branch libraries in the institution share the same delivery truck and both believe their deliveries are more functional and essential. For example at UCU Bishop Tucker Library (BTL) and Hamu Mukasa Library (HML)

Interdependence: Members in the team who are interdependent may not achieve a goal without the collaboration of everyone. For such a scenario it becomes easy to blame others when hindrances occur in goal attainment. For example in the Systems and Technical section where activities related to IT, cataloguing, stamping, classification, spine labeling and barcode labeling can in fact mostly affect the circulation service in the library demands Interdependence.

Bureaucracy and status differences: Power and status distribution differences in the library can result in conflict when domination and status are abused. Individuals get a problem with accepting authority of any nature, and this is then transferred to the work situation. But also those in power one led it on those they lead.

Leadership ambiguities: These arise when it is not clear who must take responsibility for specific duties, or performance within the University library. The end result, people become frustrated and conflict arises when problems are not answered.

Personality: Some Librarians are very goal orientated, while others are more orientated. Some focus more on detail, while others are more visionary and creative. People differ in terms of assertiveness, confidence, self-efficacy locus of control and confidence. These too cause conflict.

Communication barriers: These may include poor listening skills, differences in interpretation and perception, insufficient sharing of information and lack of non-verbal proficiency, for example in the University library.

Limited resources: Most University library resources are limited thus pushing individual librarians and groups to struggle for their share. For example, when library departments are being allocated funds on the annual budget, the greater the limited resources the higher the conflicts arise, for example health science books are very expensive most of them cost above 200 dollars per copy, hence they may buy them only 10 copies, yet business administration they buy for them 50 copies because their book each is at average of 25 dollars.

Violation of territory: Individual librarians tend to become attached to their own 'territory' within the University library. For example, that computer, parking space, their own office or desk. Jealousy may continue to arise over other people's territory such as library car, allocation of library assistants, size of office.

The age gap: The relationships between younger librarians and older librarians to work within the library section or unit, for example in IT is with young one with all the expertise and power and on the management with older side at the library can cause serious conflict at work (Mullins, 2007: 96-97). For example when there is a request for IT servicing.

Strategies for managing conflict

Relationship-Task: A person with an alliance emphasis will focus on aspects of the parties' interpersonal association, such as how they communicate, while a person with a task accent will focus mainly on material aspects like equipment.

Cooperate win: A cooperation focus considers the role of all parties in the conflict, while a triumphant approach is focused on personal gain. For example the top library management can decide to call for a meeting which can help to resolve the conflict of different groups.

Emotional-Intellectual: A person with an emotional accent will identify and express feelings experienced during the situation, while a person with an intellectual attention will focus on the observable behaviour rather than the emotions.

Improved self-knowledge: When individual librarians assess their own benefits and aspirations it provides a clear feedback on the person's contribution to the group.

Extended cohesion: conflict resolution can be dedicated as success when a library team gives all the members the faith that the group can cooperate and members can respect each other.

Prolonged understanding: All staff together can get aware of the apprehension, compassion and desires they would have not known earlier or accepted, if there is a meeting for consensus.

Non-Monetary rewards: In case finances are limited it would be possible to put a lot of attention to non-monetary rewards such as increased delegation, flexible working hours, best performance, best team player, best workmate.

Human resource management procedures and policies: A detailed attention to equitable human resource management which may help to reduce on the areas of conflict such as disciplinary procedures, equitable promotions

Group participation: Attention to the composition of library staff and to factors which affect group cohesiveness, may reduce conflict such as games, outings.

Librarians' satisfaction is a prototypical form of emergent state. Even though team member satisfaction can be targeted at specific aspects of group interactions such as communication (Hecht, 1978), it is conceptualized to be as a holistic, affective state (Marston & Hecht, 1988). The conceptualization of team member satisfaction as an affect-based emergent state follows prior conflict management research (for example; Curhan, Neale, Ross, & Rosencranz-Engelmann, 2008; Gelfand, Major, Raver, Nishii, & O'Brien, 2006). Satisfaction does not exist initially but emerges over time, reflecting the converged perception of relationships and interactions among team members (Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim, 2008).

Librarians' satisfaction enables members to work collaboratively and hence facilitate group performance, whereas library staff member dissatisfaction can disrupt intra-team collaboration inhibiting team performance (Gladstein, 1984; Nerkar, McGrath, & MacMillan, 1996). When library staff are dissatisfied with their intra-team relationships and interactions, they are likely to bear destructive conflict with group mates, hence interrupting the information flow and functionality (Bradley, Klotz, et al., 2013; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Nerkar et al., 1996; Tekleab et al., 2009), for example respect and appreciating each one's tasks.

Library staff satisfaction can strongly facilitate ongoing team performance. As a positive emergent state, it can buffer team members from destructive conflict and even undo the negative consequences of conflict (Fredrickson, 2001), thus reducing team dysfunctions

Cognitive Processes

Librarians developing the cognitive empathy may also lead to more positive attitudes towards the out-group (Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Stephan et al., 2005). Individual librarians experience cognitive empathy when they take the role of another and view a situation from that person's perspective. Empathizing cognitively can enable librarians of both groups to understand the views of the other group, especially their perceptions of the conflict.

Affective Processes

Librarians developing the emotional empathy can, especially, be valuable in an attempt to resolve intergroup conflicts. Emotional empathy involves the capacity to feel the same emotions as members of the other group. Empathizing emotionally with the out-group can lead to a concern for their welfare and more positive feelings and attitudes toward them (Batson et al., 1997; Dovidio, ten Vergert et al., 2004; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005). In particular, empathy for the

distress and suffering experienced by out-group members should increase the chances of successful conflict resolution.

Behavioral Processes

Research on intergroup contact has demonstrated that there are a number of issues which can promote favorable University library intergroup relations. The best established factors includes cooperation in the pursuit of common goals, equality in the contact situation, the approval of relevant authority figures, and contact that allows librarians to get to know one another as individuals (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). A special benefit of mutual interdependence (cooperation) in library work is that it encourages library staff to more accurately perceive others (Fiske, 2000). All of these factors can usually be introduced into small library group contexts.

Library staff are also influenced by the models to whom they are exposed, especially those of higher status. Thus, the behavior of third parties who intervene in conflicts is extremely important. Librarian mediators and facilitators need to model the same types of behaviors they wish to have the parties to the conflict display. For small library groups dealing with intergroup conflicts, it may be especially valuable to have library mediators or facilitators from both contending groups who can model the types of intergroup relationships they wish to foster.

Confederation building

This involves librarians working through disagreements and building trust. It requires library members of both groups to examine and confront their own biases and assumptions about the other group. It involves reaching across the group divide to work collaboratively with library members of the other group. Specific communication behaviors, alliance building often includes discussing options for action and making commitments to take collaborative actions. In conflict resolution settings, alliance building would involve convincing the contending parties to work together toward mutually acceptable outcomes and to focus on the fairness of the outcomes of the other group as well as their own group's outcomes.

Critical self-reflection

When individual librarians examine their own experiences, ideas, and perspectives often with respect to power inequalities. Critical self-reflection becomes a communication process when it results in questioning internal users and external users about issues such as systems of inequality with a goal of understanding their views. When individual library staff state publically that they are willing to reappraise their own views, self-reflection, has become a part of a communication process which is relevant to conflict resolution.

Agreeableness as a Moderator

Problem solving requires library team members' satisfaction with their relationships and interactions, yet in conjunction with library team members' accurate understanding of the broader group context (Weingart & Jehn, 2009). Developing and maintaining such an accurate understanding requires a degree of skepticism, critical thinking, and information search (Sinaceur, 2010). A high level of agreeableness reflects the degree to which an individual librarians will be trusting, friendly, and altruistic. A lower level reflects the degree to which an individual is skeptical, egocentric, and assertive (Bono, Boles, Judge, & Lauer, 2002; Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The primary goal of resolving intergroup conflicts is to achieve a state of affairs in which the parties are comfortable with their anticipated outcomes or future relationship. To resolve intergroup conflicts, respect for the group-based social identities of the individual librarians involved must often be taken into consideration. In addition, in many instances, the solution must also be perceived as being satisfactory to other library members of the groups involved.

Self-engagement: In this persons are actively engaged in the intergroup interaction through personal sharing, reconnaissance, and expose their interest in others. Essentially, it includes self-disclosure and displaying comfort with others who are asserting emotions.

Appreciating differences: Library staff willing to learn from members of other groups, are content to listen to their perspectives, and are open to different existences. It expresses an attentive listening as well as communicating acknowledgeable of, and respect for, others.

Communication Processes

This is the developing of several communication processes from research on dialogue groups that are relevant to improve intergroup communication during conflict resolution in small group settings (Nagda, 2006). Dialogue groups are in a University library setting are better technique of improving intergroup relations that entail facilitated discussions between members of two social identity groups with a history of conflict such as different academic qualifications levels. The goals of library intergroup dialogue are to increase intergroup understanding and equip participants with the skills to interact with members of the other groups. Participants are encouraged to express their emotions and discuss their reactions to prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. The transmission process involves the intergroup dialogues that are most relevant to intergroup conflict resolution including self-engagement, alliance building, critical self-reflection, and appreciating differences.

Concluding Comment

As librarians gain a better understanding of these processes, their competence to train people to resolve intergroup conflicts should be enhanced. That should be our promise. To fulfill this promise, more research and conceptual integration are needed, along with the knowledge gained from actually training people to recognize and act on their discern of these processes

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