Moldavian Journal for Education and Social Psychology
ISSN: 2559-7620
Covered in: CrossRef; RePEc; CEEOL; KVK; WorldCat; Google Scholar

2019, Volume 3, Issue 1, pages: 34-42| doi: 10.18662/mjesp/08

Reciprocal Associations between Communication Styles and Types of Pedagogical Approaches to Conflict Resolution

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Abstract: The aim of the present research has been to analyze how communication styles influence the personal predominant approaches of teachers in the event of a conflict broke out in the classroom. The participants were 46 teachers, from schools in Dorohoi and Darabani. The methods used were the standardized questionnaire "Communication style" (Solomon Marcus) and the adapted questionnaire of W.J. Kreidler. The present paper starts from the hypothesis that the use of persuasive messages correlates with the type of pedagogical approach in conflict resolution. The use of intervention strategies for classroom management largely depends on pedagogical tact and teacher skill. Conflict is part of school reality, but the teacher's ability to persuade may be defining in his regulation. Every pedagogical approach (of involvement, problem solving, of the compromised type, non-involvement type, ignorance type) takes its place but is advisable like teacher to use persuasive communication in finding solutions according to goals and relationships.

Keywords: *communication styles; conflict; pedagogical approaches to conflict.*

How to cite: Adascalitei, A.-M. (2019). Reciprocal Associations between Communication Styles and Types of Pedagogical Approaches to Conflict Resolution. *Moldavian Journal for Education and Social Psychology, 3*(1), 34-42. doi:10.18662/mjesp/08

Introduction

In the broad framework of conflict management it is also subsumed conflict resolution. T.K. Gamble and M. Gamble (1993) are claiming that beyond all perspectives, conflict is a natural consequence of diversity. At the moment, the vision of the conflict argues that this is inevitable, caused by needs/interests, perceptions, different values and the objective of management is to take its level towards optimum performance. The two sets of conflict control techniques, communication and analysis, are essential in conflict resolution. From the perspective of author I. Cerghit (2008), communication has always been a key component of education, an indispensable support to education. Receptive to the advancement of human communication, the long practice of the school has never ceased to approach and intelligently integrate different forms and means of verbal and non-verbal means into its procedural structures.

1. Theoretical framework

The multitude of different opinions and perceptions inevitably lead to conflict and this can be expressed in various interpersonal relationships established both at the level of communication and at the manifest behavioral level through violent relationships that can sometimes extend over a significant temporal time. The intensity of the conflict may vary depending on various factors, but it is always the expression of the values, the needs of the subjects, the different perceptions of a situation.

Among the many challenging situations to which a teacher has to cope with the class, an imminent conflict between the children has also entered. Like other types of conflicts, they express divergences in perceptions, opinions and values, and manifest themselves from a simple heated discussion to full-scale violence, violence that can extend beyond the classroom. Faced with this challenge, the teacher finds himself having to intervene to settle the conflict either as a counselor or as a mediator, or by addressing creative solutions aimed at eliminating the essence of the conflict. Pedagogical practice assists with a multitude of teaching styles. They vary according to the context of the teaching, the specificities imposed by the particularities of the didactic act.

From the great diversity of didactic styles, the conflict broke out among pupils that led to the updating of certain types of intervention focused on the communication styles specific to each teacher. In the face of conflict, the teacher reacts in his own style, style that defines his intervention

and defines it to some extent. The specificity of the conflict raises a specificity of the intervention and its resolution implies: vigilance, empathy, objectivity, concentration on task, on the roots of the conflict, addressing the conflict situation in a balanced, non-defensive and, of course, unbiased manner.

However, the approach to resolving conflicting situations is impressed by the styles of personal communication as we are going to highlight in this study.

Solomon Marcus (1987) believed that in ontogenesis, the individual is structuring a specific set of ways of communication based on his own style of reception and processing of messages and personal feedback. This way, along with temperament and attitude reactivity, defines the personality trait in the field of social relations.

Throughout individual development, certain stable and characteristic communication styles are built upon and consolidated. These tend to become generalized and manifest independently of the contextual particularities in which the actual communication takes place. Solomon Marcus distinguished four fundamental styles in communication:

- Non-assertive style, characterized by the tendency to evade communication, conformism, real difficulties in making a decision manifested behind an excess of conciliation and kindness. Style involves excessive receptivity to others' decisions, which does not exclude elements of anger and well-concealed grievance.
- Aggressive style includes elements of aggressiveness embodied in frequent frontal attacks that have the effect of damaging the interlocutor's dignity by affecting its sensitivity, and has its origins in a marked trend towards authority and dominance in the emitting subject. The effects of aggressive style are disarming, lethal and often generat antipathy and hatred.
- Manipulating style is characterized by management, shadow juggling of situations in order to obtain the maximum profit with minimal means. Manipulating subjects exploit situations in their favor, tend to associate with people they perceive as powerful, and their manifest attitude varies depending on the context, preserving their real impressions only for themselves.
- Assertive style resides in the ability to openly state their own opinions and rights in the absence of harm to the rights of others. The subject is open, honest, achieves its goals by its own means and his honest attitude attracts many sympathies.

Conflict situations existing in the class give rise to various ways of approaching the conflict. W.J.Kreidler (1984) was of the opinion that there are five types of approach to manifest conflicts through the following ways:

• The way the teacher is involved in the conflict resolution process, the involvement focused on the idea that the problems faced by the children are extremely serious and they must be guided in the separation of good from evil.

• The mode of manifest involvement by focusing on the source of the conflict, dramatizing the conflict situation in order to eliminate the conflict, which ends with increasing students' creativity and group cohesion.

• Compromise mode, individualized by listening to both sides involved in the conflict, and encouraging each to give away a little of what they want.

• The non-involvement type manifests by focusing the teacher's attention on other aspects considered more important than the conflict.

• The type of ignorance that is concretized in the setting of pretextual rules, conducive to the educational sequences, centered on the educational act, and nonitervention in the event of a conflict between pupils.

2. Methodology

The aim of the study is to analyze the correlation of communication styles with the pedagogical way of solving conflicts. The hypothesis of the study is: *approaches to engagement and focus on problem solving involve the influence of manipulative and assertive communication styles.*

In formulating the hypothesis, we have served the information in the theoretical part of the study, according to which manipulating subjects approach persuasion as a technique in the conflict resolution process. The working tools have been operationalized in the questionnaires of Solomon Marcus and W. J. Kreidler, ways in which both the styles of communication of the teachers and the ways in which they use the conflict resolution process have been individualized. The participants were 46 teachers from the Gymnasium School Nr. 1, Dorohoi and Gymnasium School "Leon Danaila", Darabani, 39 women and 7 men, selected by the random method. For checking the validity of the hypothesis, the following objectives have been proposed: a) to determinate the teachers' style of communication; b) to emphasize the degree to which engagement and focus on problem solving in students conflicts are influenced by manipulative and assertive communication styles.

3. Results

In order to check the research hypothesis, we have applied Pearson correlation. Based on the statistical analyses acquired, we have noted that: a) there is a correlation directly proportional [r (46) = 0.29, p <0.05], between manipulating style and problem-solving in the conflict resolution process; the square of r reflects a degree of association between the two variables in a ratio of 0.08 which shows a fairly low generalization susceptibility; b) the correlation between the manipulating style and the approach of involvement is not statistically significant [r (46) = 0.013, p> 0.05]; c) there is no significant correlation between the assertive style and the mode of involvement [r (46) = 0.49, p> 0.05]; d) there is no significant correlation between the assertive style and the problem-solving approach [r (46) = 0.64, p> 0.05]. Below, we present the means, standard deviations and the subjects lot (tables 1, 3, 5, 7) and the Pearson correlations for manipulating and asertive styles (tables 2, 4, 6, 8).

Table1. The means, standard deviations and the lot of subjects for manipulating style and pedagogical approach – engagement

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
manipulating style	8.3261	1.77707	46
engagement approach	7.4565	2.94925	46

Table2. Correlation coefficients for manipulative style and engagement approach

Correlations			
		manipulating style	engagement approach
manipulating style	Pearson Correlation	1	.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.930
	N	46	46
engagement approach	Pearson Correlation	.013	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.930	
	N	46	46

Table3. The means, standard deviations and the lot of subjects for the manipulating style of communication and pedagogical approach - tackling problem solving

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
manipulating style	8.3261	1.77707	46
tackling problem solving	8.4348	2.98628	46

Table 4. Correlation coefficients for manipulative style and tackling problem solving

Correlations			
		manipulating style	tackling problem solving
manipulating style	Pearson Correlation	1	.295*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.046
	N	46	46
tackling problem solving	Pearson Correlation	.295*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	
	N	46	46
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Table 5. The means, standard deviations and the lot of subjects for engagement approach and assertive style of communication

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
engagement approach	7.4565	2.94925	46
assertive style	7.3913	2.71193	46

Table 6. Correlation coefficients for engagement approach and assertive style of communication

Correlations			
		engagement approach	assertive style
engagement approach	Pearson Correlation	1	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.744
	N	46	46
assertive style	Pearson Correlation	.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.744	
	N	46	46

Table 7. The means, standard deviations and the lot of subjects for tackling problem solving and assertive style of communication

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
tackling problem solving	8.4 348	2.98628	46
assertive style	7.3913	2.71193	46

Table 8. Correlation coefficients for tackling problem solving and assertive style

Correlations			
		tackling problem solving	assertive style
tackling problem solving	Pearson Correlation	1	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.675
	N	46	46
assertive style	Pearson Correlation	.064	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.675	
	N	46	46

4. Implications/discussion

From the data obtained above, it appears that manipulating subjects, even if they tend to escape the conflict at the outbreak, aim to solve problems by dramatic approach and manipulation of the realities in order to reveal and eliminate the sources and the blockages of conflicts. Assertive subjects do not engage in solving conflicts and do not approach solving them in a constructive manner. It is possible that assertives, centered on balanced, solved, honest, empathic and pacifist conflicts, may be overcome

in the face of violent conflicts between children and resort to their resolution by other means such as appealing to hierarchical superiors or, why not, solving the conflict by itself. The assertive style is highlighted, we think, when the subject is part of the conflict and not from the position of a mediator in the shadow that guides its effective resolution.

Our study has shown that assertiveness in communication does not correlate with addressing problem solving in conflicts between pupils in the classroom. The explanation is that some teachers declare themselves as assertive, but they do not resort to conflict-resolution strategies based on involvement and resolution. In this context, it is important that the approach of a conflict to be traced: the arguments of both sides, the expression of conclusions, the use of a common language; the specificity and addressability characteristics used in communication; avoidance of dilution of arguments, direct and categorical arguments; open questions, a positive atmosphere of mutual respect.

Conclusions

The obtained results show that the hypothesis is partially confirmed. In the elaboration of the study we started from the idea that the solving of conflicts by the teachers bears the imprint of the characteristic communication styles. It was supposed that before the conflict the teacher will react in his specific style, he will update that attitude set in ontological development and which allowed him an easy approach to the problems he faced in his personal experience. It was thought that persuasion is associated with the approaches of the conflict in a positive way, which is confirmed by our research. The obtained results partly reflect our premises, with a very poor correlation between the manipulating style and the center-by-problem approach, $r\ (46) = 0.29$ and the subsequent operations show that only 8% reflects the degree of association of the variables at the population level, the rest of the association being caused by factors that do not relate to our research. Manipulating subjects approach the problem-centered technique in solving conflicts between students. Instead, they tend not to engage in conflict resolution. Assertive subjects do not engage in conflict resolution, preferring to stand aside, turn to hierarchical superiors, or wait for time to pass faster. Probably, the assertive subjects will address in a different way from the advanced premises in the present research solving the conflicts broke out between the students. We believe that recourse to resolution techniques has a much wider and more complex caseload field, that there are a multitude of factors that brighten it to defuse it. In addition to tact, skill,

structured ontogenetic techniques and the specific style of intervention, let us not forget that the conflict has an objective character, that it requires urgent interventions such as "hic et nunc" and that any delay may have effects unwanted. Ideally, teachers should show objectivity in conflict analysis, self-mastery at the time of emergence, empathy, dominance, and a certain amount of emotional intelligence, to intervene in solving conflicts, to use effective and accessible mediation techniques available to the parties to the conflict, to address educational strategies that target joint activities, knowing that cooperation can facilitate the defuse of imminent conflicts.

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