EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATORS AND MEDIATORS ARE SCHOOL LEADERS : A LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONFRONTATIONAL RESOLVING IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Conflicts do occur occasionally in all organisations. Organizational operations might suffer from intractable conflict, which also makes communication nearly difficult. Without a positive work environment, organisations will fall apart and fail to meet their objectives. However, as they support the mission of their organisations, competent school leaders with the essential abilities will be able to avoid confrontations. In this essay, numerous essential components of conflict competence are examined, with a focus on negotiation and mediation. In general, disagreements and difficulties are a constant in schools. Conflicts may persist in schools without effective management, which will harm student and staff achievement and the dedication of all instructors. The research presented here indicates not just what many writers have written regarding negotiating abilities, but also how some of those skills may be learned. The conversation explains the necessity for knowledgeable, multi skilled school principals in school administration who will defend professionalism, principles of justice, and moral and ethical leadership.

Keywords : *School Effective negotiators. Mediator, School principal, confrontational resolving skills*

INTRODUCTION

Literature highlights the necessity of making sure school administrators are responsible and well-equipped to lead their schools to success in order to promote education in South Africa. According to Christie (2010), "the shifting landscapes" of school leadership in South Africa have made it more difficult for school administrators to consistently improve their institutions. The ideal school, according to Christie (2010: 696) "should be replete with effective leadership, at all levels; skillfully managed in unobtrusive ways; and principals should integrate the duties of leadership and management and possess talents in both." According to Serfontein (2015), as their position gives them the authority to make more significant decisions, school principals require moral and ethical leadership. This author points out that principals need to embrace certain leadership styles based on moral authority. Msila (2015) also argues that effective principals need to have a moral purpose and ethical commitment if they are to lead successful schools. To be able to diffuse conflict, schools need principals who lead with a moral purpose and caring leadership. Being able to resolve conflicts amicably is part of caring leadership. Principals who are caring can Trans form schools for the better. According to Van der Vyver et al. (2014), caring and efficacy are closely related. Principals who have developed conflict-resolution techniques care about their staff members' work happiness. A Price, Waters and Coopers (PWC) (2015) poll emphasises the necessity of school principals providing accountable leadership. According to this poll, leaders need to adopt an accountable philosophie in order to boost student and teacher performance. Dysfunction in schools will be avoided by effective principals. This essay focuses on the necessity for school administrators to have conflict-resolution abilities in their teams. Many dysfunctional schools are conflict-ridden, and their principals are frequently powerless to take meaningful action (Msila 2012). The essay also examines two crucial elements that affect schools.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper uses literature review to:
- Understand what skills are entailed in negotiation;

- Examine why school leaders need negotiation and mediation skills as they try to enhance communication and avert conflicts,
- Investigate the potential threats to effective negotiation;
- Explore why transformational leaders need sound communication skills; and
- Explicate the links between a healthy school climate and negotiation skills.

CONFLICT AND PRINCIPALS

Msila (2014) writes about how teacher unionism can lead to conflicts in schools. Misunderstandings between a principal and union members or between teachers of belonging to union A and those of union B can lead to intense conflicts. These conflicts may lead to toxic environment if the school managers are not well prepared. The problems in many South African schools are exacerbated by the fact that many School Governing Bodies are not well trained in Conflict management (Msila 2012; Majola 2013). The School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are crucial bodies in school governance that are supposed to work closely with the school principal or the entire school management team. Yet, in many schools, these are weak bodies that need the guidance of ethical, morally upright and knowledgeable principals. Empowered school principals may be able to empower SGBs that are not strong. Among the major responsibilities of SGBs in South Africa are:

- Decision making,
- Planning,
- Conflict management,
- Team building and
- Negotiation and finances (DBE 2015).

As hinted above, research has also shown that many SGBs from historically black schools in particular are not equipped with the adequate skills for conflict management or other related skills (Msila 2011). School principals who are strong in these areas though will support their school committees as they enhance school achievement. Masitsa (2005) avers that all principals of effective schools know that good school management and administration are crucial in restoring the learning culture. Effective principals will learn the skills of mediation and negotiation because even in the healthiest of schools, conflicts will arise. Unresolved conflicts break communication and are antitheses to the school vision. Momodu (2013) also avers that conflicts remain one of the greatest challenges confronting effective teaching and learning in schools. Furthermore, this author underscores the importance of tolerance, peer mediation, cooperative teaching and learning in the classroom between teachers and pupils and among pupils, as well as training for teachers, administrators and parents. School principals need to consider the values of fairness and social justice as they lead schools. An effective negotiator and mediator will strive to instil this ambience of justice in her school. In this paper the focus is on the dynamics of negotiation. Negotiations have a number of critical challenges, ethics in negotiation, power dynamics, positional negotiation; steps to follow, cultural patterns are some of the aspects that affect negotiations. Negotiation is among the most common forms of conflict management. The two concepts negotiation and mediation are not necessarily synonymous. Yet both are used to diffuse conflicts. During the process of negotiation, mediation can be used. A negotiator bargains between two or more interests. Brandon and Robertson (2007) aptly put it when they state that people negotiate many things every day from when to get up, to what to eat for breakfast, what to wear. Self-negotiation might be the easier than negotiation with others. The author here explores the different kinds of negotiation as he attempts to answer the question of what works best during collaborative problem solving and negotiation. He starts by exploring social justice leadership and its relevance to negotiation and mediation. Then the focus is on how obstacles can stall negotiation as well as how empowered school leaders can salvage their conflict ridden schools.

DEMYSTIFYING THE CONCEPT – NEGOTIATION

According to Berghof (2012: 49), negotiation is a face-to-face conversation that is conducted "with the objective of achieving an agreement on a situation that is viewed as a problem or conflict." Participants in this procedure must have the authority to reach agreements. A procedure called mediation is one that seeks to resolve disputes via negotiation. The main distinction is that mediation involves a third party who is in charge of facilitating and supporting the flow of communication (Berghof 2012: 50). According to Anderson et al. (1996: 101), bargaining is one of the methods used the most frequently in the workplace to get to agreements. These authors also mention Putnam, who describes negotiation as a style of dispute resolution characterised by the exchange of ideas and counterproposals in an effort to come to an amicable agreement. The following definitions are supported by the Harvard Business Essentials paper (2003: xi), which states: Negotiation is the means by which people deal with their differences. Whether those differences involve the purchase of a new automobile, a labour contract dispute, the terms of a sale, a complex alliance between two companies, or a

peace accord between warring nations, resolutions are typically sought through negotiations. To negotiate is to seek mutual agreement through dialogue. Negotiation is an ever-present feature of our lives both at home and at work.

Additionally, more deliberate conflict management is demonstrated during negotiations. However, despite the fact that negotiation involves more regulated communication than other conflict situations, the whole process is more ambiguous due to the lack of control the stakeholders have over the conclusion (Anderson et al. 2003:102). Sometimes, there are traps in negotiations that might prevent any progress in settling the problem. Deutsch (1991) draws attention to elements like cultural considerations and how they may make negotiations more difficult. According to Deutsch, negotiators must have an implicit grasp of the cultural presumptions that are likely to shape how negotiators from various locations view the world. Negotiators from different cultural backgrounds are likely to misunderstand one another and choose to act in a way that is unintentionally hurtful to the other if they lack this understanding, creating an environment that is not favourable to effective dispute resolution (Deutsch 1991: 36). This is further supported by Lum's (2005) contention that people bring diverse experiences to bear during negotiations and that, even within the same family, a mother's and her daughter's experiences may differ and that they may be bridging a cultural divide. When negotiations fail, it's typically because of misinterpretation and poor communication brought on by the inability of one side to view the world from the perspective of the other. In certain disputes, negotiations are more effective than in others. As destructive disputes worsen, they may be exceedingly challenging to reconcile. Negotiating and bargaining are not distinguished by Goldman and Rojot (2003). They interpret the two phrases as referring to interactions between two or more parties to reach a consensus over a change or a decision not to make a change:
i)   Their interpersonal connection;
ii) Their interpersonal relationships; or
iii) Their connections to specific people or things.
According to some writers, when the required circumstances are met, persons should refrain from bargaining if reaching an agreement is not their mutual aim (Anderson et al. 1996: 120).

SOME BARGAINING STYLES

All successful negotiators use a number of styles in resolving conflicts. All what has been discussed above will be influenced by the negotiators' styles. In part the negotiating style reflects the negotiator's personality and value system as well as his training, education, culture and experience (Goldman and Rojot 2003:111). Various styles are suitable for different negotiating tasks and settings. In addition, Goldman and Rojot highlight eight styles of negotiating and effective negotiators will know and decide whether a particular style is appropriate to the particular occasion and whether it is suitable to the background and personality of the negotiators on each side. What ensues is a list of bargaining styles:
i. The Hard Nut negotiator;
ii. The Nice Guy negotiator;
iii. Building Block;
iv. Tough Issues First;
v. Best Offer First;
vi. Give and Take;

Each of these is briefly explained below

The Hard Nut Negotiator
The Hard Nut approach is often encountered in negotiating. It is a super-tough stance which the negotiator modifies only with the greatest reluctance, if at all. Goldman and Rojot (2003) point out that the Hard Nut bargaining style requires negotiator conduct that is aggressive, dominant and power oriented. This approach also raises the stress level in the parties' interaction. The classic stress syndrome is a response of flight or fight (Goldman and Rojot 2003). Moreover, these authors aver that research shows that when stress becomes excessive in negotiations, the person under stress either fights back or withdraws from the situation.

The Nice Guy Negotiator
This is the opposite of the Hard Nut. For this is a bargainer who concentrates on making theother side feel happy about what has been proposed. The nice guy bargaining is that of the congenial sales person. Negotiators who use this style listen sympathetically, show concern for other side's problems, emphasises common interests, appreciate other side's values and objectives and make efforts to achieve a settlement.

Building Block
This bargaining style is the approach of dealing with easy issues first. Both parties must be able to expend their early efforts trying to resolve some easy issues. "Therefore, if it is to succeed, the initiator of this approach (or a

mediator) must persuade the other side to alter its negotiating style so as to give the parties an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to resolve differences and operate with mutual trust". (Goldman and Rojot 2003:119).

Tough Issues First

The Tough Issues First approach seeks to determine whether there is likelihood that a settlement is attainable. This approach strives to reduce the costs of negotiating. A negotiator using the Tough Issues First approach does not hesitate to make his position known firmly and clearly. However, this approach is also compatible with flexibility and sympathetic listening to the other side's values and goals as well as receptiveness to the other side's ideas so long as there is no serious distraction from the priority issues (Goldman and Rojot 2003). Moreover, the primary focus in Tough Issues First bargaining style is that its primary focus is upon the bargaining agenda. Unless the other side accepts a Tough Issues First agenda, a deadlock may result from bargaining over agenda without ever exploring the prospects of achieving a mutual accommodation regarding the underlying substantive matters.

Best Offer First

The goal is to keep negotiation expenses to a minimum. This approach is intended to persuade the opposite party that it cannot change the mediator's perceptions, according to Goldman and Rojot (2003). The latter is accomplished by adopting a completely inflexible negotiating stance, making an offer, and doing all in your power to convince the opposing party that there is nothing else to say or do during discussions. If the party making the offer has reason to believe that the opposing side believes that few, if any, additional proposals are likely to be received, the best offer first approach is advised.

Give and Take

This approach recognises that the negotiator lacks complete understanding of the transaction at hand. In an effort to get to a settlement that is agreeable to all parties, this approach should be one of reciprocation. Without reciprocation, the approach is readily transformed into the "Nice Guy" tactic. The initiator must insist on reciprocation for the give-and-take negotiation approach to be effective.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING NEGOTIATIONS

When parties negotiate, they attempt to resolve a dispute situation. Resolution of disputes is always important. It makes it possible to find or even recognise solutions that are better for everyone. Depending on the preferences of the mediator or researcher, numerous negotiating phases and methods might be used. According to Anderson et al. (1996), the majority of negotiations use the start, problem-solving, and resolution stages. However, it should be emphasised that the transition between stages of negotiation is not always easy. The three stages are briefly discussed below.

Initiation Phase

This is a crucial stage when the negotiators concentrate on identifying conflicting objectives and outlining various concerns. The parties may seek to clarify disagreements on subjects without putting a negative framing that damages their relationship, as Anderson et al. point out that each party at this stage attempts to describe priorities. During this stage, there is a lot of proliferation.

Problem-solving Phase

In this stage, the focus of the dialogue switches from establishing priorities to problem-solving. The goal of the problem-solving step is to narrow down, examine, and mutually assess the numerous difficulties brought up in the first stage (Anderson et al. 1996: 113). During this phase, there is a lot of reasoning behaviour, information sharing, and bartering. Many negotiators search for possible areas of agreement but will only make concessions grudgingly if there are obvious indicators of tacit agreement. Here are some things to keep in mind: attempting to reduce problems to their most basic forms, dividing the issue into smaller, more manageable parts.

GOOD NEGOTIATORS AND HEALTHY SCHOOL CLIMATE

Research conducted in the past on school principals and negotiation illustrate that there are a number of skills that principals need if they are to be able to resolve conflicts in their schools (Sebetlete 2005, Msila 2012). In his recent study, Msila found that school leaders are not prepared at all in conflict resolution skills. Furthermore, this author discovered that school managers need to be equipped given the rampant conflicts in schools today. Negotiation is the missing link in the creation of working schools. (Shandru Mariyadas., & Saravanakumar, A. R. (2022). Negotiation is among the most crucial tasks of the school principal. It ensures that communication is ever healthy in a school and also leads to an effective school climate. As pointed out in the discussions above, when school climate is positive and communication is flowing, this will have a positive influence upon the results. Negotiation skills have the propensity to transform low performing schools. Adam

(2013) reports on one study on school climate, argues that school climate is associated with improving or decreasing pupil achievement. Furthermore, she contends that improving school climate helps schools and can turn around low performing schools. Conscientious district officials will always empower their principals with skills of being able to avert conflicts. School principals will only have the mediation and negotiation skills highlighted in this paper if they get the necessary professional development. There are many authors who have shown the need for continuous professional development of school principals (Bush 2007; Mathibe 2007; Msila 2009). The Zenex/ACE Research and longitudinal study showed that school principals in South Africa lack certain skills necessary or are not exposed to pertinent aspects related to their jobs. These include;

- Mentoring;
- Networking;
- Training in leadership/management;
- Lack of parental and community involvement; and Understanding change dynamics (Bush et

al. 2009) Furthermore, the Zenex/ACE Research cited above illustrated that school principals in many South African schools need to be supported as they try to build effective schools. Negotiation and mediation skills usually do not form part of training. Many in-service training short courses and programmes merely mention Conflict Management. However, this is usually treated in a mundane fashion and not regarded as a specialist area. Moreover, it is frequently not taught by conflict management specialists. Given the rife conflict in South African schools today, it will help immensely to have school managers who have the capacity to bring forth social justice leadership in schools by (among others) being able to be useful negotiators. School principals should always see the bigger picture of change management and pupil success. On one

hand, they should never suppress conflict for it is healthy for any organisation. (Shandru mariyadas., & Saravanakumar, A. R. (2022). On the other hand, students should keep learning about the development of excellent schools that make appropriate use of disputes. The role of principal will soon resemble any other career. If administrators are to run successful schools in the century we are entering, they will have to meet additional standards. If school administrators lack certain competencies, they will not be change agents and agents of change. Furthermore, a good school principal views confrontations as chances to address reform efforts rather than something to be suppressed. A capable leader will be able to handle disagreements that develop in the classroom. Effective school leaders will always require two things in order for their institution to achieve positive outcomes. These are teacher commitment and teacher cooperation. An effective negotiator will develop these. As evident in the above discussion, a principal who is an adept negotiator will build healthy communication in her school.

CONCLUSION

It may be said that good schools have competent negotiators in charge. Effective communication is mostly hampered by conflicts in schools. Conflicts that are not resolved result in this inefficient communication. Only if school administrators receive the required professional development will they have the mediation and negotiating abilities described in this report. However, savvy bargainers will utilise their skills to restore positive school climates. Effective conflict management skills are needed to maintain functional classrooms.

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