WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT MUTUAL GAINS BARGAINING AMONG EDUCATORS?

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ABSTRACT

Mutual gains bargaining (MGB) is a relatively new alternative to what is viewed as the traditional adversarial approach to collective bargaining negotiations. In an attempt to understand both the characteristics and outcomes of MGB among educators, this article analyzes eight detailed case studies. It was discovered that successful MGB outcomes can occur among this group of employees despite the preexistence of poor relations and a low level of trust between the union and management. In addition, training in MGB principles and the use of facilitators during negotiations appear to be positively related to successful MGB outcomes, while MGB participation can result in the creation of labor—management committees designed to handle problems on an ongoing basis. The article concludes with a discussion of how to deal with the constituency problem in MGB negotiations.

With an increase in global competition, an increasing number of unions and employers have engaged in various types of labor-management cooperation programs ranging from quality of work life to employee involvement programs. The motivation behind the establishment of such arrangements is the idea that labor-management cooperation can lead to a reduction in employer costs with a subsequent increase in employee job security, as well as (possibly) wages and benefits. In the collective bargaining arena, an approach consistent with the implementation of labor-management cooperation programs is mutual gains bargaining (MGB). This type of bargaining can be defined as negotiations based on "two parties engag(ing) in problem-solving behaviors, such as focusing on being fair, basing proposals on objective (neutral) criteria, sharing information regarding priorities, discussing more than one issue as a means for determining possible

concessionary tradeoffs, and focusing on their shared interests, which results in a mutually satisfying agreement" [1, p. 243]. MGB, which also is known as "integrative bargaining" [2], "principled negotiations" or "win/win" bargaining [3], is a process that attempts to move beyond the "us-them" attitude inherent in traditional collective bargaining negotiations.

This article proceeds in the following manner. The second section compares the operation of the traditional collective bargaining process with that of MGB. The third section of the article presents the study's methodology, while the following seven sections summarize and analyze the case studies of MGB implementation among educators. The final section provides a conclusion based on these case studies and the literature related to the MGB process.

THE PRINCIPLES OF MGB

In order to understand the dramatic difference between MGB and traditional collective bargaining, let us review the basic operation of the traditional collective bargaining process. Negotiations would begin with the union and management teams exchanging demands, although in most cases the majority of demands would come from the union, thus setting the agenda for the bargaining. Upon the initial exchange of demands, proposals, and counterproposals would go back and forth between the two sides with the two parties reaching tentative agreements on various items during the middle stages of the bargaining. The primary arena for engaging in problem solving or jointly exploring options would occur during the side-bar meetings between the chief negotiators [4].

Issues anticipated to be "particularly contentious or complex" (e.g., economic issues such as wages and benefits) would be discussed during the final stages of negotiation, taking place near the contract expiration date. Settlements would usually occur right before the contract expiration date, although if an impasse occurred in bargaining, strikes or lockouts would be the most likely outcome [4, p. 196].

How does MGB differ from the process described above? In the first place, while traditional collective bargaining focuses on *positions* outlined in the two sides' proposals and counterproposals, MGB focuses on interests. This emphasis on interests allows the two parties to jointly explore options that lead to mutual gains and to evaluate the options with respect to objective standards, as opposed to utilizing bargaining power to affect negotiation outcomes. Negotiators are encouraged to participate in joint problem solving in order to construct agreements "that maximize gains for both parties" [5, p. 156].

Although the implementation of MGB differs across collective bargaining situations, this type of bargaining is based on four specific principles outlined in Fisher and Ury's book, Getting to YES: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In [3]. The first principle is "Separate the people from the problem," which involves understanding how others perceive the situation, acknowledging the emotions

connected to the perception of the situation and making plans for dealing with them, as well as communicating in an effective manner. The second principle, "Focus on interests, not positions," is concerned with each side discovering its own and its opponents' underlying interests in order to move the negotiations forward. The third principle, "Invent options for mutual gain," means the two parties should not consider the negotiations to be a fixed-sum game and the two sides should engage in brainstorming sessions to maximize the number of alternatives that would satisfy the two parties' interests. And, finally, the fourth principle, "Insist on using objective criteria" involves deciding on fair standards and procedures to use for generating suitable options, rather than resorting to the use of power to influence negotiation outcomes.

However, implementing MGB goes beyond a modification of the traditional collective bargaining process and the utilization of Fisher and Ury's principles. Specifically, it requires the development of new group dynamics concerning the primary negotiating (union and management) teams, their constituencies and the integrated team (which consists of the two primary negotiating teams). Under traditional collective bargaining, the two primary negotiating teams operate "at arm's-length and only occasionally cohere into an integrated team" [5, p. 156]. However, for MGB to succeed, the primary negotiating teams must form an integrated team while the constituent groups must be brought into the MGB process so that they do not undermine the potential gains of the new bargaining arrangement [5, pp. 156-157].

MGB CASE STUDIES AMONG EDUCATORS

To understand how MGB has functioned among educators, eight case studies were examined. The cases were selected from scholarly labor relations and negotiation journals and comprise a representative sample if not an exhaustive listing of case studies that have the virtue of sufficient detail to warrant analysis and deal with educators. Two case studies include multiple sets of negotiations; one case study examines the negotiations between a teachers' union from Iowa and a teachers' union from Pennsylvania with their respective school boards, while the other case study investigates the negotiations between three different teachers' unions and their school administrations in three small districts. Therefore, the eight case studies can be grouped accordingly: two of the cases involve faculty unions negotiating with university administrations, and six cases deal with teachers' unions negotiating with school boards/administrations. Specifically, the case studies were analyzed according to both the characteristics and the outcomes of the MGB process. It should be noted that each of the case studies varies in terms of both the characteristics and the outcomes described, so that not all of the characteristics and outcomes discussed in the sections of this article are outlined in each case study.

WHY WAS THE MGB PROCESS IMPLEMENTED?

In six cases, MGB was implemented because of poor labor relations that existed between unions and management under the traditional system of collective bargaining. Because of almost two decades of adversarial labor relations at Youngstown State University (YSU), the chief negotiator of the Youngstown State University—Ohio Education Association (YSU—OEA) approached YSU's new president about the possibility of implementing MGB, which was accepted by both the president and the university's board of trustees [6, pp. 339-340]. In two school districts in Iowa and Pennsylvania, MGB appears to have been initiated because of "a history of tense labor difficulties" between the teachers' unions and the school boards [7, p. 282], while MGB was implemented between the Cleveland High School and Academy Lay Teachers Association (CHALTA) and the Cleveland Diocesan Education Office (DEO) because of "increasingly hostile negotiations and a teachers' strike" in the past [8, p. 124].

Because of continued frustration "at the impasses they reached with the traditional process," MGB was implemented between the teachers' unions and the administrations of three small school districts [9, p. 4], while poor labor relations between the teachers' union and the Flint (Michigan) public school administration for a period of over thirty years was the impetus for initiating MGB [10, p. 242]. In Montgomery Township (New Jersey), a major reason that the local teachers' union and the school board negotiations committee were willing to adopt MGB was that both sides "were disillusioned with the protracted and unproductive bargaining" that had occurred during past negotiations [11, p. 315].

LEVEL OF TRUST BETWEEN THE UNION AND MANAGEMENT PRIOR TO MGB

In all four of the cases that refer to the level of trust between the two parties prior to the implementation of the MGB process, not one high trust relationship existed. The relationship between the YSU-OEA and the YSU administration had been characterized by almost two decades of ill-will and mistrust until a new university president was hired in mid-1992 [6, p. 344]. In addition, a low trust level existed between the two teachers' unions negotiating with two school boards in Iowa and Pennsylvania, respectively [7, p. 282]. And in Montgomery Township, during the previous round of negotiations in 1989, there had been "distrust on both sides" [11, p. 314]. Finally, Heckscher and Hall described the relationship between the Flint teachers' union and the school administration as one of "day-to-day mistrust" [10, p. 242].

Since all of the cases discussed in this article had successful outcomes to one degree or another after the implementation of MGB (which is discussed later in this article), it appears inconsistent that there was a low trust level between the bargaining partners immediately before MGB was utilized. For MGB to be successful, it would intuitively make sense that the two parties must possess a high level of trust before engaging in this type of bargaining.

However, in their book, Getting to YES, Fisher and Ury stated that trust is not a prerequisite for successful MGB to occur because this type of bargaining is not predicated on the two parties feeling good but on helping each side achieve more for itself [3]. Since the parties are concerned with expressing interests and not positions, negotiators are not more vulnerable using MGB than traditional collective bargaining techniques [12, p. 272].

Nevertheless, Friedman pointed out that during MGB training sessions, negotiators often state that mutual gains tactics should not be used because they cannot trust the other party [12]. Friedman had discovered earlier that trust is the major predictor of support for the MGB process, particularly for negotiators from the union side [13]. Friedman explained this finding by stating that since MGB depends more heavily on objective research and analysis than traditional collective bargaining, the union may feel at a disadvantage with respect to management because it does not possess the same level of resources to pursue this type of research [12, p. 272]. In addition, if the MGB process does not lead to the outcomes that the union envisioned when planning for the negotiations with its membership, problems may occur. And finally, trust is crucial, especially from the union's perspective; it may view MGB as a type of cooperative program designed to weaken or undermine the union because various types of cooperative programs have served that purpose in the past.

TRAINING IN MGB PRINCIPLES

Five of the eight cases refer to the fact that participants received MGB training before engaging in negotiations. At YSU, both union and management bargaining team members engaged in joint training, which was conducted by representatives of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) [6, p. 340]. In the collective bargaining relationship between the CHALTA and the DEO, training was provided by a university professor to both the union and management negotiating team members, which consisted of a presentation of the procedure as well as "rules, regulations, and guidelines" for the negotiation process [8, p. 124].

In the case concerning the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the University of Cincinnati, union and management negotiating team members attended a two-day training session that included a bargaining simulation utilizing MGB techniques [10, p. 241]. Prior to the start of bargaining in Montgomery Township, both the teachers' union and the school board negotiating teams received a one-half day training program that focused on MGB bargaining philosophy and strategies [11, p. 317]. In Flint, both teams' bargaining members attended a lecture on MGB followed by a one-and-a-half day training session [10, p. 243].

As one can see from a description of the MGB training in the cases outlined above, it was quite varied in terms of who conducted the training and what was actually covered in the sessions. In all five cases, both the union and management teams received joint training in MGB, which, according to Susskind and Landry [14] and Ancona, Friedman, and Kolb [5] is a necessary condition for achieving successful outcomes during negotiations. Furthermore, Susskind and Landry believe that joint training will be even more effective if bargaining simulations are part of the training. And, during these simulations, by having union and management negotiators reverse roles, each party can learn to understand how the other side perceives problems as well as develop empathy for the other team, which helps in problem solving.

However, only one case study indicated that problems occurred during the actual negotiations because of deficiencies in the MGB training. In one of the two collective bargaining negotiations between the teachers' unions and the school boards in Iowa and Pennsylvania, a lack of effective instruction in MGB was blamed for negotiating problems. In addition, in the same case study, in one of the situations, the participants were not taught how to "separate the people from the problem," which resulted in one of the participants engaging in extremely confrontational behavior [7, p. 284].

THE USE OF FACILITATORS DURING MGB NEGOTIATIONS

Facilitators were used throughout the MGB process in five cases. A conflict-management consultant supervised the MGB process between the two teachers' unions and the two school boards in Iowa and Pennsylvania, respectively [7, p. 281] while a facilitator and cofacilitator assisted in CHALTA and the DEO during their negotiations [8, p. 124]. In the AAUP and the University of Cincinnati negotiations, the trainer remained active in facilitation throughout the negotiations "and played an important role in helping to develop key agreements" [10, p. 241]. In Montgomery Township, the consultant served as a facilitator/ mediator throughout the negotiations [11, pp. 317, 320] while in the Flint teacher union/school board negotiations, an external consultant served as an "extremely active" facilitator throughout the negotiation process [10, p. 243].

According to Heckscher and Hall [10, p. 236], combining training of the negotiators with facilitation during the bargaining process is more effective in achieving successful outcomes than implementing either technique alone. This combination occurred in three of the eight cases presented in this article [8, 10], although in the situations where both training and facilitation was used, the outcomes did not appear to be any more successful than in the situations in which only one of the two techniques was utilized.

As with training, facilitation of the MGB process can occur on a continuum from a more passive type of intervention to one of a more activist approach.

Susskind and Landry advocate that facilitators adopt a more activist orientation; they point out that one intervention facilitators should be prepared to make is to "be available as a coach to both sides during the actual contract bargaining" [14, p. 8].

Since many of the negotiators engaging in MGB have limited training in the procedure, negotiators may resort to traditional bargaining techniques, especially during the midpoint of negotiations, if they are experiencing initial problems with the implementation of MGB [5, pp. 164-165]. Because of this possibility, it seems reasonable for facilitators to be prepared to take a more activist role to salvage the MGB process. It is conceivable that a passive facilitator could ultimately damage the entire process if s/he allowed bargaining to deviate too much from the MGB principles.

For example, in one of the eight cases reported in this article, although the negotiation outcome was still successful, a participant "was permitted to jump up and approach the other side, angrily waving a contract in their faces" [7, p. 284]. Since the facilitator adopted a passive approach by neither intervening nor discouraging this specific behavior, a message was sent that this was a legitimate tactic that could be used in MGB [7, p. 284].

Clearly, by allowing these types of incidents to occur on a regular basis, passive facilitation could lead to the destruction of the MGB process. However, more active facilitation should not be used as a substitute for devoting more time and effort toward the delivery of a solid training program.

THE FORMATION OF LABOR-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES/DISCUSSION GROUPS

Besides changing the negotiators' behavior at the bargaining table, the MGB process can lead to the development of other positive outcomes in the day-to-day relationships between unions and managements. One of these changes is the formation of labor-management committees/discussion groups that regularly meet to deal with problems that occur over contract administration. Such an arrangement was one of the outcomes of the MGB process discussed in three cases.

One of the contractual provisions negotiated between the YSU-OEA and the YSU administration after the implementation of MGB was the formation of deans' advisory councils in each college to provide increased faculty participation in university governance. Besides the creation of these councils, "ongoing unionmanagement discussions" were called for throughout the contractual period as a method for dealing with problems [6, p. 343].

An outcome in the negotiations between the CHALTA and the DEO was the holding of "regularly scheduled, dialogue sessions" between teachers and administrators where problems could be addressed on an ongoing basis [8, p. 125]. And in Flint, a labor-management committee was formed to handle "complex problems" as well as to administer the contract on a daily basis, although after two years these committees were not functioning effectively [10, p. 244].

Although the literature discussing how to implement MGB programs does not address the issue of the formation of labor-management committees as a specific positive outcome of the process, it appears that creating such mechanisms would be helpful in insuring that the MGB process continues in future negotiations. Since one of the major problems in MGB is getting the constituencies of the two parties to agree to accept this procedure [5, 12], if labor-management committees are one of the outcomes of the MGB process and the two sides' constituents participate in these committees and have a positive experience, the two parties' constituents may develop a stronger commitment to the MGB procedure. However, if these committees do not function effectively, this could be a factor that ultimately undermines the process.

Nevertheless, in one case, a labor-management committee had been implemented *prior* to the adoption of MGB. In Montgomery Township, approximately eighteen months before the start of the negotiations that utilized the MGB techniques, "school-based decision-making councils," which were essentially quality circles, were formed to address "the district's staff relations problems" [11, p. 314].

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES WITH THE MGB PROCESS

Although each of the MGB cases experienced success to one degree or another, there were specific problems and difficulties mentioned in the process in five cases. Two of the cases mentioned the role of negotiator personality as problematic in different contexts. Carlton stated that "personality differences" [6, p. 341] between the bargainers was one obstacle in the YSU-OEA/YSU negotiations and that the success of the whole process seemed too dependent on the personalities of those involved in the negotiations [6, pp. 345-346]. Schachter believes that when MGB takes place in small school districts, "the role of individual personality is particularly important" to the program's success because MGB training is neither long lasting nor comprehensive in these settings so the loss of certain teachers or administrators engaged in MGB may doom the process in the future [9, p. 6].

Inexperience with the MGB process also was mentioned as a problem in two cases. The Iowa and Pennsylvania school board teams were "inexperienced, less knowledgeable, and less skilled negotiators" with respect to MGB than the teacher union teams [7, p. 284], while in Flint, both the union and school board negotiators' "lack of experience" harmed "the negotiators' ability to interact effectively" [10, p. 244].

The major problem in the YSU-OEA/YSU negotiations centered around the two sides' "failure to implement the techniques presented" [6, p. 345], while in the negotiations in Iowa and Pennsylvania, the primary problem was with how the MGB process was set up, that is, there was a lack of time controls and structural difficulties. These problems contributed to the negotiators resorting to traditional bargaining tactics toward the end of the negotiations [7, pp. 284-285]. Although the AAUP and the University of Cincinnati administration concluded a successful collective bargaining agreement using MGB in 1990 [14, p. 6], problems surfaced within two years, and a strike occurred during the 1993 negotiations with the disputed issues resolved without the use of MGB [10, p. 242]. And in Flint, constituency problems (both union and school board members) interfered with the MGB process [10, p. 244].

While the problems mentioned above could derail serious attempts at MGB, there are procedures that may be helpful in minimizing the occurrence of most of these problems. In terms of the concern that MGB might be too dependent on a few key personalities, more intensive training of more participants could potentially reduce the severity of this problem. The problem of lack of experience may be remedied with additional use of the MGB procedure over time. And the failure to sufficiently implement MGB techniques may be handled through more active facilitation, while the same is true of structural problems that can crop up during MGB sessions.

However, I believe that the most serious obstacle to the successful implementation of MGB over the long run is active opposition by constituents. Because of this possibility, Heckscher and Hall argued that training and facilitation is not enough to guarantee a successful MGB relationship (what they refer to as a level-one intervention) but that there must be a transformation of the internal relationship between the negotiators and their constituents (a leveltwo intervention) [10, p. 236]. While Heckscher and Hall acknowledged that this transformation is extremely difficult [10, p. 246], they stated that it will be easier to bring it about if the negotiators have developed "good internal communication within constituencies" prior to engaging in any MGB training [10, p. 245].

Friedman presented two recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of MGB that might be useful in dealing with this constituency problem [12, pp. 276-277]. He stated that constituents should be included in MGB training so they can become more knowledgeable about the process. This would modify the constituents' expectations concerning bargaining and give them a different viewpoint for judging negotiator behavior. The second recommendation was to involve as many constituents at the bargaining table as possible. If a number of constituents are actually sitting at the bargaining table (e.g., line managers for the management team and union members for the union team), they will be able to actually experience MGB rather than merely gain knowledge about it during the education and training sessions.

THE SUCCESS OF MGB PROGRAMS

In all eight cases discussed in this article, the MGB programs were successful to one degree or another. The negotiations between the YSU-OEA and the YSU administration were deemed successful, as indicated by the membership of the union overwhelmingly ratifying the proposed contract [6, p. 343].

In the bargaining between the teachers' unions and the school boards in Iowa and Pennsylvania, MGB led to the negotiation of a contract in which both parties obtained desirable contract provisions; the teachers gained higher salaries and better benefits, while management obtained a longer contract as well as a higher level of employee commitment. In addition, more trust and confidence developed between the two union-management pairs, which resulted in increased levels of employee morale [7, p. 287]. Based on survey data, the participants in the CHALTA and DEO negotiations were "far more satisfied than dissatisfied" with both the MGB process and the outcomes generated from the procedure [8, p. 139]. And in Montgomery Township, in addition to the rank-and-file teachers and the board of education ratifying the three-year contract, there was a feeling that the MGB process had generated "evident goodwill" that would lead to "pervasive positive consequences for the interpersonal climate of the district" [11, p. 320].

In two situations, the outcomes of the negotiations and what transpired in the years after were similar. Bargaining between the AAUP and the University of Cincinnati was successful in the short term as measured by "significant improvements in the negotiating process" and the negotiation of an innovative collective bargaining agreement. However, this positive relationship had already broken down by the next round of negotiations [10, p. 242]. In Flint, the negotiation between the teachers' union and the school board also was successful in the short run through the development of a "major contract innovation in handling financial projections," although the improved relationship between the two parties deteriorated within two years [10, p. 244].

CONCLUSION

So what kind of general conclusions can we draw about the operation of MGB among educators? From the case studies discussed in this article, we can conclude that in spite of problems which might crop up during MGB, successful outcomes can occur despite the preexistence of poor relations and a low level of trust between the union and management. In addition, some type of training in MGB principles and the use of facilitators during negotiations appear to be positively related to successful MGB outcomes. And one major outcome from participation in MGB is the formation of various kinds of labor–management committees that operate to handle problems between negotiations.

However, this level of success in utilizing MGB among educators might not mirror the experience of the operation of MGB as a whole. Based on a survey of MGB trainers, educators may be more likely to possess the characteristics that would lead to successful MGB outcomes. For example, a number of trainers believe that MGB is more likely to be successful under two conditions: "if the bargaining unit was white collar (and) if participants were more highly educated" [15, p. 97]. Since both of these characteristics apply to educators, MGB might be more effective when it is practiced by these employees as opposed to other groups of workers.

Even though some level of success was experienced in each of the cases presented in this article, future rounds of MGB may be problematic, depending on the constituencies' level of commitment to this process. Since getting constituencies to accept MGB is probably the major problem confronting the future success of MGB and since according to Friedman, "in order for MGB to be fully effective, there must be ongoing relationship building between the two sides, ongoing trust-building, and, ideally, efforts to rearrange the very structure of bargaining" [13, p. 436], one way to gain constituent acceptance and to encourage continual trust building among the two parties is to have constituents involved in labor-management cooperation programs prior to, as well as during, the implementation of MGB. This experience would allow employees to engage in "further developing the(ir) sense of participation in the total life of the enterprise" [16, p. 103]. If constituents are actively involved in successful labormanagement cooperation programs on the shop or office floor, they may be more likely to accept MGB as a legitimate form of labor-management cooperation in the collective bargaining arena. Thus, it might be expected that certain cases in this article-cases in which some form of an effective labormanagement committee emerged due to MGB or was implemented prior to the introduction of MGB—would be more likely to have future rounds of successful MGB.

However, based on this argument and considering the fact that the vast majority of unionized educators work in the public sector, the successful growth of MGB among educators may depend on the initial implementation of public sector labor-management cooperation programs. This may be problematic because there are more constitutional, political, and legal restrictions placed on public sector labor-management cooperation programs than on comparable private sector programs [17]. However, according to Ball, these limitations do not necessarily preclude such developments in the public sector [18]. For example, in spite of these constraints, in 1994, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the state of Illinois developed successful "Public Service Quality Involvement Committees" in agencies with at least 1000 employees [18]. And in the federal sector, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) have developed an extensive and successful labor-management cooperation program that is focused on both joint quality improvement and employee empowerment [19, pp. 158-160].

Therefore, the future success of MGB among educators may depend more on macrolevel changes in the relationship before and during the implementation of MGB than on the microlevel fine tuning of negotiator training and collective bargaining facilitation. The key may ultimately rest with the formation of more public sector labor-management cooperation programs modeled on the initiatives established by the AFSCME/state of Illinois and the NTEU/IRS, which will provide constituents with prior positive experiences with labor-management cooperation programs. Unless constituents are willing to accept and abide by the tenets of MGB in the long run, the entire process is likely to be undermined.

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