

Conflict Management in Universities: Introduction

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Conflict Management

Objectives:

To understand the different types of conflicts in higher education management and manage conflicts in an effective manner.

Expected Outcomes:

At the end of the module, participants will be able:

1. to identify and analyze the different types of conflict in HE.
2. to recognize escalation and required actions for de-escalation of conflicts.
3. to reflect on their conflict handling modes and participate in case consulting.

Definition of Conflict

A conflict is a struggle and a clash of interests, opinions, or even principles. Conflict will always be found in society; as the basis of conflict may vary to be personal, racial, class, caste, political and international. - Wikipedia

How do we feel about conflicts?



Polling - <https://poll-maker.com/QB4HDB5K7>

1. How many conflicts have you encountered in your current workplace?
- 0, 1, 2, 3-5, >5
2. As a leader, have you handled conflict among your staff/students?
YES / NO / Not Sure
3. Have you successfully resolved conflict(s) in your workplace?
YES / NO / Maybe

Three “wise” Monkeys



Why are conflicts in universities so special?

The nature of an organization influences the specific “conflict culture”:

- its subject matter, and its objectives
- the mode of interaction between the people working in and for that organization.

At universities:

- Many and different stakeholders with different interests: ministry, presidents, professors/instructors, students, parents, communities...
- Academic traditions, different disciplines, academic freedom vs. tight regulations or expectations
- Both hierarchical and democratic structures (e.g. deans elected or appointed)

Why are conflicts special in universities?

- Academic leaders: not trained for leading but for science/scholarship in their discipline
- Academics prefer not to sacrifice time which could be spent working academically instead of managing, risk of falling out with the colleagues
- Administration and academia...a cultural clash...

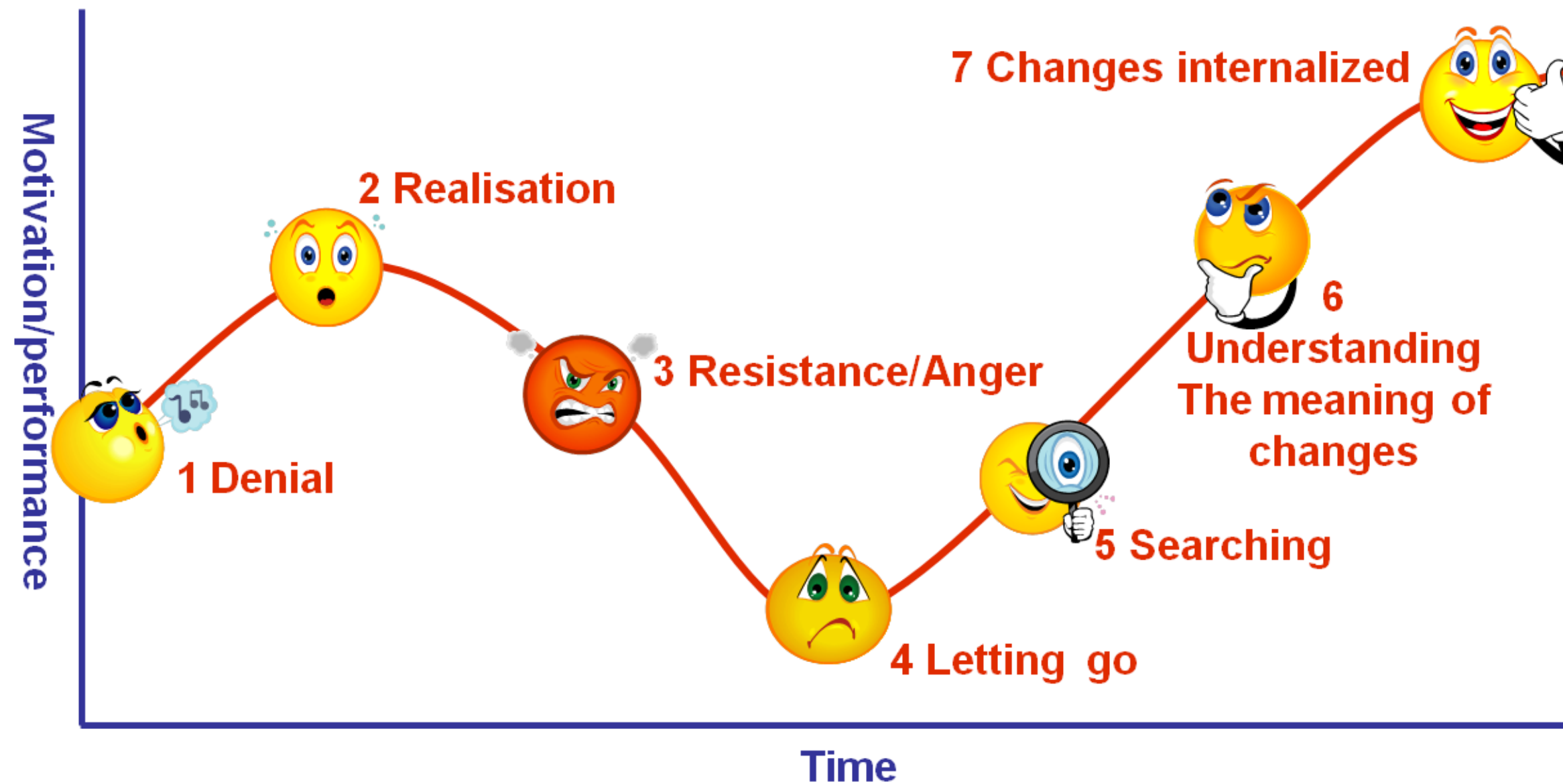
Why analysis and diagnosis of each conflict is essential?

Not every conflict is equal.

Types of conflicts:

- Conflict of interests
 - Conflict of goals
 - Conflict of valuation
 - Conflict of methods
 - Relationship conflicts
 - Conflict of ownership or resources
 - Role conflicts
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- *Latent or cold conflicts*
 - *Open or Conflicts of norms or values*
 - *Structural hot conflicts*
 - *Chronic conflicts*
 - *Institutionalized conflicts*

Do you remember the *Change Curve* ?



Conflicts can be an indicator that change is really happening!

Conflict Diagnosis, cool and rational:

- Who? Who is involved in the conflict?
- What? What is the issue or the topic?
- How? In what kind of manifestation does the conflict appear?
- Why? How has the conflict evolved?
- What has already been done to resolve the conflict?
- Which resources are at hand? Culturally, individually, socially, financially

- Conflict management means handling conflicts, not necessarily solving them.

Different possible outcomes in conflicts:

$A \dots B \longrightarrow$ “Flight”, B leaves the conflict (temporarily)

$A \quad B \times$ “Liquidation”, B is not there any more

$A \begin{array}{l} \text{---} \\ \text{---} \end{array} \rightarrow B$ Suppression, using power

$A \parallel B,$ or $\frac{A}{B}$ Separation, disentanglement

$\begin{array}{c} \text{A} \quad \text{B} \\ \text{---} \end{array} \quad \text{A} + \text{B}$ Cooperation Compromise Consensus

Two questions for your reflection:

1. Can we avoid conflict in our lives?
2. What is the benefit of conflict?

“An open mind is not an empty one.”

Roger Fisher

THANK YOU