



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN MACEDONIA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND HUMANITIES

4th International Conference Education Across Borders

Education in the 21st Century: Challenges and Perspectives

Aikaterini Dimitriadou
Eleni Griva
Angeliki Lithoxoidou
Alexandros Amprazis
(Editors)

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Education Across Borders**

**Education in the 21st Century: Challenges and Perspectives
Florina, 19-20 October 2018**

**Aikaterini Dimitriadou
Eleni Griva
Angeliki Lithoxoidou
Alexandros Amprazis
(Editors)**



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The authors were asked to produce updated versions of their papers and take into account the discussion that took place after the presentation and the suggestions received from other participants at the Conference. On the whole, the e-Proceedings present a comprehensive overview of ongoing studies in Education Research in Europe and beyond.

The editors carried out a review of the updated versions of the papers that were submitted after the Conference. The editors do not necessarily endorse or share the ideas and views presented in or implied by the papers included in this book.

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Conflict is normal and essential for healthy development. The presence of conflict in everyday life is inevitable and natural, but how one manages a conflict depends from many factors. In that line, conflict management is the skill set for understanding how to prevent, manage, and resolve competing needs and interests without resorting to violence. The phenomenon of violent behavior among students in the school environment has been researched by many experts, but as a complex phenomenon it has never been, nor can it be permanently investigated. The overall aim of this paper is identifying the potential sources of conflict in primary schools and teachers' conflict management strategies. The methodology of the research rests upon the preparation and design of a standard questionnaire for teachers. The respondents were 16 teachers from primary schools in Bitola. The results showed that, according to teachers, conflicts at schools usually arise from the negative situations caused by differences of opinion and lack of communication. On the other hand, the teachers who experience conflicts usually respond by evading the situation.

Keywords: conflict management, primary schools, teachers, strategies

1.Introduction

A conflict is a struggle between people. This struggle may be physical, or mental, between conflicting ideas. The presence of conflict in everyday life is normal and natural, but how one manages a conflict situation depends from many factors. In that line, the conflict management is set of skills for understanding how to prevent and resolve conflicting needs and interests without resorting to violence.

As an introduction we can say that conflict situations are possible in the society on macro and on micro level. Generators of conflicts on macro level usually are: social inequalities and exclusions (Gulevska et al., 2017). On the other hand, generators of conflicts on micro level may be: misunderstanding, different opinions, different perspectives and limited resources.

Most studies analyze the different styles that individuals are oriented to use in the conflict situations. These styles depend from many factors such as: personality, nature, upbringing, culture, work environment and cetera. For example, personality types usually are energised by their own “modus vivendi”. Conflict might occur when an extrovert cannot understand why an introvert will not talk to him/her about a problem and vice versa, an introvert cannot

understand way an extrovert won't think about the situation first before talking and arguing (Eggert, M. & Falzon, 2018).

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is a commonly used psychological assessment tool that helps professionals to find reasonable solution for conflict situation in everyday life. The model organizes 5 conflict management styles based on two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. The aspects of the styles are: competing, collaborating, compromising, accommodating, and avoiding. Competing is assertive style. Somebody act in a very assertive way to achieve your goals, without cooperating with the other party, and it may be at the expense of the other party. Collaborating is a style which connects somebody with partners, peers or, generally with other party. This style allows creating a bigger space for everybody's ideas. Compromising is scenario where neither party really achieves what they want. This style offers a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperation. Avoiding is a style when somebody simply avoid the issue. There is no help to other party achieve their goals, and also, there is no assertiveness to achieve own goals. Accommodating is a style when somebody cooperates to a high-degree, and it may be at his own expense. Actually, this means that somebody works against his own goals and wants to help the other party. According to the experts, Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI) can be used to measure teachers' conflict management style and to assess the quality of the teacher-student relationship (Ghandour, 2015).

The school should be a desirable place for every child and young people in the population to receive a quality education in the same place, regardless of abilities, need for identity such as gender or ethnicity. Unlike segregation or integration, the focus shifts from the need of the individual to fit in to the need of the school to provide an environment that allows all young people to flourish (Cremin & Bevington, 2017). But, the experts argue that in the educational systems around the world, at all levels, the explicit, as well as the hidden curricula reflect and reproduce larger societal dynamics of power and inequality that may be a source for conflict (Adams, 2017). Enlightened educational communities are beginning to express concern over the increasing numbers of suspensions and exclusions as schools strive to maintain control over changing populations. This trend leads to the formation of a subculture within and beyond the school (Thorsborne, 2017).

Managing classroom conflicts is an important part of teachers' work. Every person sees things from a different perspective and requires that perspective be recognized by others. In this context, we can say that every human being, especially the child, needs the acceptance and love expressed to him by others. When this basic human aspiration is not satisfied, the child can manifest unacceptable social behavior in order to attract the attention of those whom she expects acceptance and care. Conflicts in the classroom may be: Teacher-Teacher Conflict, Student-Student Conflict and Teacher-Student Conflict. Based on the assumption that conflict can be a "spiritus movens" for positive personal and social change, teachers should focus on preventing, decreasing, stopping or transforming violent conflict using peaceful, non-violent methods. Also, teachers should help students understand their actions, the actions of others, and find solutions together because the conflicts often arise from a combination of fear, anxiety, or frustration. Finally, for the teacher to possess the disposition to manage such conflicts effectively in schools, a clear understanding and interpretation of

conflict issues are required. There are a lot of answers being offered to all sorts of problems, also in the field of education (Grondin, 2011).

What does this mean for conflict in school communities? One implication is the understanding that students and teachers are often caught up in a problem story (organized around a conflict) rather than that they are problem persons by nature (Winslade, J. & Williams, 2012). The causes for the problem story between students can be: student's attempt to increase popularity or power, differing socio-economic backgrounds, gender, race, religion, disabilities, family-life, rumors, social exclusions and cetera.

According to our opinion the key dynamics of the central principles of effective conflict management in a wide variety of contexts in the classroom represents a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge which enhance teachers' personal skills for conflict management.

2. Methodology of the research

This research was conducted in order to gain insights into how teachers manage the conflict situations in the schools. Additionally, a broad-based analysis is made regarding identifying the potential sources of conflict in primary schools. Participants in this research are 16 teachers from primary schools in Bitola. Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 60 years of age with the average being 34 years of age.

The methodology of the research rests upon the preparation and design of two standard questionnaires. The first one was adapted to five broad categories (according to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument) in which, in our opinion, teachers can manage the conflicts in the work place: competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating, compromising. The second one was designed to examine the teachers' opinions regarding identifying the potential sources of conflict in primary schools. The questions are divided in two groups: about the teachers conflict management strategies and about the potential sources of conflicts in the classroom. With this research we try to examine the conflict situations in the relationship Teacher-Student.

Questionnaires were handed out to all teachers selected by their willing to participate in the survey, providing enough time for their completion. Once completed, the questionnaires were collected in a way that ensured anonymity. Respondents were given the task to choose the conflict management styles which are implemented by them in the practice by checking one of the offered answers: "sometimes", "often" and "very often".

3. The results

The analysis of the questionnaires offers the following findings. The answers show that teachers very often prefer to manage the conflict in the classroom by avoiding the situation, often decide to collaborate with the other party (i.e. with the student, the parents and the pedagogue at the school service) and sometimes try to resolve the conflict with accommodation.

The figure below shows the types of conflict management styles implemented by the teachers in the classroom.

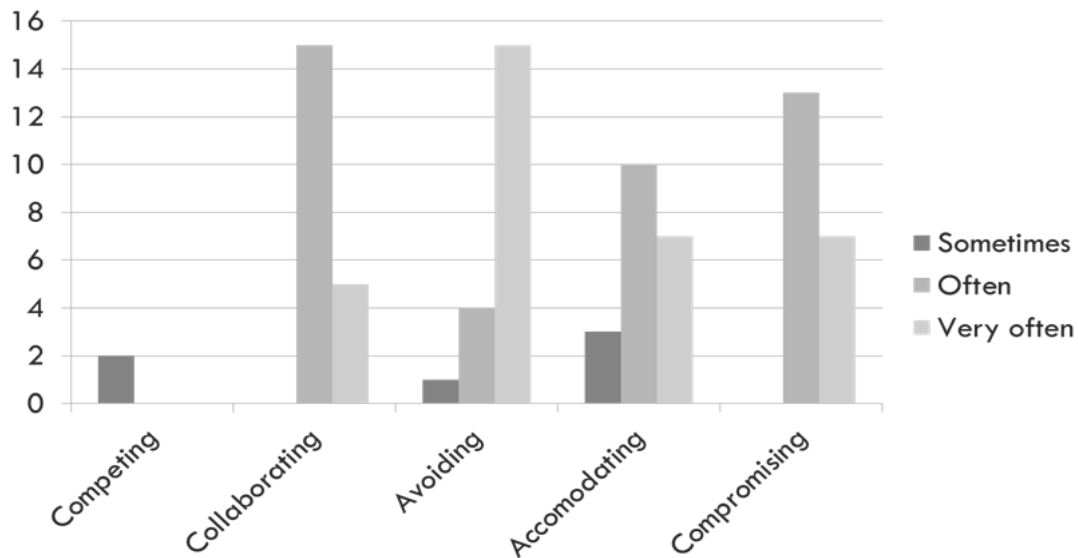


Figure 1. Overview of responses of the teachers with regard to the conflict management styles

Regarding of the potential sources for the conflict situations in the relationship Teacher-Student, 10 teachers respond that the biggest one is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder among the students, 4 teachers respond that : lack of communication, 1 teacher think that the biggest source for conflict isabsence of apologies from the student's part and 1 teacher respond: lying.

The figure below shows the potential sources for the conflict situations in the relationship Teacher-Student from the teachers' point of view.

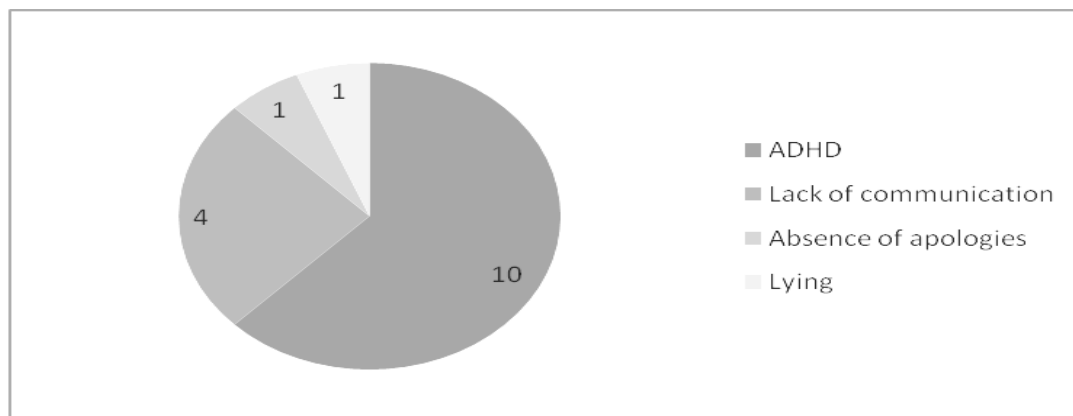


Figure 2. Overview of responses of the teachers with regard to thepotential sources for the conflict situations in the classroom

We would emphasize that limitation of the research is that the potential sources for the conflict situations in the classroom are affirmed only from the teachers' point of view.Student's perception and feelings regarding a conflict situations in the classrooms is needed.

4. Conclusion

Understanding conflict and the process of managing conflict are the most valuable lessons that we, as human beings can learn (Soleymaniha, 2014). In that line, the experience clearly demonstrates that to be successful teacher require an awareness of the relevance and significance of conflict resolution theory and practice. Even the best teacher will have such experience in his/her career. Conflict is not always negative. Conflict can bring about change, different perspectives and allow various types of growth.

The conflict situations in the classroom, inherently and systematically, impose the need of constructive communication and interaction, in line with contemporary educational trends. The instructions and examples for proven teaching interactions that encourage positive behavior, also can reduce or prevent inappropriate behaviors in the classroom (Hensley, 2016). But, implementation of such educational purposes and priorities requires adequate knowledge, skills and mindset of the teachers. It is exceptionally important that the future teachers acquire knowledge for action not only professionally, but also personally, as persons with high ethical awareness.

The analysis of the obtained results shows that more interventions are needed into the syllabus of the teacher training faculties in the region. Generally, this research shows that teachers can include concepts related to conflict management into classrooms in any subject area (art, health, language arts, reading, speech, writing, math, music, physical education, science, and social studies).

Therefore, our recommendations include the following two parameters:

- One essential component of the recommendations is strengthen skills for dealing with conflicts or the training and preparation of the teachers for better understanding of conflict and its resolution.
- It is necessary to integrate some concepts into curriculum materials which will include: understand and analyze conflict, identify feelings, identify factors that cause escalation, handle anger and other feelings appropriately, improve verbal communication skills.

The problem with the students' obedience and discipline in the classroom also requires teachers' knowledge about the conflict management. According to many educational policy makers (Gartrell, 2013), the students should acquire knowledge about their responsibilities and accountability to the teachers and the teachers should teach children to learn from their mistakes rather than punishing children for making mistakes. On this way, they can empower encouraging classroom in which all children feel fully accepted as capable members and learners.

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