

# Leader Negotiating Style in Learning Organizations:

## A Qualitative Study of Teacher Education Institutes in Malaysia

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**Abstract**— The aim of this paper is to show some findings on the leader negotiating styles among institutional managers in Malaysia. The managers selected were from Malaysia's Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs). TEIs are under the jurisdiction of Malaysia's Ministry of Education. Some years ago, these institutes were called teacher colleges (TCs), and trained teachers were conferred certificates and diplomas in education. Generally these teachers were placed in primary schools and lower secondary schools. Graduate teachers from universities would be placed in upper secondary schools. In 2005, the Malaysian government changed the basis of teaching training. They wanted all teachers for primary and secondary schools to be graduated. Then, TEIs are regarded as learning organizations. Under the TEI scheme, potential school teachers were awarded undergraduate degrees in education. They then can be placed either in primary or secondary schools just as their counterparts from public universities. The leaders in TEIs were expected to negotiate a lot in dealing with their student teachers, other managers within TEIs, other managers from Malaysia's Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. Qualitative interviews were conducted among 32 managers in TEI head office and the managers in its campuses around Malaysia. It was found that the dominant negotiating style among the respondents was the accommodating style.

**Keywords**— negotiation, leader negotiating style, learning organization

### I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict and negotiation are two different concepts. But a conflict exists within every negotiation in organizations [1]. Sometimes a conflict management is also referred to as negotiations [1]. These skills are critical for these organizational leaders and managers to get things done. The negotiating skills are required by leaders in business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as in governmental organizations.

The paper aims to determine the dominant negotiating styles used by the leaders in the upgraded Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs), entities which are operating under Malaysia's Ministry of Education. In Malaysia, it was observed that few studies had focused on organizational issues with few exceptions [2, 3].

### II. BACKGROUND OF MALAYSIA'S TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES (TEIS)

On 13th July, 2005, the Malaysian Cabinet approved that 27 Teacher Colleges (TCs) be upgraded into Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) which can confer the Bachelor in Education degrees ([www.moe.gov.my/ipgm](http://www.moe.gov.my/ipgm)). The TEI is almost like a mini university. With effect from 10th June 2009, the Teacher Education Institutes head office began its operations in the city of Cyberjaya. The other 27 campuses are located throughout Malaysia. The head office houses the offices of the Rector, the Deputy Director and other administrative functional heads. They monitor the running of the 27 campuses. Each campus has its own administrative staff headed by a Campus Director and assisted by a Deputy Director and other heads of departments.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the researcher would review the concepts of conflict, negotiation, leader, leader negotiating style and learning organization.

#### A. Conflict and Conflict Management Styles

Scholars have defined a conflict in various ways. It can be defined as a disagreement between individuals [4]. It can vary from moderate disagreement to a win-lose, emotion-packed confrontation. It can also be defined as a struggle or a contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals [5].

Conflict management styles are ways used by organizational leaders to manage conflicts between them and other people. Scholars in the field of conflict have generally agreed that Pruitt and Rubin's model is the reflection of the generic practice of conflict management styles in organizations (see Figure 1)[6]. The model is known as the Dual Concerns Model.

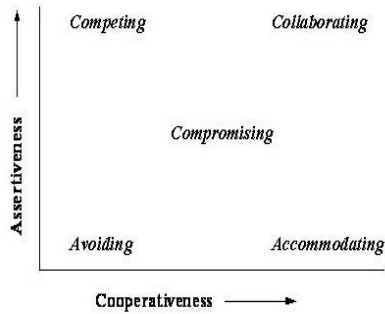


Fig. 1. The Dual Concerns Model

The model balances the human needs from two dimensions: the assertiveness needs and the cooperative needs. It has five conflict management styles: 1) competing; 2) collaborating; 3) compromising; 4) avoiding and 5) accommodating [6].

### B. Negotiation

The negotiation also has been defined by scholars in various ways. But Lewicki et al. had been credited for defining negotiation which included conflict. They defined negotiation as the productive process of overcoming conflict between two individuals or groups so as to achieve their goals [1].

As such, the negotiating styles are seen as the same as the conflict management styles: 1) competing; 2) collaborating; 3) compromising; 4) avoiding and 5) accommodating.

### C. Leader and Leader Negotiating Style

A leader can be defined as the head of a department or an organization [7]. He or she supervises other subordinates which are put under their charge.

Leader negotiating styles comprise the five negotiating styles: 1) competing; 2) collaborating; 3) compromising; 4) avoiding and 5) accommodating as espoused by the Dual Concerns Model.

### D. Leader Negotiating Styles and Learning Organizations

Organizational leaders need to convince or persuade their stakeholders in order for their organizations to achieve their goals. However, if an organization subscribes to the concept of a learning organization, the work of the leader will be more complex, as he or she needs to convince the stakeholders on a continuous basis so that the performance of a learning organization would improve over time.

The scholar who was credited with the honor of introducing the concept to the management literature is Senge from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the USA [8]. He defined learning organizations as "...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together".

In addition, a learning organization is said to have five main features or characteristics;

- systems thinking,
- personal mastery,
- mental models,
- shared vision
- and team learning

Even though other scholars have developed other models of learning organization, Senge's model is usually used as the base of discussion. In this paper, the TEIs was viewed as the learning organizations for meeting Senge's definition of what a learning organization should be.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

The study had chosen the qualitative method with in-depth interviews to undertake the investigation and it was deemed as appropriate to achieve its objectives [11, 12, 13]. The interview protocol was adapted from the survey instrument created by Thomas and Kilmann in 1974 [9]. The unit of analysis was individual. The target was the managers of Malaysia's Teacher Education Institutes. There were approximately 100 managers in the said institution (population) and the sample was 30 managers.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that in terms of gender, 78 percent of respondents were males (25) whereas 22 percent were females (7). In terms of qualifications, 53 percent of the respondents had masters' degrees (17), 25 percent had bachelors' degrees (8) while 22 percent had PhD degrees (7). In terms of generation category, 84 percent of the respondents were Baby Boomers (27) while 16 percent were Gen X (5). According to Stein, those born from early 1950s to 1960 were considered Baby Boomers while those born from 1961 to 1980 were Gen X [10]. The respondents were observed to be senior in terms of age group. In terms of office locations, 81 percent of the respondents were from their head office in Cyberjaya (26) while 19 percent were from their branch campuses around Malaysia (6). Lastly in terms of position, 72 percent of the respondents were Deputy Directors of the branch campuses (23), 13 percent were the Chief Assistant Directors in head office (4), 9 percent were Head of Departments in the branch campuses, 3 percent was a Deputy Director at head office (1) and 3 percent was an Assistant Director at head office (1).

TABLE I. INTERVIEWEES' PROFILES

No.	Item	Percentage
1	Gender	
	Male = 25	78.0
	Female = 7	22.0
	Total = 32	100.0
2	Qualification	
	PhD = 7	22.0
	Masters = 17	53.0
	Bachelors = 8	25.0
	Total = 32	100.0

No.	Item	Percentage
3	Generation	
	Boomer= 27	84.0
	Gen X = 5	16.0
	Total = 32	100.0
4	Office Location	
	HQ = 26	81.0
	Campus= 6	19.0
	Total = 32	100.0
5	Position*	
	DD HQ = 1	3.0
	DD Cps = 23	72.0
	HOD Cps = 3	9.0
	CAD HQ = 4	13.0
	AD HQ = 1	3.0
	Total = 32	100.0

Legend: \* DD = Deputy Director; Cps = Campus; HOD = Head of Department; CAD = Chief Assistant Director; AD = Assistant Director

Next we look at the summary of the interview data (Table 2). Table 2 shows the categorization of the leader negotiating styles of the respondents.

TABLE II. CATEGORIZATION OF THE RESPONDENTS LEADER NEGOTIATION STYLES

No.	Leader Negotiating Style	Number of Respondents
1	Accommodating Style	9
2	Avoiding Style	6
3	Collaborating Style	6
4	Competing Style	6
5	Compromising	5
	Total	32

From the interview data, it seems that the difference between the respondents' replies on their leader negotiating style was not much especially in relation to the avoiding style, collaborating style, competing style and the compromising style. But in this study's interview group, 28 percent (9) of the interviewees were categorized as having accommodating style. According to Che Rose, the tendency is that generally accommodating style is widely practiced in several contexts in organizations in Malaysia [2].

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

From this study, it was seen that the Dual Concerns Model as espoused by Pruitt and Rubin and was also widely used by Lewick et al. and it was a useful device to track the dominant

leader negotiating styles of managers in Malaysian organizations [6,1]. The limitation of this study was that it depended only on the qualitative interview data. While this method had its strengths, a follow up survey could enhance the findings of this study in future,

## Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge the help and permission of the 27 Malaysia's Teacher Education Institutes who participated in this study during the Senior Management training program conducted by the authors.

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