

Management Case Study

(Personality, Leadership & Organizational Behaviour)

Bula-Namaste – Who is at Fault?

Dr. Shashidhar Venkatesh Murthy

A/Prof. & Head of Pathology
School of Medicine, James Cook University
QLD 4811.

Signature of Preceptor:

Signature of Candidate:

Dr. Christopher Kennedy.

Dr. Shashidhar Venkatesh Murthy

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Abstract

Human behaviour is complex, sensitive and dynamic variant which has tremendous affect on organizational viability, productivity and growth. Using an interesting case from my experience as acting head of a medical School, of solving a relationship problem between staff, I have presented my experience of applying knowledge of organizational behaviour and leadership skills and discussed issues and new theories related to human relationship and organizational behaviour. Being a Pathologist, I have used pathology approach to solving problems. I have presented and discussed the aetiology, pathogenesis, morphology, signs and symptoms of human relationship problems in organizations and its management. This case study illustrates complexities of organizational behaviour and how I handled a difficult situation in line with modern understanding of human interactions in a professional organisation and learnt that while human relationship problems provide hardest challenges, also provides opportunities to utilize dynamics of human relationships to build strong, productive and effective organizations.

Key Words:

human relationship; Organizational behaviour; personal Conflicts; conflict resolution; leadership; problem solving;

Bula – Namaste... *Who is at fault?*

Introduction & Background:

At the end of First week in my new role as Acting Head of School, I was relaxing & enjoying the serene view of outside nature through the window of my room and celebrating my successful first week, when phone rang.. call from the Dean.. appeared quite disturbed.

It is frustrating.... "People have lost concern for the school" Please handle this situation..... I am sending you files.....!"

Although trained as a Pathologist, being an academic head of department has given me experience of management, administration & leadership. Although challenging I have enjoyed & learnt many tricks and tips of good leadership. In this experience, most common and difficult task is that of managing personal conflicts... a nightmare at any time for any leader....!

Background:

The countryside of the Fiji Islands is a gift of natural beauty and bounty, unfortunately it is balanced by racial tension between Indigenous Fijians and British implanted Indians. "Bula" is the welcome greeting in Fijian and "Namaste" in Indian language commonly used in Fiji; both are major races in multiracial Fiji islands. Although the racial problem started over a generation ago, it has peaked in recent years with social unrest and a series of political and military coups. Like most institutions, The Fiji School of Medicine has a multiracial mix of Indians, Fijians & Other pacific islanders. Government policy to encourage indigenous Fijians to higher education and skilled jobs has fuelled racial tensions even more.

With the first glance through the files, I was warned of an impending nightmare situation. As usual for any one in management position, I had no choice but to accept that challenge and so I sat down to plan my next steps using all my learning and experience on the Friday evening....!

Case Summary:

Staff A was a Fijian female medical scientist working in medical laboratory who had complained to the Dean about unfair treatment by her supervisor, Staff B, an Indian Head of the Medical Laboratory.

I knew Staff A as a skilled & cooperative colleague. She arranged practical sessions for my students quite effectively. She was a quiet person who kept to herself or was not an engaging "peoples" person) person, I never had any problems working with her.

Staff B is Indian, her immediate supervisor & head of medical laboratory. He is competent, hard working and able leader and popular not only among staff but students and senior administration as well. Through his leadership & people skills, he had positively contributed in many administrative positions in the school including chair of Staff association.

Staff A had been working for 3 years. Her file showed several past instances of conflicts with her supervisor and had complained several times before about her being treated unfairly. Similarly supervisor had recorded several written complaints about her being irregular or incorrect.

Her present complaint was more urgent and serious as her supervisor had refused her leave and approval to attend an overseas conference just the week before her proposed travel, giving reasons that it was too late to arrange replacement for her duties (as per rules). She was furious and had written a long complaint letter to the Dean about how she was being unfairly treated and had now decided to take the matter out of the School. The Dean was in a difficult situation as both staffs were important for various reasons and the situation had become critical.

Situation Analysis:

Situation within the organization (Microenvironment):

Both Involved staffs were key persons in running of department & school. Multiracial mix of both staff & students. Indian, Fijian & other pacific Islanders. Everyone conscious of country situation and racial tension. Shortage of staff within the school.

Situation outside the school (Macroenvironment):

Fiji Country with racial tension between Fijians and Indians. Recent political coup has further strained racial relationship among people of Fiji. Political instability. News media in search of racial conflict stories fuelling racial tension.

Who is at fault? What is the cause of this situation?

Problem Analysis:

Although the problem was of personal conflict within medical school, it had major implications - not only with involved staff, but with departmental work, school wide staff morale and even the staff, work and image of the medical school.

I remembered a similar situation discussed by Prof. Brian Bull, Pathologist & Head of Clinical Laboratory at Loma Linda University, California, USA during my fellowship training in Laboratory Management & Quality Control. "Conflict between an English laboratory manager and a Jewish medical scientist staff". The scientist wore his Jewish cap (The Kippah) as a mark of respect to his tradition instead of the laboratory cap which was worn by all other staff. He felt that it did not affect his duty obligations and his supervisor although could not legally object did not like as it was different from others. Every time manager saw his cap it reminded him of "non compliance" of laboratory rule. A constant hidden problem in relationship (emotional bank account discussed in detail later) leading to a very fragile negative relationship. Simple mistakes by of each would be seen exaggerate and create tension. Such fragile relationships could ignite major conflict affecting functioning of whole organization.

The situation in front of me in the Fiji Islands several thousand miles away was a similar problem. Important fact is that in both situations involved staffs were "normal", "competent" individuals of importance to the functioning of organization.

How to solve this problem?

Management Issues: (Handling conflict)

Conflict is an antagonistic interaction in which one person or party attempts to thwart the intentions or goals of another. Conflicts are natural and common in all organizations. (Richard L Daft 2005)

Causes of Conflict

1. Competition for resources: When people compete for scarce resources.
2. Unclear responsibilities & goals : when there is lack of guidelines or good leadership.
3. Differences in personality, beliefs, values & attitudes: Most common and difficult to solve.

Although simple issues bring a conflict to notice, the origin of conflict is multilayered and complex as depicted by multilayered “Conflict Iceberg” by Dave Bamford. In fact he states that there are many more factors that can be added to this iceberg. (Positive Changes Counselling, 2008). Each level of the iceberg represents something that does not appear on the surface, yet adds insight to the nature & origin of conflict. (Cloke & Goldsmith 2005, Resolving Conflict at Work,)



Conflict Iceberg: Dave Bamford Copyright (c) 2008 Positive Changes Counselling (used with permission)

- *Issues*. What issues appear on the surface?
- *Personalities*. Are personality differences contributing to conflict? If so identify them and understand how they operate?
- *Emotions*. What emotions are contributing to the conflict? What is their impact?
- *Interests, needs, desires*. What deep concerns are driving the conflict?
- *Self-perceptions and self-esteem* ? *Is behaviour seen as a contributor?*
- *Hidden expectations?* What are expectations of both parties? ? have they communicated? If not how to communicate or How to clear false expectations?
- *Unresolved issues from the past*. Does this conflict revisit elements from past relationships?

Summary of Problem Analysis: It appeared that both staffs were influenced by the racial atmosphere in the country and possibly minor mistakes of each over the years accumulated and magnified by both had lead to strained relationship leading to present crisis state.

Problem Synthesis:

Understanding the problem is the first & foremost important step in solving the problem. In the present world millions of lives and billions of dollars are being wasted trying to solve problems which have not been understood well.

It is only easy to solve the problem when we understand the problem. Similar to what I teach in Pathology to my students, “Understanding the pathology is vital for successful treatment”. In management, problems are the diseases in organization and I apply my pathology knowledge to problem solving in the same way.

Briefly “Pathology” in medical education is defined as “Scientific Study of Disease” and involves 4 major steps in understanding disease (Vinay Kumar, Robbins & Cotran Pathologic Basis of Disease).

1. Aetiology – The study of cause of the disease
2. Pathogenesis – The mechanism and progression of disease
3. Morphology – Study of tissue changes in disease
4. Clinical Significance – Study of pathological basis of signs & symptoms.

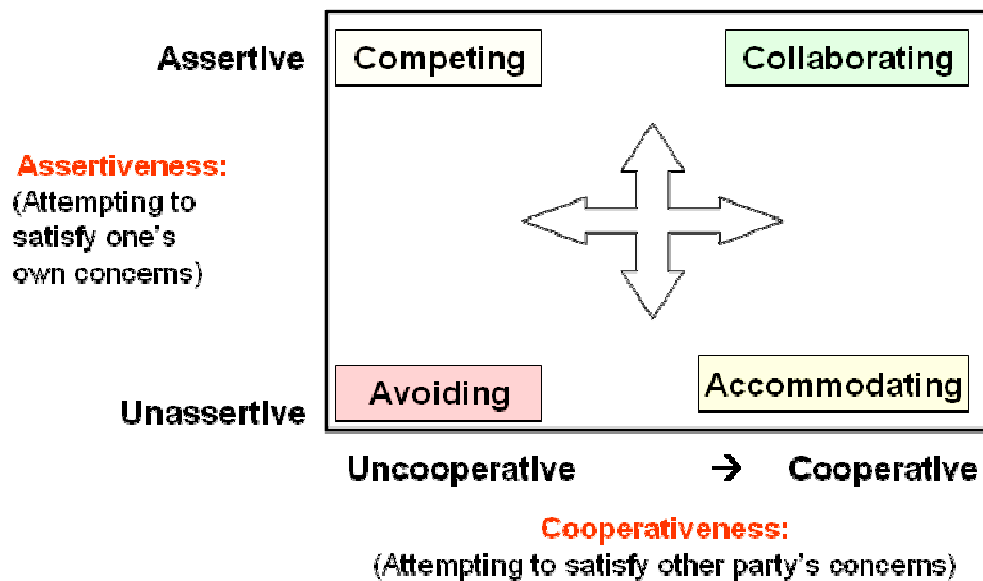
Applying this knowledge into management, I came up with these ideas...

1. Aetiology – study of all causes leading to the problem
2. Pathogenesis – mechanisms & progression from cause to problem situation.
3. Morphology – Situation analysis as a result of problem.
4. Significance – mapping relationships from cause to effect.

However, Brian Tracy has given similar but more detailed tips suitable for managing the organizational problems “Eight steps to problem solving” (Brian Tracy, Management/Leadership Series, Brian Tracy International. <http://www.briantracy.com>)

Leadership Styles to Handle Conflict:

Effective leaders and team members vary in their style of handling conflicts and each style is appropriate in certain situations. (K.W. Thomas 1077) . From a strict power based critical project teams where competing style works best to social or political environments where avoiding type suits better to highly performing organizations where collaborating type of style works best.



MODELS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES TO MANAGE CONFLICT

(Kenneth Thomas, Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Behaviour, Cross Ref in Daft R. L 2005)

Eight steps to problem solving: (Brian Tracy).

1. First, **approach the problem with the expectant attitude** that there is a logical practical solution just waiting to be found. Be relaxed, confident and clear in your mind.
2. Second step, **change your language from negative to positive**. Instead of the word "problem," use the word "situation," Problem is a negative word while situation is a neutral word. "We have an interesting situation", is better than, "We have a problem."
3. The third step in systematic problem-solving is to **define the situation clearly**, in writing. "Exactly what is the situation?" Then ask, "What else is the situation?" Sometimes stating the problem in different words makes it much easier to solve. Fully 50% of situations can be resolved by accurate definition.
4. Step four is to, ask "**What are all the possible causes of this situation?**" Failure to identify the causes or reasons for the situation often causes you to have to solve it again and again. Fully 25% or more of situations can be effectively dealt with by discovering the correct causes.
5. Step five is to ask, "**What are all the possible solutions?**" Write out as many solutions or answers to the situation as possible before moving on. The quantity of possible solutions usually determines the quality of the solution chosen.
6. Step six is to "**Make a clear decision.**" Taking into account all stakeholders, best solution with least damage.
7. Step seven is to "**Assign clear responsibility** for carrying out the decision and then set a deadline for completion and review." Decision without a deadline is just a fruitless discussion.

8. Final step is to **follow-up, monitor the results**, compare with expected results and then generate new solutions and new courses of action.

I started with step one... and two be positive, this is not a problem but an interesting situation...

Then step 3.... What exactly is the problem? - Mistrust between them? Problems in their view of relationship? Staff A, the Scientist had lost trust in her supervisor, Staff B, the supervisor thinks she is unlike others in spite of his flexibility. But the fact is both are reasonably normal people.

Then step four... what are the causes of this situation... the background, race, tension in the country, the way they look, speak different language. But more than these, the suspicion that the “other is not favourable to me” because of his race. The culprit is the suspicion, mistrust. So it is the macro environment affecting the microenvironment of the organization. Multiple complex causes related to changing national environment, Government policy, race, culture & personality.

Here I needed more understanding of organizational behaviours, especially factors affecting modern organizations and the importance of relationships. While searching for answers I came across an excellent reference by Margaret J. Wheatley in her book about Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World (Margaret J. Wheatley).

I have summarised the excerpts from her book given by RL. Daft in his famous text book on leadership “The Leadership Experience” (Richard L. Daft)

Leadership & the new Science: (Margaret J. Wheatley)

Margaret J. Wheatley applies principles of science to organizations. She wrote, “Following principles of science governed by Newtonian physics, traditional organizations were built on assumption of people and resources with straight forward controls operating in orderly hierarchy. But, just as Newton’s law broke down as physics explored ever-smaller elements of matter and ever-wider universe, rigid control-oriented leadership didn’t work in a world of dynamic human relationships, instant information, constant change and global competition. The physical sciences responded to the failure of Newtonian physics with a new paradigm called Quantum mechanics. In organizations and leadership and the new science author explores how leaders are redesigning organizations to survive in a quantum world.

Chaos, Relationships and Fields.

- ***Nothing exists except in relationship to everything else.*** It is not things, but the relationships among them that are the key determinants of a well ordered system we perceive. Order emerges through a web of relationships that make up the whole. Not as a result of controls on individual parts.
- The empty space between things is filled with fields, invisible material that connects things together. ***In organizations, the fields that bind people include vision, shared values, culture and information.***
- Organizations, like open systems, grow and change in reaction to disequilibrium and ***disorder can be a source of new order.***

“Conflicts are inseparable from relationships, a necessary evil in an organization”. Shelton and Darling (Shelton & Darling 2004) suggest conflict is a necessary condition for both individual and organizational progression. They encourage managers to "embrace conflict and use it for continuous transformation." This theoretical perspective is the interactionist approach. This viewpoint espouses not only accepting conflict, but also encouraging it. Theorists are of the opinion that a conflict-free, harmonious, and cooperative organization tends to become stagnant and nonresponsive to market change and advancement. Therefore, it is necessary for managers to interject a minimum level of conflict to maintain an optimal level of organizational performance. For example,

Implications for leadership:

- *Nurture relationships* and the fields between people with a clear vision, statements of values, expressions of caring the sharing of information, and freedom from strict rules and controls.
- *Focus on the whole, not on the parts in isolation.*
- *Reduce boundaries* between departments and organizations to allow new patterns of relationships.
- Become comfortable with uncertainty and recognize that any *solutions are only temporary*, specific to the immediate context and developed through the relationship of people and circumstances.
- Recognize that *healthy growth of people and organizations is found in disequilibrium not in stability.*

Another good resource on this subject is given by Stephen Covey, famous business philosophers of this generation; author of my favourite book “Seven habits of highly effective people” has discussed this aspect of human relationship in a metaphor “*Emotional Bank Account*”.

Emotional Bank Account

Stephen Covey uses the term "emotional bank account" to describe the amount of positive relationship as trust that has been built up in a relationship between people. *Trust is an invisible but critical factor in the survival of a relationship.* It is possible to make deposits (positive trust) or take withdrawals (negative trust) from the account. Stephen Covey describes 6 major ways of making

deposits on the Emotional Bank Account:

1. understanding the individual;
2. attending to little things;
3. keeping commitments;
4. clarifying expectations;
5. showing personal integrity;
6. Apologizing sincerely when you make a "withdrawal".

Withdrawals are taken by many things, including:

1. showing discourtesy;

2. disrespect;
3. overreacting;
4. betraying trust;
5. not honouring commitments;
6. Threatening.

As I looked into their files, I realized that the “emotional bank account” between two staff was overdrawn several times and there was no evidence of any deposits...! a virtual time bomb waiting to explode between them and both were looking for each others mistakes.

Eureka...! Got the 4th step in problem solving.... the exact problem was a “Negative Emotional Balance” between these two staff due to their mutual mistrust.

Now to step 5 - how to solve this problem? The root cause was the macro environment i.e. the political situation, race or their background was not in my control. So I had to concentrate on tweaking the micro-environment...!

Plan of action:

I had a complex situation of personality conflict to solve. Both involved staffs were highly skilled professionals of importance to the organization. The fact was both were “normal” individuals with strong opinions. The problem was their negative “emotional account balance”.

Environment, both micro and macro have a great influence on staff performance. And are the most complex and difficult to control. But as shown by Margaret J. Wheatley, problems can become opportunities in learning organizations where time of turbulence and chaos is an opportunity for change & growth. (Margaret J. Wheatley)

Correcting the negative “emotional account balance” was my first priority in this situation. But the cause of this negative balance was partly due to their own personalities and experiences also strongly influence how they react. The environment in Fiji Islands (or in any other country) does have significant effect on peoples and their relationships. As the country or Macroenvironment issues are not in our control, we need to recognize and understand so that microenvironment is adjusted.

So I determined to tackle the microenvironment, the human relationship problem. I decided, the best approach was to correct their misconception of each other through their own past examples of good actions. Again my leadership skills & learning came in handy, especially utilizing the Jim Collins leadership skills levels.

Leadership skills.

Although the situation was urgent and critical to the Institute, it demanded a democratic leadership as the environment was that of academic skilled professionals having strong opinions and values. This required higher levels of leadership skills, i.e. levels 4 & 5 (Jim Collins)

Briefly, the five levels of leadership discussed by Jim Collins are:

- Level 1. As an individual, the person makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills and good work habits.
- Level 2. As a contributing team member, the person contributes individual capabilities to the achievement of group objectives and works effectively with others in a group setting.
- Level 3. As a manager, the person organizes people and resources towards the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives.
- Level 4. As a leader, the person catalyses commitments to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating high performance standards.
- Level 5. The distinguishing traits are the ability to build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will (Collins 2001).

Level 5 leaders have unselfish ambition foremost for the cause, the organization, the work and not for themselves. They have strong desire to make good on that ambition.

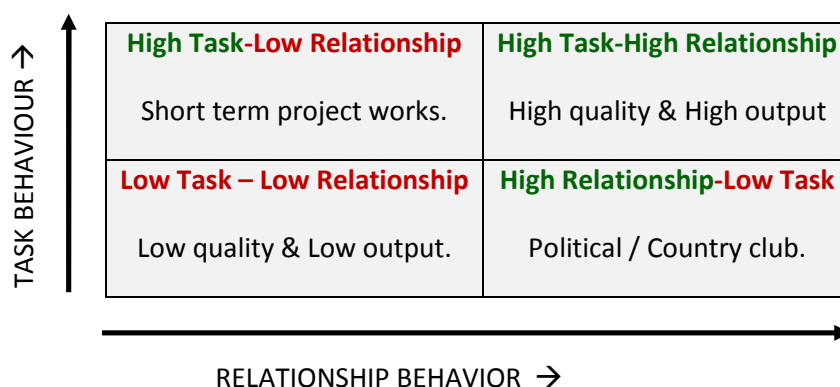
Now to next step 6 making clear decisions to solve the problem. Here some understanding of “Fiedler’s Contingency Model” was essential before I took action.

Fiedler’s Contingency Model:

Essentially Fiedler’s Contingency approach (Fred E. Fiedler, 1954) is a model designed to diagnose whether a leader is task-oriented or relationship oriented and match leader style to the situation.

Fiedler proposed four main leadership styles in terms of their contingency approach to the extent to which the leader’s style is relationship oriented or task-oriented. A relationship oriented leader is concerned with people, establishes mutual trust and respect and listens to employees needs. A task oriented leader is primarily motivated by task efficiency, provides clear directions and sets performance standards.

Figure1 : Fiedler’s Contingency Model: Four Leader Styles.



As my situation was in a skilled professional organization and the situation was that of a human relationship problem affecting work efficiency which required high level Relationship oriented approach with ultimate target of getting people and the organization to its best performance using “High relationship-High Task oriented” leadership strategy. Or according to Kenneth Thomas “Collaborative” style. As both people and task are important in my situation.

Five A's of Conflict Management:

Borisoff and Victor (Borisoff, D., & D.A. Vicotr 1998) identify five steps in the conflict management process they call the "five A's" of conflict management.

ASSESSMENT: Assess the situation, parties involved, collect available data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: In which each party attempts to hear out the other.

ATTITUDE: This step attempts to remove the foundation for pseudo-conflict. Removes the mistrust.

ACTION: Actively implement the chosen conflict resolution mode based on trust.

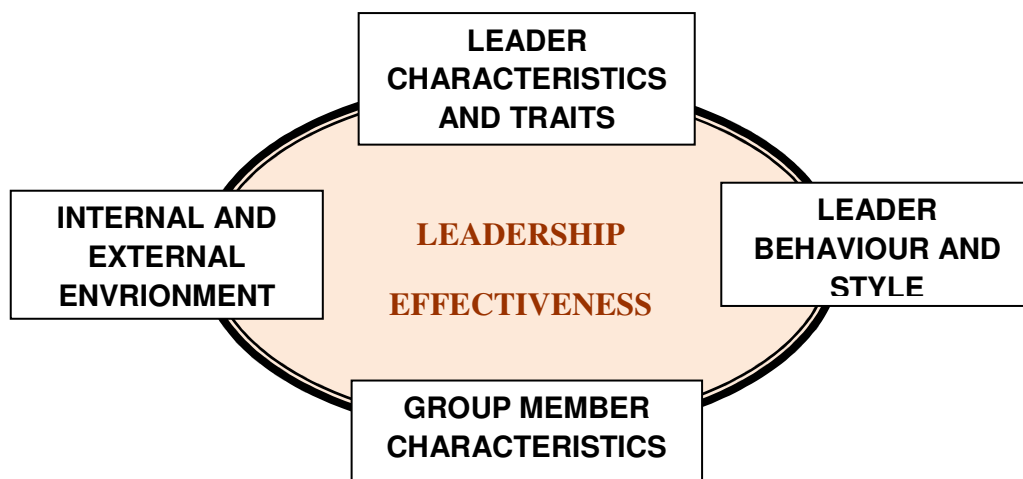
ANALYSIS: Participants decide on what they will do next, summarize and review agreed solution.

Action step 1 - Planning action:

First I had to build relationship with each and then motivate and encourage them through real examples of their past contributions and good actions. I had to convince them that they both were normal good hearted individuals fallen victim to related the adverse environmental situations affecting human relationships in the workplace. This had to be done in a diplomatic way. This required level 5 leadership skill of personal humility and professional will and keeping the interest of all stakeholders at forefront.

However as discussed by Richard L. Daft, leadership alone is not sufficient as there are several factors affecting effectiveness of leadership and level 5 leader has a responsibility of recognizing these factors (Richard L. Daft) represented in Figure 2.

Figure-2: Factors affecting leadership Effectiveness:



Not just my leadership knowledge and skills, my behaviour & style had their impact on the outcome. I had to be diplomatic when I approached them with respect and concern for the organization. Also their (group member) characteristics and our institution environment, and even macro (out of school, country) environment had their influence on the outcome.

Fortunately in my situation the group members were normal, competent mature professionals. Although the external environment was not in our control, we had favourable internal environment which was satisfactory with generally higher staff quality and morale in the school.

Then it was necessary to use step 7 taking action and putting deadlines.

Action step 2 - Implementation:

First I called Staff B, the laboratory manager for an informal discussion over evening tea in my room on Monday. We discussed the case in a friendly manner and I narrated to him the story of a Jewish medical scientist I learned during my fellowship training. It emphasized the fact that such situations were common in every multiracial community and this was not rare.

I appreciated and approved his actions as they were legal and correct. I appreciated his patience with the Staff A, the scientist.

In an inquisitive way, I asked if he had noticed any good side of this scientist. He immediately said she was technically skilled but had a dominant personality which had not impressed him. Then we discussed different behaviour pattern of people and the reasons for being what we are. I also explained my encounters with the scientist as good and cordial and my judgement was that she was skilled and competent.

Then I asked if there was any special help which he had offered her in her and he immediately listed several instances of extra help he had offered her but she never appreciated them. I also accepted his decision not to approve her request for the conference visit as she had not followed the school policy of giving a minimum of 4 weeks advance notice. Then humbly I explained my situation as acting head of school that had the responsibility of solving the situation in the interest of the school and also his responsibility to the school as senior staff, and I left the decision to him.

He was happy to alter his decision for the sake of school, and not because of her behaviour. I promised him that I would talk to her and make sure that she followed the rule and corrected this mistrust situation. My immediate concern was solved....!

Next I called medical scientist separately for a chat in my room and requested her to tell her side of story. She was quite emotionally upset about all the happenings. And as expected she expelled all her anger out of her. Then she calmed down a bit. Emotions are strongest when kept inside; they burn not only the body but the soul slowly and gradually...! The best way was to let them out free. I listened to her sympathetically and calmed her down, told her that I would offer all my help to her, and said that her supervisor had approved her conference visit. She was surprised at my statement. Then I told her that same story of the Jewish scientist and that both were normal individuals, just their relationship was strained due to their biased views. Then I listed a few of the favours given by her supervisor in an effort to improve their relationship and said I am sure you have also done your bit to impress him, however because of your strained relationship you may have failed to notice them.

Finally I explained to her that her personal conflict with supervisor was not sufficient reason to break the school policy and that her supervisor was right in that situation to reject her request, an unlikely

event if they had good relationship. So the major problem was their mistrust and I explained to her several instances, when he was trying to favour her. She accepted that their relationship was based on mistrust so she did not recognize at the time that he had done favour. The good news was that her conference travel had been approved by him, in spite of her applying so late; he has shown goodwill and agreed to make arrangements to cover her duty. She seemed to soften her tone and slowly said, she would also write an apology letter and thanks to him. The nightmare was over finally with a happy ending....! I had identified and treated the cause of problem. The Dean was also surprised but importantly relived of his nightmare.

Action step 3 - Monitor and Review of results:

After two weeks, when she returned from the conference I called both of them to my room to celebrate their positive relationship. Then I explained the theory of “Emotional Bank Account” that it applies not only at work but in all our relationships.

My quotes to both staff on that day were,

1. We spend significant part of our life at work. It is in our hands to make it best or worst....!
2. All people were normal & good hearted. There were no bad people...If you find an exception; they have a strong reason in you. (Just like in this situation, you both had decided that other person was bad....!)
3. Negative emotional bank account is the common cause of relationship problems.

Action step 4 – Follow up (Failure...) :

Having solved the problem, my next task was to monitor the results of this case. I Made reminders in my diary for next 6 months to watch them.

However, 4 months later Staff A resigned and relocated to another country. Although she gave reason of better job & higher salary, probably the conflict was one of the factor influencing her decision. I had failed to resolve the conflict in long term. A year later like many professionals at that time, staff B the laboratory manager also moved to America.

Human behaviour is complex and especially in adults behaviour is resistant to change. Some times two people simply do not get along with one another and will never see eye to eye on any issue when their beliefs, values and attitudes are deep rooted (Richard L. Daft 2007). When conflicts become chronic, recurrent or resistant to manage, effective solution may be to separate affected individuals.

Further plans:

This case was an eye opener to the issues of personality, culture, race and general political climate of the region affecting organizational behaviour. Further plans to prevent conflicts and promote healthy interaction between staff we planned several activities in the school. Few popular ones were as follows.

1. Encourage & foster better relationship among staff: We had non-formal staff meetings, and one popular activity we developed was a staff Walkathon and BBQ party once a month.

2. Encourage people to be effective: Circulated summary of “The seven habits of highly effective people” by Stephen R. Covey (appendix 1) by email to all staff without any mention of case.
3. Need to develop learning organizations: Management & leadership coaching for key senior staff. This was organized by the school through hiring private consulting company later in the year.

Learnings from the Case:

1. Working in teams is a reality in every modern organization. And the most often teams work in cooperation rather than superior to subordinate relationship. Leading such skilled members of cross functional teams is a challenge to leaders because of complex & dynamic adult human relationships.
2. Personal conflicts are complex, dynamic, invisible virtual environment and have great impact on functionality, productivity and organization growth and survival.
3. Empty space between people in an organization that bind people are trust, shared values, culture and information.
4. Conflicts should be viewed as challenges and they are an opportunity for understanding people and bringing change or growth.
5. Traditional organizational rules do not apply to personal relationship problems. Solving conflicts require high order thinking, flexibility, creativity, commitment seen in high level leaders. Level 5 leadership.
6. Improving organizational microenvironment especially relationships have a very positive outcome on productivity and growth.
7. Reducing boundaries between departments and organizations allows growth and new patterns of positive relationships that help organization grow and thrive in a competitive world.
8. “Building positive relationships within organization is the key to successful leadership” Organizing informal meetings “tea party” is one of the cheapest and most effective relationship builders.

What if Conflict was unresolved? (Plan B)

Although the conflict was solved in this case. My experience tells it is not always. As discussed by Richard L. Daft in his book on Leadership Experience chapter 10 Handling team conflict, “Personality conflicts are caused by basic differences in personality, values and attitudes and can be particularly difficult to deal with. Sometimes the only solution is to separate the parties and reassign them to other teams” (Daft R.L. 2005). One reason could be that as adults our values & personality are deep rooted inside us and requires extraordinary effort to change. Although Stephen R. Covey explains in his book 7 habits of highly effective people that people can change. In this case parties decided to separate as both felt change was more difficult.

This case of personality conflict in the Fiji island reflected common issues & problems related to personality and effect of outside environment on the personal interactions within an organization and some insight into understanding this complex process.

What next ?

Organizations survival & success depends on people in the organization. In modern organizations diversity & multicultural workplace is the norm. People bring with them their own personality,

values, beliefs and culture into the team. Understanding & managing this complex & dynamic organizational behaviour is a challenge for management and leadership. One of the organizational aim is to promote tolerance and respect for difference of culture, personality traits, experiences.

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Appendix: 1 –**Summary of Stephen Covey's seven habits of highly effective people****Habit 1 - be proactive**

This is the ability to control one's environment, rather than have it control you, as is so often the case. Self determination, choice, and the power to decide response to stimulus, conditions and circumstances

Habit 2 - begin with the end in mind®

Covey calls this the habit of personal leadership - leading oneself that is, towards what you consider your aims. By developing the habit of concentrating on relevant activities you will build a platform to avoid distractions and become more productive and successful.

Habit 3 - put first things first®

Covey calls this the habit of personal management. This is about organising and implementing activities in line with the aims established in habit 2. Covey says that habit 2 is the first, or mental creation; habit 3 is the second, or physical creation. (See the section on [time management](#).)

Habit 4 - think win-win®

Covey calls this the habit of interpersonal leadership, necessary because achievements are largely dependent on co-operative efforts with others. He says that win-win is based on the assumption that there is plenty for everyone, and that success follows a co-operative approach more naturally than the confrontation of win-or-lose.

Habit 5 - seek first to understand and then to be understood®

One of the great maxims of the modern age. This is Covey's habit of communication, and it's extremely powerful. Covey helps to explain this in his simple analogy 'diagnose before you prescribe'. Simple and effective, and essential for developing and maintaining positive relationships in all aspects of life.

Habit 6 - synergize®

Covey says this is the habit of creative co-operation - the principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, which implicitly lays down the challenge to see the good and potential in the other person's contribution.

Habit 7 - sharpen the saw®

This is the habit of self renewal, says Covey, and it necessarily surrounds all the other habits, enabling and encouraging them to happen and grow. Covey interprets the self into four parts: the spiritual, mental, physical and the social/emotional, which all need feeding and developing.
