

## CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO NEGOTIATION: COLLABORATIVE VS COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article examines two contrasting negotiation approaches: collaborative (integrative) and competitive (distributive) strategies. Negotiation is vital in various domains such as business, politics, and personal relationships, where it facilitates conflict resolution and decision-making. The collaborative approach focuses on creating win-win outcomes by emphasizing shared interests, open communication, and creative problem-solving. It fosters long-term relationships and encourages innovation by integrating diverse perspectives. Conversely, the competitive approach aims to maximize individual gains at the expense of the other party, often leading to zero-sum outcomes. This strategy is characterized by fixed-sum games, competitive orientation, and limited information sharing. While it offers speed and simplicity, it may hinder creative solutions and lead to strained relationships. This essay critically analyses these approaches, exploring their principles, strategies, and potential outcomes through various examples. It highlights the importance of understanding negotiation contexts to choose the appropriate strategy, thereby enhancing the quality of agreements and reducing conflict.

**Keywords:** negotiation, collaborative strategies, competitive strategies, integrative negotiation, distributive negotiation, conflict resolution, win-win outcomes, zero-sum outcomes.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Negotiation is an essential skill in various aspects of life, including business, politics, and personal relationships. It allows individuals or parties to resolve conflicts, make decisions, and reach agreements that satisfy their interests. Wertheim (2020) had mentioned in his article that is very helpful for an organization in categorizing the various responses that we have to contradict in terms of two dimensions which are (1) the interest of meeting our needs and (2) the importance of meeting the needs of others. Many experts agree that several styles of conflict resolution exist, but there is no right or wrong, just different (Bell 2002; Robin 2002). However, different approaches to negotiation exist, each

with its own set of principles and strategies. De Dreu et al (2007) in their study have developed a set of basic principles that include current insights about the negotiation process and capture the cognitive, motivational and affective influences on the quality of agreement reached by the public. They also developed the idea that in order to make strategic decisions, individuals in consultation need to understand their situation and their counterparts. In this discussion, I will critically analyse two opposite approaches to negotiation: the competitive approach and the collaborative approach. Hence, I will explore their key principles, strategies, and provide five examples to illustrate their differences and potential outcomes.

## CONTENT

De Dreu (2014) further delves that negotiation is indeed a process where two or more parties with different needs and goals discuss an issue to find a mutually acceptable solution. Conflict is mostly wasteful, and deal-making is often suboptimal. In most cases, managing conflict constructively can significantly reduce wasted time, money and energy. Within the negotiation literature, two opposite approaches are often discussed: distributive negotiation (also known as win-lose negotiation) and integrative negotiation (also known as win-win negotiation).

**Unveiling the Essence of Distributive negotiation:** According to Park et al (2019), distributive negotiation, also known as competitive, win-lose or zero-sum negotiation, is a bargaining process in which the parties involved aim to claim the largest possible share of a fixed resource or value. Unlike integrative negotiation, which emphasizes collaboration and the creation of value for all parties, distributive negotiation operates under the assumption that one party's gain is directly proportional to the other party's loss. This approach is commonly used in scenarios where resources, such as money, time, or assets, are limited, and the distribution of these resources requires compromise.

There are three main characteristics of distributive negotiation which are (1) Fixed-Sum Game: Distributive negotiation operates on the principle of a fixed-sum game, where the total value available for distribution remains constant (Dai et al, 2020). As a result, any gain made by one party directly corresponds to a loss suffered by the other party. (2) Competitive Orientation: According to Abigail et

al (2018), parties engaged in distributive negotiation adopt a competitive mindset, focusing on maximizing their own share of the limited resources. The primary goal is to achieve the best possible outcome for oneself, often at the expense of the other party. Lastly, is (3) Limited Information Sharing: In distributive negotiation, there is a tendency to withhold information or selectively disclose it to gain a strategic advantage. Parties may employ various tactics, such as bluffing, concealing preferences, or exaggerating demands, to sway the negotiation in their favour (Abigail et al, 2018).

Strategies in distributive negotiation are involving (1) Anchoring: Anchoring involves making an initial offer that sets the tone for the negotiation (Chapman et al, 2017). By suggesting an extreme or favourable position, negotiators attempt to influence the final outcome by establishing a reference point for subsequent concessions. (2) Reservation Price: Neale & Bazerman (1985) mention that each party determines their reservation price, which signifies the lowest value they are willing to accept. This acts as a bottom line, beyond which they would rather walk away from the negotiation than settle for an unfavourable outcome. (3) Concessions: According to Adair & Brett (2005), negotiators engage in a series of concessions, gradually reducing their demands or offering trade-offs to move closer to an agreement. The timing, size, and sequencing of concessions play a crucial role in shaping the negotiation dynamics. (4) Competitive Tactics: Various competitive tactics, such as bluffing, highballing (demanding an inflated value), or lowballing (underestimating one's worth), are employed to gain leverage and create perceived advantages during the negotiation process (Filzmoser & Vetschera, 2008)

According to Oesch & Whyte (2002), distributive negotiation offers several advantages, including (1) Speed and Efficiency: As distributive negotiation focuses on a single issue, it allows for faster decision-making and efficient resolution of conflicts. (2) Simplicity: The straightforward nature of distributive negotiation makes it accessible and easier to understand for parties involved. (3) Maintaining Relationships: In scenarios where future interactions between parties are unlikely, distributive negotiation allows for a more direct and uncomplicated approach.

However, according Benetti, Ogliastri & Caputo (2021), the distributive negotiation also poses certain drawbacks as follows: (1) Limited Creative Problem-Solving: Distributive negotiation may hinder the exploration of creative solutions or innovative options that could potentially benefit all parties involved. The focus on claiming a larger share of the fixed resources may restrict the exploration of win-win scenarios. (2) Potential for Hostility: Adler & Graham (2017) mentioned that competitive nature of distributive negotiation can lead to heightened tensions and increased hostility between the parties. The emphasis on maximizing individual gains may result in a breakdown of trust and strained relationships, making future collaborations or negotiations more challenging. (3) Missed Opportunities for Value Creation: By solely concentrating on dividing limited resources, distributive negotiation may overlook opportunities to create additional value or expand the available resources. Collaborative problem-solving approaches, such as integrative negotiation, offer a more holistic perspective that can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes. (4) Risk of Impasse: Distributive negotiation can be susceptible to reaching an impasse, where parties fail to reach an agreement due to their entrenched positions and unwillingness to make concessions (Adler & Graham, 2017). This impasse may prolong conflicts and hinder progress towards a resolution.

### **The Power of Integrative Negotiation: Fostering Collaboration for Win-Win Solutions:**

While there are different approaches to negotiation, one particularly effective method is known as integrative negotiation. Unlike distributive negotiation, which focuses on dividing a fixed set of resources, integrative negotiation emphasizes collaboration, creativity, and the exploration of shared interests to generate win-win outcomes. According to Park et al (2019), integrative negotiation involves situations where the interests or goals of each negotiator are not mutually exclusive. I will delve into the concept of integrative negotiation, exploring its key principles, benefits, and strategies.

According to Park et al (2019), they further discuss the principles of integrative negotiation embody a set of principles that guides the process of reaching mutually beneficial agreements. Firstly, the principle emphasizes the importance of focusing on interests rather than positions. By understanding the underlying needs, concerns, and motivations of all parties involved, negotiators can identify common ground and explore creative solutions that address everyone's interests. Secondly, integrative

negotiation emphasizes open communication and active listening. By fostering a climate of trust and respect, negotiators can build rapport and establish effective channels of communication, enabling them to uncover and address any potential obstacles or misunderstandings. Finally, integrative negotiation encourages the development of objective criteria for evaluating proposed solutions. By employing objective standards, negotiators can rely on fairness and logic rather than subjective opinions, ensuring that agreements are based on sound principles and stand the test of time.

A study by Elgoibar et al (2021) delves that integrative negotiation offers several advantages over other approaches, making it a valuable tool for resolving conflicts and reaching agreements. Firstly, it promotes the creation of win-win outcomes, where all parties involved feel satisfied and benefit from the agreement. By uncovering and addressing shared interests, negotiators can generate solutions that maximize joint gains, fostering long-term relationships and collaboration. Secondly, integrative negotiation encourages creativity and innovation. By exploring different options and considering multiple perspectives, negotiators can find novel solutions that may not have been initially apparent. This allows for the integration of diverse ideas and the generation of outcomes that are more comprehensive and robust. Finally, integrative negotiation enhances communication and understanding between parties. By actively listening and empathizing with each other's needs, negotiators can build trust, reduce tensions, and lay the foundation for future cooperation.

Study by Benetti & Ogliastri (2019) had mention that to be effectively engage in integrative negotiation, several strategies can be employed. Firstly, negotiators should prioritize information sharing. By openly exchanging relevant information, parties can gain a more comprehensive understanding of each other's needs and interests, facilitating the identification of mutually beneficial solutions. Secondly, negotiators should seek to identify and create value. This involves exploring options that expand the available resources or maximize the benefits for all parties involved. Creative problem-solving techniques, such as brainstorming or considering trade-offs, can aid in finding innovative solutions that meet the diverse interests of the parties. Thirdly, negotiators should focus on building relationships based on trust and empathy. By fostering a cooperative atmosphere, parties are more likely to engage in open communication and collaboration, leading to more fruitful negotiations.

Lastly, negotiators should be prepared to adapt and be flexible. As negotiations progress, new information may arise, requiring adjustments to previous proposals. Flexibility allows parties to respond to changing circumstances and maintain a constructive negotiation process.

In general, after analysing in depth and thoroughly about distributive and integrative negotiation in the context of the discussion above, there are examples of negotiations that relate to the current issues of the education system today.

### **Distributive Negotiation**

**School Budget Allocation:** Simosi, Rousseau & Weingart (2021) mention that distributive negotiation often takes place when allocating limited resources within educational institutions which school administrators, teachers, and staff negotiate to determine how funds will be distributed among various departments, programs, and initiatives. This negotiation involves prioritizing competing needs such as staffing, curriculum materials, technology upgrades, and extracurricular activities.

**Faculty Contracts and Salaries:** Negotiations between educational institutions and faculty members revolve around contract terms, including salaries, benefits, workload, and professional development opportunities. (Van der Heijden et al, 2021). Both parties engage in distributive negotiation to determine a fair and equitable compensation package within the constraints of the institution's budget.

**Student Enrolment and Admissions:** When schools have limited spots available for enrolment, distributive negotiation occurs during the admissions process. A study by Farran (2014) for admission to college in United States, that admissions officers negotiate with prospective students and their families to determine acceptance, financial aid, scholarships, or other incentives, aiming to attract high-quality students while ensuring a diverse and balanced student body.

**Resource Distribution in Group Projects:** Davison et al (2013) discussed that distributive negotiation can also occur among students themselves, especially in group projects where resources like time, responsibilities, and workload need to be distributed fairly. The further mentioned that students negotiate to determine individual contributions, deadlines, division of tasks, and allocation of resources to optimize the group's overall performance.

Negotiations with Vendors and Suppliers: A study by Park et al (2019) had mentioned that educational institutions often negotiate with vendors and suppliers for various goods and services necessary for operation. Negotiations can involve purchasing textbooks, laboratory equipment, technology infrastructure, maintenance contracts, or cafeteria services. Both parties engage in distributive negotiation to secure the best pricing, terms, and quality within the institution's budgetary constraints.

It's important to note that while distributive negotiation is common in these scenarios, other negotiation approaches, such as integrative negotiation or collaborative problem-solving, may also play a role in fostering mutually beneficial outcomes in the field of education.

### **Integrative Negotiation**

School Funding Allocation: Mulford (2003) says that in many educational systems, school districts face the challenge of limited financial resources; in such cases, administrators, teachers, and community members engage in integrative negotiations to determine how to allocate funds in a way that meets the diverse needs of students. These negotiations involve collaborative discussions and the exploration of various options. The parties involved work together to find creative solutions that ensure equitable distribution of resources while addressing different educational priorities. Through integrative negotiations, stakeholders can identify synergies, pool resources, and prioritize investments that will have the greatest positive impact on student learning outcomes.

Curriculum Development: Alsubaie (2016) in his article mentioned that creating a curriculum that meets the needs of a diverse student population requires the input and collaboration of educators with different perspectives and expertise. In the process of curriculum development, teachers, subject matter experts, and curriculum specialists engage in integrative negotiations. These negotiations aim to reconcile their goals and create an inclusive and comprehensive curriculum. Through open dialogue and negotiation, educators work together to address topics such as content selection, teaching methods, and assessment strategies. Integrative negotiations facilitate the incorporation of multiple viewpoints, leading to a curriculum that caters to the needs of diverse learners and promotes academic excellence.

**Teacher-Parent Collaboration:** According to Adam, Harris & Jones (2016), effective communication and collaboration between teachers and parents are crucial for supporting students' educational journey which parent-teacher conferences and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings often involve integrative negotiations. During these interactions, teachers and parents engage in open and constructive dialogue to develop strategies that support the academic and social-emotional growth of students. They share information, perspectives, and concerns, and work together to address any challenges or barriers that may hinder a student's progress. Through integrative negotiations, teachers and parents collaboratively set goals, devise action plans, and establish ongoing communication channels to promote the child's educational success.

**Collective Bargaining:** In many educational systems, Eberts (2007) delves that teachers' unions negotiate with school districts on various issues, including salaries, working conditions, and benefits which in term these negotiations, known as collective bargaining, often involve integrative negotiation approaches. Teachers' unions and school districts engage in a collaborative process, seeking to reach a mutually beneficial agreement that addresses the interests of both parties. Through integrative negotiations, the parties explore different options, consider trade-offs, and strive to find solutions that meet the needs of teachers while ensuring the effective functioning of the educational institution. These negotiations contribute to establishing fair and sustainable employment conditions that support the recruitment, retention, and satisfaction of qualified teachers.

**Student Discipline and Behaviour Management:** Jacobson, Gov & Nisar (2022) had long discussion that addressing student discipline issues is a critical aspect of creating a safe and conducive learning environment. When facing disciplinary challenges, educators, administrators, and parents engage in integrative negotiations to develop strategies that balance the need for maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment with the student's individual needs. Integrative negotiations in this context involve collaborative discussions centred on understanding the root causes of behavioural issues, identifying appropriate interventions, and determining suitable consequences. Through integrative negotiations, stakeholders collaborate to create disciplinary measures that provide



appropriate consequences for misconduct while also promoting the student's growth, development, and reintegration into the educational community.

These examples highlight the various situations in which integrative negotiations can occur in the field of education. However, it is important to note that each negotiation is unique and context-dependent, and the specific strategies and approaches employed may vary (Kröhling & Chiotti & Martínez, 2019). Integrative negotiations in education aim to foster collaboration, creativity, and a win-win mindset among the parties involved. These negotiations recognize that the interests and goals of different stakeholders, such as educators, administrators, parents, students, and community members, may sometimes appear to be in conflict. Integrative negotiations provide a framework for these stakeholders to come together, share their perspectives, and find mutually beneficial solutions that address the diverse needs and priorities of all involved.

## CONCLUSION

Distributive negotiation serves as a valuable approach in scenarios where limited resources need to be allocated. Understanding its characteristics and employing appropriate strategies can help negotiators navigate the process effectively (Yakubu et al, 2018). However, it is crucial to recognize the limitations and potential drawbacks associated with distributive negotiation, such as the potential for hostility, missed opportunities for value creation, and the risk of impasse. By considering alternative negotiation approaches that prioritize collaboration and creative problem-solving, parties can strive for outcomes that maximize joint gains and foster stronger relationships.

Wertheim (2020) mention that integrative negotiation stands as a powerful approach to resolving conflicts and reaching agreements. By focusing on collaboration, creativity, and the exploration of shared interests, integrative negotiation offers a framework that promotes win-win outcomes, fosters innovation, and strengthens relationships between parties. Its principles of focusing on interests, open communication, and objective criteria provide a solid foundation for reaching mutually beneficial agreements. By employing strategies such as information sharing, value creation, relationship building, and flexibility, negotiators can navigate complex situations and find solutions that

address the diverse needs and interests of all parties involved Wertheim (2020). Integrative negotiation has the potential to transform conflicts into opportunities for cooperation and growth, paving the way for sustainable and harmonious outcomes. As individuals and organizations continue to navigate the intricacies of negotiation, embracing the integrative approach can lead to more positive and mutually beneficial results.

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