

BEULAH HEIGHTS UNIVERSITY

Conflict Mediation

A Paper Submitted to
Professor Dr. Anyango Reggy Gregory

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of

DM 904 - Leadership and Peacemaking: Conflict and Reconciliation

by

Kleber M. Gomes

Atlanta, Georgia

April 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 3

The Mediation..... 4

The Mediator..... 5

Mediation Practice..... 6

Conflict Mediation Case..... 7

Conclusion..... 11

Bibliography..... 12

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and discuss the mediation and its importance on conflict resolution. Further, this paper is also based on an analysis of a conflict mediation case in a Multicultural Church in the United States of America.

There is a tendency to react wrongly to conflicts, avoiding them by pretending that they do not exist, or responding angrily. Thus, the dispute is not resolved and can become worse. Further, many conflicts occur due to communication breakdown. It is necessary to seek a constructive response or reaction to a conflict. Instead of reacting to disagreements in a confused, defensive, or angry way, it is possible to respond to conflict positively and constructively.¹

Conflict, in a positive way, is an opportunity to grow, and it is necessary for a positive and constructive view among all parts involved. A positive response and more useful reaction to conflict is to collaborate.² In this way, when two individuals engage in truly cooperative strategies, they develop better communication and understanding. Further, that positive response to the conflict brings “more creative solutions, increased productivity, and a healthier relationship.”³ The mediation in a dispute is essential to an agreement between the parties. Mediation is a facilitation form of conflict negotiation in which the parties, of their own free will, accept that an impartial third party helps them to resolve the situation. That third party, the mediator, has the central role to facilitate the communication of participants

¹ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 15.

² David B. Griffith, and Cliff B. Goodwin, *The Conflict Survival Kit: Tools for Resolving Conflict at Work* (Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2012), 5.

³ *Ibid.*

using various techniques, and also allow the parties to create their own ideas and strategies to resolve the issues.

The Mediation

According to Barash, conflicts can be solved in several ways: “by violence, by the issues changing over time, or by mutual agreement.”⁴ The best way to resolve a conflict is through mutual agreement, and the mediation is essential to achieve it. Mediation aims to resolve disputes or prevent conflict through dialogue among the parties involved and the mediator, a neutral and impartial person. The role of the mediator is to collaborate constructively and positively. The positive vision of the conflict and mutual cooperation are ways to reach the objective of a conflict resolution, which is to solve it or to avoid negative consequences. Conflict is a disagreement between two or more people that generally lead to fights or even wars.

Further, dispute implicates “competition between two or more individuals or groups who have incompatible interests and who are interdependent.”⁵ Generally, the tendency often is negatively responded faced with conflict. Griffith lists four ways that are not constructive: Avoidance, Accommodation, Competition, and Compromise. However, the conflict “can serve as a positive indicator, signaling opportunities for change and growth.”⁶

Hence, the positive response and more constructive reaction to a conflict are to collaborate.⁷ In this way, when two individuals engage in truly cooperative strategies, they

⁴ David P. Barash, and Charles P. Webel, *Peace and Conflict Studies*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002), 26.

⁵ Griffith, *The Conflict Survival Kit*, 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

develop better communication and understanding. Further, that positive response to the conflict brings “more creative solutions, increased productivity, and a healthier relationship.”⁸ Collaboration builds confidence and solves problems. Therefore, conflict is neither good nor bad. The response to a conflict can be good or bad. When the reaction or response to conflict is constructive, it becomes a favorable circumstance for change and growth.⁹ Hence, the mediator role in a conflict is essential to lead to a proper and helpful understanding.

The Mediator

Two types of mediators can help in different conflict situations in an organization. The first one, the internal mediators, have the advantage to know about some concerns and views into the organization. They are also aware of the organization as a whole, including the issues and parties. However, that knowledge may also become a disadvantage when that closeness with the problems can become bias in a mediation. The external mediator can be useful in some disputes being beneficial to remove such concerns. The use of external mediators is the better choice for disputes concerning high-level executives. “Further, as someone employed within the institution, the potential for undue influence on the mediator by someone higher in authority.”¹⁰ In that situations and others, when the issues are highly sensitive and confidential, an external mediator is preferable than an internal mediator. Griffith argues that “external mediators may be preferable for disputes involving high-level

⁸ Griffith, *The Conflict Survival Kit*, 5.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 230.

executives on matters for which there is great concern about confidentiality or for which undue pressure could be placed on an internal mediator to address.”¹¹

There is also the concerning the relationship to the parties. The relationship between mediator with one party can become a concern due to a possible bias in a dispute. According to Griffith, “there is an expectation that mediators ensure that they are not biased or prejudiced toward any party in the mediation or have any biases or prejudices concerning the issues involved that would unduly sway them in their facilitation of the mediation.”¹² Therefore, one of the principal characteristics of a mediator is impartiality.

Mediation Practice

There are three principal approaches that mediators can embrace for their mediation practice. The first one is Evaluative Mediation, in which the mediator promotes and facilitates the communication between the parties. In that scenario, the mediator leaves the decision making to the parties. The second approach is the Facilitative Mediation. This approach is concentrated on the support of the communication process and decision making between the parties. The third and more constructive approach is Transformative. The transformative approach facilitates mediation. However, that is also focused on the good relationship between the parties.¹³

In most situations, the facilitative approach is the best process choice, due to promoting opportunities to the employees in dispute to be heard and to reach an agreement of business goals. The internal mediators on those situations, due to their easy accessibility to

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Griffith, *The Conflict Survival Kit*, 231.

¹³ Ibid., 232.

people involved, “they may have more opportunities to help parties work through a deeper relationship issues.”¹⁴ Hence, “mediation is a powerful tool to empower individuals to resolve disputes on their own terms.”¹⁵ The good mediator does not participate in the decision-making process. Instead, he or she leads the parties to their own decision-making.

The process of mediating “involves uncovering the underlying issues driving the dispute and bringing the parties to increasing levels of understanding and agreement.” According to Griffitt, the mediation process “is like sifting ever-finer grains through a sieve.”¹⁶ The mediation being productive, “the parties will achieve a realistic, durable agreement addressing all issues.”¹⁷

Conflict Mediation Case

One example of a Conflict Mediation Case occurred on a Multicultural Church, specifically a Brazilian Christian Church on the United States of America. The dispute arose between the Pastor and the leadership team of that community. The principal issue was about cultural differences. The cultural difference is one of the barriers in the churches and also in other organizations today. On the other hand, that can be an opportunity for people to serve others, and to learn more about different cultures.

In that context, it is vital to learn more about the foreign mission. That can be an opportunity for churches to create and prepare groups for the international mission. According to Sande, “conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, to serve others, and to

¹⁴ Ibid., 233.

¹⁵ Griffitt, *The Conflict Survival Kit*, 233.

¹⁶ Ibid., 239.

¹⁷ Ibid.

grow to be like Christ.”¹⁸ When we choose to respond to a conflict in a constructive way, we act as a peacemaker, as Christ did. The peacemaking responses “are commanded by God, empowered by the gospel, and directed toward finding just and mutually agreeable solutions to conflict.”¹⁹

The definition of “Foreign mission” in the dictionary is “a religious mission conducted outside the nation or national territory from which it is commissioned.”²⁰ However, it can also be understood, such as mini nations inside a nation. That is the case of the United States of America, with several mini nations inside a nation. Therefore, it is possible to make a foreign mission even if you do not cross the border. For example, there are many Brazilian, Hispanic, Korean, and several other ethnical churches or missions inside the USA. The preparation and knowledge of culture, in every aspect of it, is essential to who will make a foreign mission. Moreau states that “today’s missionary cannot afford to move to a new culture without some type of pre-field training.”²¹

Nevertheless, despite the “nations inside a nation” have the same language of those living in their homeland, their culture is a little different and, sometimes, very different. In a Brazilian community in the United States, some years ago, a pastor, was sent by a traditional Organization Church of Brazil to take care of that community, as a missionary pastor.

¹⁸ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 40.

¹⁹ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 25.

²⁰ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed April 10, 2020, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/foreign%20mission>.

²¹ A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group), Kindle Location 4582.

However, due to a lack of adequate preparation to join a new culture, that pastor had many conflicts with the attendants and the leadership of the Brazilian community.

The conflict mediation was carried out by the leader of the district in a specific region of which the Brazilian community was part. The parties involved were the pastor by one side and the leadership team of the Brazilian community by the other side. In that situation, the mediation was done by an external mediator because he was not a member of the Brazilian community. In that circumstance, he was in disadvantage of understand the situation due to the difficulty of distinguishing a different culture with its specific and unique issues. On the other hand, as an external mediator, he did not have the problem of being biased in any direction. The mediation started with the mediator listening to the parties. Each one of the parties was heard separately, with the agreement of all participants to how it would be conducted. The “A” and “B” parties telling their stories is the first step of the mediation process. In that process, it is essential communication skills, principally active listening.

Active listening is one of those communication competences, which the leader pays close attention to what the person is saying. Listening involves more than hear, and it is necessary to feel and understand the essence of what the person is saying.²² Ken argues that “one of the most challenging ways to serve others in the midst of conflict is to help them see where they have been wrong and need to change.”²³ The only way in that situation is to develop trust with them through active listening. Thus, after the first process of listening to the parties, the mediator led those separated meetings to uncover interests. The next step was

²² Paulette Rao, MCC, BCC, *Transformational Coaching, Shifting Mindsets for Sustainable Change* (Brooklyn: True North Resources LLC, 2013), 97.

²³ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 143.

to hold a meeting with everyone to discuss together the issue of that conflict. The process of the mediation followed the levels of framing the issue, generate, and evaluate options. Hence, after those mediation meetings were concluded and accepted by both parties, the principal issue was the cultural difference, and that was a mistake by who sent him without a previous preparation to a new context. There are cultural differences between Brazilian living in Brazil and living in the USA. The culture is different because it is mixed with the American culture, and even with other cultures. The decision-making to the issue was suggested by the participants and accepted by everyone, including the pastor. The conclusion of it was that the pastor should participate in a training to mission in multicultural churches in the educational institution of this denomination. Thus, it was confirmed commitments and agreements by all parties involved.

Conclusion

Mediation aims to resolve disputes or prevent conflict through dialogue between the parties. The mediator is a neutral and impartial person that conducts a mediation. Thus, mediation is essential to achieve a conflict resolution. The role of the mediator is to collaborate constructively and positively. The mediator facilitates the communication between the parties in conflict, help them reach their own resolution.

That study also presented an example of mediation due to conflicts that emerged from cultural differences. Cultural differences are barriers that can arise in disputes. However, it can also become opportunity to the transformation of people, to serve others, and to learn more about different cultures. An external mediator conducted the mediation. The mediator, although he did not know about that specific culture, his conduction was essential to that conflict resolution. The mediator applied effective techniques that help the parties to seek their own decision to the conflict. The principal method in conflict mediation is related to communication skills. Active Listening is a useful tool that helps to build trust between the parties and the mediator. The mutual trust is essential to develop confidence. Ken concludes that "with God's help, you can learn to speak the truth in love by saying only what will build others up, by listening responsibly to what others say, and by using principles of wisdom."²⁴ The practice of those skills is vital to develop or reestablish trust between the mediator and the parties in conflicts.

²⁴ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 183.

Bibliography

Barash, David P. and Webel, Charles P., *Peace and Conflict Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002.

Griffith, David B. and Goodwin, Cliff B., *The Conflict Survival Kit: Tools for Resolving Conflict at Work*. Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2012.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed April 10, 2020,
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/foreign%20mission>.

Moreau, A. Scott, Corwin, Gary R., and McGee, Gary B., *Introducing World Missions*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2015.

Rao, Paulette, MCC, and BCC, *Transformational Coaching, Shifting Mindsets for Sustainable Change*. Brooklyn: True North Resources LLC, 2013.

Sande, Ken, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.