

The Effect of Conflict Resolution Strategies of the Primary School Principals on the Motivation of the Teachers (District Of Gebze Sample)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 10.10.2012

Received in revised form

05.11.2012

Accepted 27.11.2012

Available online

15.12.2012

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in order to determine the effect of the third party roles which are used for the solutions of conflicts by the principles of the primary schools on the performance of the teachers. Data collected from 47 principals and 256 teachers working in 15 primary schools in the district of Gebze, Kocaeli were used in this study. The findings of the research depict that while the school principals mostly hold the roles of mediator and facilitator, they are likely to avoid the roles of reconciler by force and laissez-faire (negligent). Role of the reconstructionist is also partly used by the principals.

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Keywords:

Conflict, third party role, principals

Introduction

Conflict is one of those elements that we come across frequently in daily life. It is much more probable to encounter conflict in places where human beings interact intensively such as educational institutions. This study was conducted in order to determine the effect of the third party roles used for the solutions of conflicts by the principles of the primary schools on the performance of the teachers.

Data collected from 47 principals and 256 teachers working in 15 primary schools in the district of Gebze, Kocaeli were used in this study.

The findings of this research depict that while the school principals mostly hold the roles of mediator and facilitator, they are likely to avoid the roles of reconciler by force and negligent. Role of reconstruction is also partly used by the principals.

As it occurs in every organization conflicts can be seen in schools as well. Organizational conflict can be defined as the disagreement of the goals, objectives and values of individuals with the other individuals or groups (Henry, 2009:16). There might be many reasons for the conflicts in schools. These reasons can be listed as such: the individual differences such as age, language, religion, ethnics (Cunliffe, 2008:99), different majors or educational level; administrative procedures such as injustice in the schedules, assigning specific people to the duties with extra charge, inequity in taking time off from work, unfair distributions of the classes or duties among teachers, problems about clarification and formation of the goals, roles and responsibilities (Cunliffe, 2008:99), uneasiness of the staff who are accustomed to conventional styles after hiring recently educated staff with updated methods (Erdoğan, 2008:202), not being able to reach personnel in a specific time as a result of limited communication stream and likewise inadequate communication between the principals and staff (Erdoğan, 2008:203) ill-defined expectations (Kırçan, 2009; Aydın, 2007), a feeling of insecurity of the employees due to frequent and close supervision and hence perceiving every

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development as a danger (Erdoğan, 2008:204); or physical issues such as the size of the school, limited resources, initiatives in using resources of the school (Kirel, 2004: 143; Hiriyyappa 2009:191).

There are three main approaches in conflict. These approaches are traditional approach which claims that all conflict structures are destructive and the main role of the principal is to get rid of any kind of conflict (Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1947); the second one is behavioral approach which maintains the idea that conflict has to be admitted since it cannot be abolished, moreover, it positively affects the organizational performance, and focuses on finding out methods in order to manage and dissolve conflict for organizational efficacy (Parsons, 1994:26); and the last one that is interactive approach which somehow accepts behavioral approach but also supports conflict as it has the point of view that a harmonic, peaceful, calm and cooperative group may be stable, uninterested and irresponsible to the necessity of change and renewal (Robbins, 2003:165; Erdoğan, 2008; Kirel, 2004; Aydın, 2007; Tanrıverdi, 2008; Robbins, 2003; Kondalkar, 2007). The most significant advantage of conflict is to help in choosing a stronger solution, to get employees to increase sensibility and motivation against the problem; to facilitate so as to get them to know themselves, learn how to manage some individual conflicts and broaden their aspects about the matter (Başaran, 1996:40).

Although the efficacy of an organization, of groups and of individual jobs depends on the management of interpersonal conflict and moreover the conflict provides a lot of advantages both for the individual and for the organization, inefficient management of the conflict might cause negative conditions such as an increase in stress level of the both sides and misuse of the capacity and energy (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003:741; Deniz and Çolak, 2008:312; Tjosvold, Law and Sun 2006:231; Desi, 1965:37-38).

The most common third-party role in literature can be listed as mediator, reconciler by force, reconstructionist, laissez-faire and facilitator (Kozan and Ergin, 1999; Lewicki and Sheppard, 1985; Kozan et al, 2007; Bazerman and Lewicki, 1985; Arnold, 2007; Putnam, 1994). In their study Karambayya and Brett (1989) used reconciler by force role instead of the role of a judge by stating that in administrative conflict solutions the role of a judge wouldn't be appropriate.

Mediator. is the most common third-party role. The mediator both behaves neutrally and is directly interested in the conflict matter and works for both sides to get them to reach a solution (Karip, 2010:141, Purdy, 2000:322-323).

Stroh et al. (2002:139) also claimed that the neutral third-party role doesn't have the authority to urge a solution for conflicting sides, on the contrary, the mediator helps both sides to find their own solution. Putnam (1994:24) defines this role as "organizational ombudsman".

Reconciler by force. This role forces conflicting parties to end the conflict independent from the subject, the content and the parties, no matter which one is right and which is wrong, of the disagreement. In this role the third party's attention is neither the parties nor their benefits (Karip, 2010:142-143). When Karambayya and Brett (1989) followed the conflict management processes of the managers who under took this role for their study on third party role, they observed that they enforce the rules in a tough way and prevent the parties from debating each other.

Reconstructionist. These managers use their organizational authority in order to change risky relationships and responsibilities (Karambayya, Brett and Lytle 1992:427, Kozan and İlter 1994:456).

Laissez-faire. This role, which means "let them do", clearly defines the behavior of a manager who would not get involved in the dispute and leave the disputants on their own. In legal settings, or even in the case of the ombudsman, the *laissez-faire* role is highly unlikely once the third party is involved in a dispute. A manager's decision not to get involved in subordinates' conflicts may imply that the conflict does not call for intervention or that it can also be avoided by the disputants (Kozan and İlter 1994:457).

Facilitator. This role can be described as asking questions, listening to views of the parties, gathering both parties to find a common solution by making the sides share their thoughts and helping them create their own solutions (Kozan and İlter 1994:460).

Their formal organizational authority, expertise, and interpersonal skills make managers logical third parties to whom disputants can turn when they cannot handle a dispute themselves (Karambayya and Brett, 1989:687; Kozan and İlter, 1994:453) and managers are usually demanded to solve conflicts even if they are not demanded. Managers use some strategies mentioned above upon knowledge or in a traditional way; moreover, these strategies have positive or negative effects on teachers. With this study, it is tried to find out which strategies are mostly used by the managers and the effects of them on teachers.

Problem Sentence

What are the conflict resolution strategies of the school principals as third-parties in the primary schools in Gebze District in 2010 – 2011 academic year and are there any effects of these strategies on the performance of the teachers?

Sub Problems

1. What is the level of the third-party roles in conflict resolution according to the views of the principals and the teachers?
2. Are there any significant relations between the teacher motivation and the conflict resolution strategies used by the principals?

Method

This study has relational screening model. In this research, the relationship between the third-party roles and the performance of the teacher in resolving conflicts was examined. The universe of the research is constituted by the school principals and teachers in primary schools in Kocaeli province Gebze district in 2010 – 2011 academic year. In this study, “the third-party role scale” which was developed by Selim and İltter (2004) was used to find out the conflict resolution strategies of the school principals.

Findings

Table 1. The opinions of the principals and teachers about the third-party role of the principals

Dimensions	Administrator				Teacher			
	N	\bar{X}	ss	V	N	\bar{X}	ss	V
Mediator	45	3,89	0,69	17,74	214	3,69	0,71	19,24
Reconciler by force	45	2,32	0,61	26,29	214	2,62	0,79	30,15
Reconstructionist	45	2,98	0,54	18,12	214	2,99	0,7	23,41
Laissez-faire	45	2,4	0,73	30,42	214	2,7	0,76	28,15
Facilitator	45	3,86	0,69	17,88	214	3,52	0,9	25,57

According to the opinions of the principals and teachers, while mediator ($\bar{X} = 3,89$) and facilitator ($\bar{X} = 3,86$) roles are the mostly used third-party roles and reconciler by force ($\bar{X} = 2,32$) is the least used third-party role by the principals. On the other hand, laissez-faire role has a high value that is more than expected from a principal. The coefficients of variation regarding the expansion of opinions show that while the opinions of principals on mediator, reconstructionist and facilitator roles are the same ($V < 25$), laissez-faire and reconciler by force roles are not ($V > 25$). The opinions of teachers, except mediator and reconstructions roles ($V > 25$), are different. This can be interpreted as the principals use different strategies in different schools.

Table 2. The differences between opinions of the on the third-party roles principals

Roles	Position	N	\bar{X}	sd	S.E.of \bar{X}	F	t	df	P
Mediator	Principal	45	31,11	5,49	0,82	0,83	1,74	257	0,08
	Teacher	214	29,50	5,72	0,39				
Reconciler by force	Principal	45	11,62	3,05	0,46	3,26	-2,34	257	0,02
	Teacher	214	13,08	3,94	0,27				
Reconstructionist	Principal	45	17,82	3,24	0,48	2,60	-0,22	257	0,83
	Teacher	214	17,97	4,19	0,29				
Laissez-faire	Principal	45	12,00	3,64	0,54	0,00	-2,42	257	0,02
	Teacher	214	13,49	3,78	0,26				
Facilitator	Principal	45	11,56	2,06	0,31	6,85	2,30	257	0,01
	Teacher	214	10,57	2,69	0,18				

A significant difference was found out between the opinions of the principals and teachers in terms of reconciler by force, laissez-faire and facilitator roles relating to the third-party role of the principals in conflict resolution ($p < .05$). Average of the opinions shows that compared with the principals teachers believed more intensely that principals adopt the roles of reconciler by force and laissez-faire roles more frequently than the facilitator role.

Table 3. The third-party role of the principals and the motivation of the teachers

Roles	Motivation	
	r	P
Mediator	,258**	0,00
Procedural Marshall	-,831**	0,00
Restructurer	-,224**	0,00
Laissez-faire	-,510**	0,00
Facilitator	,200**	0,00

According to the opinions of the principals and the teachers, while a negative significant relation was found out between reconciler by force, reconstructionist and laissez-faire roles and teacher motivation, a positive significant relation was found out between mediator and facilitator roles and teacher motivation. This can imply that when the principals adopt mediator and facilitator roles in conflict resolution, motivation of the teacher increases. However, when they adopt reconciler by force, reconstructionist and laissez-faire roles, the motivation can be affected negatively.

Results and Discussion

As a third-party, to resolve a conflict school principals mostly adopt facilitator and mediator roles, but they prefer reconciler by force and laissez-faire roles less frequently. This finding resembles the findings of Kozan and İltar (1994) and Karambayya and Brett (1989). In some situations, the principals also use reconciler by force, laissez-faire and reconstructionist roles, however, this affects the motivation of the teacher negatively. In the case of a conflict although teachers expect the principals adopt a mediator and/or a facilitator role; they do not want not only to be reconciled by force also new regulations or being ignored by the principal.

If the principals become third-parties of any conflicts in their schools, they'd better be mediators, settle down the conflicts amicably or let the parties solve their problems by themselves after listening to both sides. Since these roles do not affect teacher motivation negatively, this will contribute both the workforce in the schools to be used efficiently and effectively and the job satisfaction of the teachers to be increased.

In this respect, the principals in the universe of this study must be warned about the importance of their roles in conflict resolution. The principals should be informed about dissolving the negative effects of the conflicts and getting them to contribute the organization; hence conflicts must be managed in a way that contributes to increase the efficacy and effectiveness of the schools.

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