

Why does conflict arise in organizations assignment

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Why does conflict arise in organizations, and how it can be managed

ABSTRACT This essay seeks to illustrate how organizational conflict cannot be avoided. It will demonstrate the various ways in which conflict may arise within organizations and classify them into a range of groups. There will be a thorough analysis to show if conflict is positive or negative towards the growth of an organization. Findings of the previous will then lead to different mechanisms that can be used when managing conflict to ensure positive outcomes in an organization.

The aforementioned will be supported by relevant theories, which will assist in reinforcing the validity of this essay. **INTRODUCTION** In this era of rapid development organizations are formed as a social entity to foster an environment of financial, economic and social growth. Organizations can range from large governmental bodies to small business. Organizations have evolved through different stages, from its birth to maturity. During these stages organizations tend to be adversely affected by crisis of leadership, autonomy, control and bureaucracy.

Consequently these crises make conflict unavoidable. Additionally, an organization may be exemplified where two or more individual establish a relationship in order to accomplish and acquire a desired goal. There are various schools of thought as it pertains to conflict including the Traditional View, Human Relations View and the Interactionist View. More so conflict exists at different levels namely Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Intergroup. However there may be some techniques available to manage conflict like Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration, Conciliation and Consultancy.

The following paragraphs will further explain the scopes of conflict and how it can be managed. CONFLICT It is a process that begins when one part perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first part cares about. [1] An organization is a social arrangement which pursues collective goals, which controls its own performance, and which has a boundary separating it from its environment. [2] Schools of thoughts with regards to conflict: The Traditional View:

This view was prevalent in the the 1930's and 40's where it was conceived that the existence of conflict can only be harmful to the growth of an organization. Therefore in that era conflict should have been avoided, this resulted in less focus to research on the causes of conflict. The Human Relations View: The human relations position pioneered that conflict was inevitable in all groups and organizations. It could never be eliminated and it also sometimes proves to be beneficial to a group's performance. This was dominant in the late 40's and mid 70's. The Interactionist View:

This view encourages the existence of conflict at an ongoing minimum level, enough to keep the group viable, critical and creative. After looking at the above views it will not be feasible to say that conflict is good or bad. It can only be analyzed as bad or good based on the type of conflict. (The schools of thoughts were taken from " Stephen Robbins, Organizational Behaviour, 10th ed. 2003") Functional: Interactionist view does not see all conflict as good but those conflicts that supports the goals and improves performance is called functional conflict or constructive conflict.

Dysfunctional: On the other hand conflict that is dysfunctional relates to the conflict that promotes alienation, inefficiency and generally has adverse effects on productivity. To know if a conflict is either functional or dysfunctional, the types must be known. Types of Conflict Task Conflict- this relates to the content and goals of the task that is to be performed, Relationship Conflict- this focus on interpersonal relationships, and Process Conflict- this relates to how the task gets done. Studies show that Relationship conflict most of the times turns out to be dysfunctional.

Task, relationship or process can be perpetrated in the following ways

Intrapersonal Conflict occurs within us: when we are at odds with ourselves, when we are torn between choices we need to make, when we are frustrated with our goals or accomplishments. Conflict within us very often leads to conflict with others. Interpersonal Conflict occurs between two or more individuals. We might get into a heated debate in a meeting, get in an argument with a coworker, or have a bad encounter with our boss. This is the type of conflict we are most concerned with in this workshop, although our discussion has bearing on the other types.

Intergroup Conflict occurs between groups: nations, gangs, work areas, etc. For example, your department at work might have an 'us vs. them' attitude about some other department. Intra/ Interpersonal and Intergroup was taken from a Business Management skills article from Dave Neal found on <http://www.scarecrowworkshops.com/b-conflict-management.html> The Process of Conflict diagram will help illustrate why conflict arise in

organizations, this was taken from Stephen Robbins, Organizational Behaviour, 10th ed. 2003 [pic]

Stage 1 shows some of the conditions that has the capacity to develop conflict A break down in communication is significant in contributing to conflict . The true sense of communication is for the receiving party to understand what the sender is communicating in order to attain the right feedback. The bureaucratic nature of an organization facilitate the process of unsuccessful communication. This is so as information passed on to subordinates may be prone to deterioration. This may be so as the subordinate or receiver may not attach the urgency of the message that the sender intended.

As such, this reluctance may cause the final message or information to be significantly ambiguous, which would result in conflict. Additionally, another source of conflict is structural factors as it pertains to size, Staff Heterogeneity, Participation, Line-Staff distinction, Reward Systems, Resource Interdependence and Power. In terms of size an organization tend to operate more efficiently and with less conflict when it is small. The manager has more direct influence in the company in terms of supervision and the overseeing of delegated tasks.

However where the company grows in size the reins of control are strained. There may now be increased specialization and bureaucracy. Consequently there may be increased opportunity to for misconception of information and hence conflict. For example, an interview was done at a renowned company, WASA in Trinidad and Tobago. The manager of the Construction Services

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Department North is responsible for various pipe laying projects therefore it is mandatory for him to retrieve materials for the various projects.

The retrieval of these materials does not lie in his hands, thoroughly, but this function is mainly dependent on the Manager of Corporate Services-Supplies to source the right provider of the materials. This process of sourcing these materials may be long at times therefore putting the pipe laying projects sometimes on long delays. Consequently there is the possibility of having conflict between these two managers but note carefully that the structure of certain procedures within the organization is the main cause for the conflict.

The issue of staff heterogeneity appears to have an adverse effect as it pertains to conflict. There are many issues which may arise due to differences in staff. For instance the junior staff in a company may feel that the senior staff may be too inflexible. They generally wield more power in organizations and junior staff may be subjected to their redundancy and myopic work approach. Thus conflict may tend to arise. Moreso, Participation, in terms of decision making, is a source for conflict. A subordinate may need to be able to express their opinions. Where employees are given a forum to express their decision making opinions it may be noted that conflict is more likely to occur. According to Robbins, an atmosphere of conflict may be created as the employee is unable to prevail with his point of view due to his lack of authority. Furthermore According to Allen 1955, line and staff distinctions may be another cause for conflict. It may be noted that Line units perform tasks that are directly related to the core activities of the organization. However, staff units perform tasks that support the line

function. This definition was taken from the book Organizational Behavior by K.

W. Thomas. This may be exemplified in the aforementioned WASA scenario where a line unit member involved in the installation of pipe was hampered in carrying out his task. This may result in conflict as the staff unit may be removed and not place as much emphasis on the centralized operations of the company as a line member. It may be also noted that conflict may arise in terms of reward systems. This refers to the fact that one party may receive a reward at the expense of the other. As such conflict would tend to arise. and that i Personal Variables, this is basically personality differences.

An important factor is found in stage 2 due to the fact that the antecedents of conflict must be perceived or felt. This is so because all the possibilities in stage 1 could occur but the feelings associated with stage 2 may not necessarily transpire. Further observation of the above diagram with regards to stage 3, which are techniques to handle conflict can also encourage conflict, for instance competing (this speaks for itself) and also avoiding due to the fact that the matter is never resolved leaving the parties unsatisfied and also no growth was made towards achieving the organizations' goals.

In Addition stage 4 can also promote conflict depending on what happened in the previous stage. If the conflict handling techniques (stage3) was destructive then behaviours (stage 4) may be verbal attacks, threats and ultimatums, aggressive physical attacks or overt efforts to terminate the other party. Therefore it can be analyzed that stage 3 can also initiate more

conflict. There are other major fields of study within organizational behaviour that can be a recipe for conflict. Some of these are as follows.

Job Satisfaction- Job satisfaction is an integral aspect in organizational conflict. The employee needs to feel truly a part of the company and that his contribution is instrumental to the company's progress. He must also feel challenged by his work load and not bogged down by mundane and alienating tasks. **Personalities and emotions-** (express on this factor and mention the following in the right context) there is the Myers- Briggs Type Indicator (a test of 100 questions that asks people how they react to a certain situation and then this break down into sixteen personality types. 3] **Leadership skills-** this is where studies were done analyzing the type of employees to see what type of leadership skill will be best suited in order to facilitate an ambiance of little conflict/ functional conflict thus enhancing the organization's performance. Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory reiterate this. In other terms if a manager does not have the right type of leadership skills to suit his staff conflict can occur. **Organizational Change-** if change is not accepted this can cause conflict especially if this change affects the culture of an organization.

For example, a technology change may cause conflict if workers perceive they are not ready to handle it. (use other examples) **Techniques to Manage Conflict** Conflict may be managed If conflicts results in destructive outcomes then it must be managed. The various ways of managing conflict are **Negotiation-** this is a process in which two or more parties exchange goods or services and attempt to agree on the exchange rate for them. [4]

Mediator- A neutral third party who facilitates a negotiated solution by using reasoning, persuasion, and suggestions for alternatives.

Arbitrator- this involves a third party to a negotiation who has the authority to dictate an agreement. Conciliator- A trusted third party who provides an informal communication link between the negotiator and the opponent.

Consultant- an impartial third party, skilled in conflict management, who attempts to facilitate creative problem solving through communication and analysis. The definitions of the former four was taken from Organizational Behaviour, Stephen Robbins, 2003.

Also the positive ways of handling conflict (stage3 of the diagram)

Collaborate, Compromise and Accommodate (expand on these points) Other ways are Superordinate goals; this is creating a shared goal that cannot be attained without the working together of the conflicting groups. Smoothing- de-emphasizing on differences while looking at the common interest.

Behavioural Change techniques can be used to alter personality. Structural Change Techniques can be used to avoid interactions between the conflicting groups Conclusion In conclusion conflict in an organization is inevitable.

In essence, in the 1930's and 40's the Traditional View enveloped that all conflict as destructive and hence should be avoided at all cost. Additionally conflict is unavoidable in all organizations and it can never be eliminated. It has been proposed that conflict may also be advantageous to a group's performance. The aforementioned denoted the Human Relations View which was prevalent among the late 1940's and mid 1970's. Moreover, the

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interactionist view states that a minimal level of conflict is necessary for the stimulation of creativity.

Furthermore conflict can operate on various levels namely Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Intergroup. It is caused mainly through communication, structural and personal behaviour factors. Communication factors pertain to the distortion of information along the communication line. Structural factors that lead to conflict may include size, staff heterogeneity, participation, line staff distinctions, Reward systems, Resource Interdependence and Power.

Bibliography The following was taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict> and can be redone from an organizational perspective

Conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people, which is sometimes characterized by physical violence. Military conflict between states may constitute war. [edit] Definitions In political terms, " conflict" refers to an ongoing state of hostility between two or more groups of people. Conflict as taught for graduate and professional work in conflict resolution commonly has the definition: " when two or more parties, with perceived incompatible goals, seek to undermine each other's goal-seeking capability".

One should not confuse the distinction between the presence and absence of conflict with the difference between competition and co-operation. In competitive situations, the two or more parties each have mutually inconsistent goals, so that when either party tries to reach their goal it will undermine the attempts of the other to reach theirs. Therefore, competitive situations will by their nature cause conflict. However, conflict can also occur

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in cooperative situations, in which two or more parties have consistent goals, because the manner in which one party tries to reach their goal can still undermine the other.

A clash of interests, values, actions or directions often sparks a conflict.

Conflicts refer to the existence of that clash. Psychologically, a conflict exists when the reduction of one motivating stimulus involves an increase in another, so that a new adjustment is demanded. The word is applicable from the instant that the clash occurs. Even when we say that there is a potential conflict we are implying that there is already a conflict of direction even though a clash may not yet have occurred. [edit] Types and Modes of Conflict

A conceptual conflict can escalate into a verbal exchange and/or result in fighting. Conflict can exist at a variety of levels of analysis: ??? intrapersonal conflict (though this usually just gets delegated out to psychology) ??? interpersonal conflict ??? emotional conflict ??? group conflict ??? organizational conflict ??? community conflict ??? intra-state conflict (for example: civil wars, election campaigns) ??? international conflict ??? environmental resources conflict ??? intersocietal conflict ??? intra-societal conflict ??? ideological conflict ??? diplomatic conflict ??? economic conflict ??? military conflict religious-based conflict (for example: Center For Reduction of Religious-Based Conflict) Conflicts in these levels may appear “nested” in conflicts residing at larger levels of analysis. For example, conflict within a work team may play out the dynamics of a broader conflict in the organization as a whole. (See Marie Dugan’s article on Nested Conflict. John

Paul Lederach has also written on this.) Theorists have claimed that parties can conceptualise responses to conflict according to a two-dimensional scheme; concern for one's own outcomes and concern for the outcomes of the other party.

This scheme leads to the following hypotheses: ??? High concern for both one's own and the other party's outcomes leads to attempts to find mutually beneficial solutions. ??? High concern for one's own outcomes only leads to attempts to "win" the conflict. ??? High concern for the other party's outcomes only leads to allowing the other to "win" the conflict. ??? No concern for either side's outcomes leads to attempts to avoid the conflict. In Western society, practitioners usually suggest that attempts to find mutually beneficial solutions lead to the most satisfactory outcomes, but this may not hold true for many Asian societies.

Several theorists detect successive phases in the development of conflicts. Often a group finds itself in conflict over facts, goals, methods or values. It is critical that it properly identify the type of conflict it is experiencing if it hopes to manage the conflict through to resolution. For example, a group will often treat an assumption as a fact. The more difficult type of conflict is when values are the root cause. It is more likely that a conflict over facts, or assumptions, will be resolved than one over values. It is extremely difficult to "prove" that a value is "right" or "correct".

In some instances, a group will benefit from the use of a facilitator or process consultant to help identify the specific type of conflict. Practitioners of nonviolence have developed many practices to solve social and political

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conflicts without resorting to violence or coercion. [edit] Examples ???

Approach-avoidance conflict is an example of intrapersonal conflict. ??? The Vietnam Conflict is commonly regarded as a war. ??? The Arab-Israeli conflict forms a historic and ongoing conflict between Israel and Arab interests. See also Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland furnishes an example of another notable historic conflict. For information on the conflict, see the Troubles, Bloody Sunday (Northern Ireland 1972), the 1974 Dublin and Monaghan Bombings and the 1998 Omagh bombing. ??? Many conflicts have a supposedly racial or ethnic basis. This would include such conflicts as the Bosnian-Croatian conflict (see Kosovo), the conflict in Rwanda. ??? Class conflict forms an important topic in much Marxist thought. ??? Another type of conflict exists between governments and guerrilla groups or groups engaged in asymmetric warfare. = [edit] Causes of Conflict Structural Factors (How the company is set up) ??? Specialization (The experts in fields) ??? Interdependence (A company as a whole can't operate w/o other departments) ??? Common Resources (Sharing the same secretary) ??? Goal Differences (One person wants production to rise and others want communication to rise) ??? Authority Relationships (The boss and employees beneath him/her) ??? Status Inconsistencies ??? Jurisdictional Ambiguities (Who can discipline who) Personal Factors ??? Skills and Abilities ??? Personalities ??? Perception Values and Ethics ??? Emotions ??? Communication barriers ??? Cultural Differences " Conflict is an emotionally defined and driven," and " does not exist in the absence of emotion. " There are many components to the emotions that are intertwined with conflict. There is a behavioral,

physiological, cognitive component. ??? Behavioral- The way emotional experience gets expressed which can be verbal or non-verbal and intentional or un-intentional. ??? Physiological- The bodily experience of emotion. The way emotions make us feel in comparison to our identity. Cognitive- The idea that we “ assess or appraise” an event to reveal its relevancy to ourselves. These three components collectively advise that “ the meanings of emotional experience and expression are determined by cultural values, beliefs, and practices. ” ??? Cultural values- culture tells people who are a part of it, “ Which emotions ought to be expressed in particular situations” and “ what emotions are to be felt. ” ??? Physical- This escalation results from “ anger or frustration. ” ??? Verbal- This escalation results from “ negative perceptions of the annoyer’s character. There are several principles of conflict and emotion. ??? 1. Conflict is emotionally Defined-conflict involves emotion because something “ triggers” it. The conflict is with the parties involved and how they decide to resolve it “ Events that trigger conflict are events that elicit emotion. ” ??? 2. Conflict is emotionally Valenced- Emotion levels during conflict can be intense or less intense. The “ intensity” levels “ may be indicative of the importance and meaning of the conflict issues for each” party. ??? 3. Conflict Invokes a Moral Stance- When an event occurs it can be interpreted as moral or immoral.

The judging of this morality “ Influences one’s orientation to the conflict, relationship to the parties involved, and the conflict issues”. ??? 4. Conflict is Identity based- Emotions and Identity are a part of conflict. When a person knows there values, beliefs, and morals they are able to determine whether the conflict is personal, relevant, and moral. “ Identity related conflicts are

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potentially more destructive. " ??? 5. Conflict is Relational- " conflict is relational in the sense that emotional communication conveys relational definitions that impact conflict. " " Key relational elements are power and social status. Emotions are acceptable in the workplace as long as they can be controlled and utilized for productive organizational outcomes. -

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Antecedent Conditions Communication Structure Personal Variables
 Perceived Conflict Felt Conflict Conflict Handling Intentions Competing
 Collaborating Compromising Avoiding Accommodating Overt Conflict Party's
 Behaviour Other's Reaction Increased Group Performance Decreased Group
 Performance Stage 1 Potential Opposition or Incompatibility Stage 2
 Cognition and Personalization Stage 3 Intentions Stage 4 Behaviour Stage 5
 Outcomes