

Conflict Resolution Case Study
Student's Name
Institutional Affiliation

Abstract

This paper studies a case conflict scenario.

Mr. Kiernan is a fifth year math teacher who has been at Poe Middle School for five years. He was just asked to join the School Study Team as a regular member. Other members on the team include Mr. Barnaby, an English teacher; Ms. Chamley, a counselor; Mr. Carson, a special education teacher; Ms. Amity, a social studies teacher; and Ms. Claire, the assistant principal.

At the first School Study Team meeting, a new science teacher, Mr. Jones, came in to discuss his difficulties with a particular special education student. Mr. Jones is struggling to engage the student in class on a daily basis, both academically and behaviorally.

In further discussion, Mr. Kiernan was impressed to see Mr. Carson guide the team through comprehensive problem solving steps. Everyone participated in the discussion and brainstormed ideas except Ms. Claire. It seemed that when it came time to evaluate the suggestions, Ms. Claire found numerous reasons why each would not work. She specifically cited legal implications and time constraints. Mr. Kiernan offered ways to mitigate these concerns, but Ms. Claire simply said, "No." Mr. Kiernan was somewhat surprised to hear the others then agree with Ms. Claire, except for Mr. Jones who said nothing. Ms. Claire then referred back to one of her original ideas and the others enthusiastically agreed that it would be a good starting point. Mr. Kiernan tried once again suggesting another option, finding a way to incorporate both suggestions, but again Ms. Claire vetoed the idea. Mr. Jones seemed to tacitly accept the idea, but left without much enthusiasm.

Conflict Resolution Case Study

Conflict management styles are learned better when applied in practice. Within the framework of this paper, one will discuss the case study and the conflict management styles that have been employed by the key characters. Apart from that, it will evaluate the case dynamics as well as the solutions and the strategies for resolving the interpersonal conflicts, described in the case study. The final recommendations regarding a possible strategy will be offered as well.

The interpersonal conflict, which is presented in this case, relates to the dispute that has occurred in the process of searching for the decision of a problem. Mr. Jones has initiated the discussion of one of the cases that relates to a special needs pupil. The participants of the meeting obviously had different opinions regarding the situation and aimed to elaborate on them during the meeting. Thus, a direct conflict occurred between Mr. Kierman and Mrs. Claire in regards to the final solution in the case study.

Firstly, several characters have been involved in the case and all of them have played different roles. There exist five conflict management styles such as avoiding, compromising, collaborating, competitive and accommodating. Obviously, Mr. Jones chose the avoiding style since he had not tried to take part in conflict management and refrained from the discussion of possible alternatives. At the same time, it seems that in the end, he decided to use accommodating approach, while Mr. Carson accepted the role of the neutral facilitator in the

negotiations process as he had actually orchestrated the meeting. As Muller (2009) asserts, neutral facilitators help to guide the conflict management process and reach a compromise that would satisfy all the parties to the conflict. Mr. Kierman, in his turn, chose both collaborating and compromising approaches. At first, he participated in the discussions regarding the solution, trying to accumulate as many alternatives as possible. Then, he tried employing a compromising approach, when he attempted to combine both solutions offered at the meeting. The rest of the educators obviously employed avoiding conflict management style, as they did not actively participate in the discussions of the final decision (Ferguson, 2006).

The problem solving that has been involved in this case provides for several stages. At the first one, Mrs. Claire offered one of the original ideas to accept as the solution for the case. Next, Mr. Kiernan intervened, offering other alternatives and suggesting the compromising option that could satisfy all the involved members of the meeting. Then, Mrs. Claire vetoed the decision again, demonstrating competing conflict resolution style as she had confronted Mr. Kiernan. Consequently, the solution process obviously was suspended since the ideas of Mr. Kiernan had been vetoed whereas the idea of Mrs. Claire had not been supported. To be precise, it was tacitly accepted by Mr. Jones who had initially showed no enthusiasm to it. It should be noted that problem solving in this case was not conventional as the participants of the meeting did not go through all the stages, including the analysis of the problem, the evaluation of the solution, its implementation, and so on. The goals have not been set as well. Therefore, it can be inferred that not all conflict solution stages have been presented in this case and that there is still some room for searching a solution. Consequently, further strategies and initiatives regarding it can be offered.

Considering the case in question, one should say that all the parties involved in the conflict should realize the significance of the issue in question and reach some decision. Nevertheless, due to the conflict that had occurred between the participants of the meeting, the problem-solving process was been postponed. The next step that should be taken in this case is the reconciliation of the members. The strategies that could be employed to reach this goal include mediation and compromising. As Nowell and Salem (2007) note, "*mediation* is a form of assisted dispute resolution in which participants come together to resolve their differences with the aid of a neutral third party." Moreover, Nowell and Salem (2007) state that the overview of the literature on the topic proves that mediation enhances positive working relations as well as discourages future conflicts. In other words, mediation is beneficial in terms of the solution and prevention of various conflicts since it provides such an elaboration of the solution that can be satisfying for all and that does not require one of the parties to choose the option that does not meet their expectations fully. Considering the subject matter that has been brought for a review for the meeting, the participants should definitely involve an independent mediator, preferably with the understanding of the school internal processes as well as the peculiarities of special education (Curseu, 2011). Mr. Carson has obviously failed to play the role of an independent mediator in this case, and this factor proves once more that the person from the outside is needed in order to resolve the conflict. Moreover, the participants of the meeting might also initiate the participation of an independent special education expert in their discussion since this individual would be able to provide an expert opinion in regards to the issues under debate as well as suggestions regarding the final solution in the case.

Furthermore, in this case, a compromise is another strategy for the conflict solution. Compromise is usually reached in the course of deliberations when the participants discuss various alternatives and choose the one that satisfies the interests of both sides or all the

members involved (Altmäe & Turk, 2009). A compromise strategy is less preferred than mediation since in such cases, the parties should abandon some of their interests to reach an acceptable solution, whereas in mediation, the solution accepted by the parties usually corresponds to their intentions and wishes. Nevertheless, both options are applicable, and they are actually employed in the school environment (Nowell & Salem, 2007). The evaluation of the strategies that are offered as the solution alternatives in this case leads to a solution that it is better to choose mediation with the participation of independent experts in special education who will judge both parties and explain to them the advantage and disadvantages of the offered decision. More than that, this option is more advantageous in terms of the costs and efforts involved into the dispute resolution.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that the interpersonal conflict that has occurred in this case involves the educators, all of whom employed various conflict management styles ranging from the avoiding to the compromising one. More to say, one should not forget that all existing conflict resolution styles and roles have been played by the key characters in this case study. Thus, it is rather insightful for the understanding of the issues related to the conflict management. At the same time, the problem-solving process involved not all of the usual stages. The strategies, which can be offered for the solution of the conflict, involve reaching a compromise or mediation. It is obvious that mediation should be preferred instead of compromise since it will ensure a better quality of the final decision made as well as contribute to the processing and facilitation of conflict resolution.

References

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