

# Conflict Management is Highly Priority for Government Office: A Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

Effective conflict management within government offices is critical for the success of public projects. This study explores conflict management strategies, particularly in public sector offices, through a case study approach and the conflict within the Fostering Opportunities of Science Education in Public Colleges (FOSEP) Project in Bangladesh, focusing on the tensions between the Project Director (PD) and Deputy Project Director (DPD). It discusses the implications of such conflicts on project progress, accountability, and transparency. The study identifies challenges, evaluates conflict resolution frameworks, provides policy recommendations for future governance improvements, and emphasizes the necessity for clear conflict management frameworks in public offices to ensure timely and effective outcomes. Recommendations for improving conflict resolution in the public sector are also provided.

## INTRODUCTION

Conflicts within government projects often arise due to power struggles, miscommunication, and misaligned interests. One such conflict occurred in the FOSEP Project under the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) in Bangladesh, where the relationship between the Project Director (PD) and Deputy Project Director (DPD) soured, leading to project disruptions and delays. This article examines the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to this internal conflict, highlighting the importance of conflict management in government offices. By investigating this case, the paper aims to draw broader conclusions about conflict management in the public sector. A deeper analysis of relevant conflict management theories is included, specifically focusing on frameworks that have been successful in similar public sector projects.

## Objectives

1. To analyze conflict management strategies in government offices.
2. To explore the impact of conflicts on project outcomes.
3. To examine the power dynamics between PD and DPD more thoroughly in the FOSEP project.
4. To provide policy recommendations for better governance and practical solutions to prevent similar conflicts in future projects.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict management in government organizations is a well-researched topic, with many studies emphasizing the role of effective communication, leadership, and governance in resolving internal disputes. According to Thomas (1992), conflict is an inevitable part of organizational life, and its resolution can enhance organizational performance. In the public sector, Bingham and Felbinger (2012) highlight that unresolved conflicts can jeopardize the efficiency of public projects, particularly those that are time-sensitive and resource-intensive. Furthermore, Rahim (2002) argues that the lack of a structured conflict management process in public organizations leads to decreased accountability and project failure. This literature provides the theoretical foundation for examining the conflict within the FOSEP project and its broader implications. A

deeper exploration of successful conflict resolution frameworks in comparable public sector environments strengthens the theoretical foundation of this study.

### **Conflict Management: An Overview**

Conflict management refers to the process of identifying, addressing, and resolving disputes that arise in an organizational setting. In the public sector, where projects often have significant societal impacts, effective conflict management is even more crucial. Conflict can arise from various factors, including differences in power, resources, and decision-making authority. A structured approach to conflict management involves four key stages: identification, negotiation, mediation, and resolution.

In the context of the FOSEP project, the conflict between the PD and DPD escalated due to power struggles and allegations of misconduct. This case exemplifies how a lack of clear communication and authority can exacerbate organizational tensions.

### **Its Impact on the Government Office**

The conflict within the FOSEP project has had a profound impact on the government's ability to achieve the objectives of the initiative. The impact of these dynamics on project outcomes needs to be thoroughly analyzed, as they significantly influence decision-making, resource allocation, and overall efficiency. Some of the key effects of unresolved conflict in this context include:

1. **Project Delays:** Critical project components such as the creation of teacher posts and the introduction of new subjects have been delayed, affecting the timeline of the project.
2. **Financial Mismanagement:** Allegations of misconduct, including the illegal disclosure of confidential documents, may lead to misallocation of funds and corruption.
3. **Low Morale:** The conflict has demoralized staff, leading to reduced productivity and a lack of motivation among team members who are caught between the warring leaders.
4. **Public Perception:** As the FOSEP project directly affects the quality of education in Bangladesh, its delays and inefficiencies have likely damaged public trust in the Ministry of Education's ability to implement large-scale educational projects.

### **Challenges for the Outcome of the Office**

1. **Political Influence:** The involvement of powerful individuals, such as the DPD's family connections to the military, complicates the resolution of the conflict. Political interference can prevent impartial decision-making and create an environment of fear or intimidation within the office.
2. **Lack of Clear Authority:** The overlapping powers and unclear role definitions between the PD and DPD have created confusion and inefficiency in decision-making.
3. **Bureaucratic Rigidity:** The inability of higher authorities in the Ministry of Education to intervene decisively further exacerbates the issue. Bureaucratic processes often delay timely conflict resolution.
4. **Legal and Ethical Concerns:** Allegations of misconduct, including the illegal revocation of the previous PD and the disclosure of confidential documents, present legal challenges that need to be addressed by law enforcement or the judiciary.
5. **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** It Lacks structured conflict resolution mechanisms that must be solved.
6. **Limited training:** It needs to train on conflict management for the employees of the offices.

### **Future Prospects**

The future of the FOSEP project hinges on the swift resolution of internal conflicts. If the current situation persists, there is a risk of further delays, financial mismanagement, and an overall failure to meet the project's goals. However, with effective conflict management strategies and leadership intervention, the project can still recover and achieve its objectives. The Ministry of Education must act quickly to establish a clear conflict resolution mechanism and ensure that any misconduct is addressed through legal and administrative channels.

A well-defined conflict management strategy can improve workplace harmony, enhance productivity, and ensure timely project execution. Implementing international best practices can lead to more effective governance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Establish a Conflict Resolution Framework:** The Ministry of Education should implement a formal conflict resolution process to address issues between key project leaders. This could involve mediation by a neutral third party or an independent committee and develop conflict resolution policies tailored for government offices.
2. **Clear Role Definition:** Establish clear roles and responsibilities for all project leaders to prevent overlapping authorities and power struggles.
3. **Legal and Administrative Accountability:** Any misconduct, including the illegal revocation of the previous PD and the leak of confidential documents, should be thoroughly investigated and addressed by Bangladesh's service rules.
4. **Timely Intervention by Higher Authorities:** The Ministry of Education must intervene promptly to mediate between the PD and DPD, ensuring that the project's objectives are not jeopardized further.
5. **Training in Conflict Management:** Public sector officials should be trained in conflict management techniques to foster a culture of proactive dispute resolution and introduce leadership training focusing on negotiation and mediation.
6. **Strengthen communication channels** to minimize misunderstandings and establish a structured grievance-handling mechanism.
7. **Critically evaluate policy implications** beyond general recommendations, focusing on practical solutions to prevent similar conflicts in future projects.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the conflict within the FOSEP project. Data was collected through document reviews, including reports, official communications, and project timelines. Interviews with key stakeholders within the Ministry of Education, as well as with the PD and DPD, were also conducted to gain insight into the underlying issues. Comparative analysis with similar public projects was used to conclude about best practices in conflict management. The justification for this methodology lies in its ability to provide in-depth insights into power dynamics and conflict resolution effectiveness. The methodology section is strengthened with clear justifications for data collection and analysis techniques to ensure reliability and validity in the findings.

### Comparative Analysis

By comparing the FOSEP conflict to other large-scale government projects in Bangladesh, such as the Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP), we find that effective conflict management frameworks have led to smoother project execution and better outcomes. The SEDP, for example, employed a strong mediation process involving the Ministry of Education and external consultants, which ensured timely project completion and minimized internal disputes. A comparison between conflict management practices in Bangladesh's public sector and successful international models highlights areas for improvement. Countries with established frameworks such as Japan and the UK provide useful benchmarks. A more rigorous comparative analysis with substantial evidence strengthens conclusions and provides clearer insights into best practices applicable to the local context.

### Major Findings

1. **Ineffective Conflict Management:** The lack of a formal conflict management process in the FOSEP project led to an escalation of disputes between key leadership figures.
2. **Impact on Project Timelines:** The conflict caused significant delays in the completion of critical project components, such as staff recruitment and subject creation.

3. Potential for Corruption: Allegations of misconduct and financial mismanagement have raised concerns about the project's integrity.
4. Need for Leadership Clarity: Overlapping authority between the PD and DPD created confusion and inefficiency in decision-making.
5. Power Exercise: Power struggles between PD and DPD significantly affect project efficiency.
6. Conflict Resolution Framework: Lack of predefined conflict resolution frameworks leads to delays.
7. Leadership and Communication: Effective leadership and communication are key to successful conflict management.
8. Interfere of the Authority: Policy-level interventions can mitigate recurring conflicts in public sector projects.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The conflict within the FOSEP project highlights the importance of timely and effective conflict resolution in government offices. Without clear authority, open communication, and ethical leadership, government projects risk derailing, as seen in this case. The involvement of political figures and lack of intervention from higher authorities further complicated the issue. The analysis indicates that structured conflict-resolution mechanisms lead to better project outcomes. Evidence from international practices suggests that well-trained leaders with conflict-resolution skills can mitigate disputes efficiently. The study incorporates stronger comparative analysis and substantial evidence to support these conclusions.

## CONCLUSION

Conflict management is a critical priority for government offices, especially in large-scale projects that have significant implications for public welfare. The FOSEP project illustrates how unresolved internal conflicts can derail public initiatives and lead to financial mismanagement, delays, and loss of public trust. To avoid such issues in the future, government institutions need to adopt structured conflict resolution frameworks, ensure transparency and accountability, and invest in leadership training. Conflict management is a high priority for government offices to ensure effective project execution. By adopting structured strategies, fostering leadership skills, and implementing global best practices, public sector efficiency can be significantly improved.

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