

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

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Abstract: This article examines the issue of preventing conflicts in educational institutions through the formation of social-emotional competencies between learners and educators. The essence of social-emotional competency, its structural components, and mechanisms for its development in the education system are analysed based on academic sources. In addition, modern pedagogical approaches, psychological mechanisms and their influencing factors are discussed.

Keywords: social-emotional competency, conflict, educational institution, psychological mechanism, empathy, self-awareness, self-management, communicative skill.

Introduction. In today's era of globalization the education system is oriented not only to imparting knowledge, but also to ensuring the social-emotional development of the individual. The interactions between learner and educator, the social climate within the classroom, peer communication — all of these increase the risk of conflict. In such conditions the development of social-emotional competency, i.e., the skills of managing one's emotions, understanding others and communicating effectively, becomes the most important psychological tool for preventing conflicts. Modern psychological studies show that learners and educators with high social-emotional competencies choose moderate, constructive approaches in conflict situations. Therefore these competencies are considered a key factor in ensuring psychological safety in the education system.

Social-emotional competency is the set of abilities of a person to manage one's own emotions, understand the emotions of others, establish positive social relationships and maintain equilibrium in communication. It determines a person's psychological well-being, social adaptability and capacity to approach conflicts constructively. The concept of social-emotional competency in psychology is grounded in the theory of emotional intelligence. According to this theory, a person recognises and manages their own and others' emotions and, by doing so, realises effective social interaction. Daniel Goleman applied this theory to practical areas including education, considering social-emotional competency as 80 percent of the factor for professional success. Because knowledge by itself is not enough — a

person's emotional culture, ability to hold themselves, ability to work with others are also keys to success.

Goleman divides social-emotional competency into five main components:

- Self-awareness – the individual knows their emotions, strengths and weaknesses, understands how their emotions react in different situations.

- Self-management – managing emotions, controlling impulsive behaviour. Maintaining calmness, patience and balance in stressful conditions.
- Motivation – the individual moves towards goals under internal drive. They are determined in achieving successes. This trait prompts a person towards positive changes.
- Empathy – the ability to understand others' emotions, moods, needs.
- Social skills – effective communication, working in a team, establishing positive relationships. Maintaining peace in conflicts, coming to compromise, being able to listen.

A conflict is a social process arising from the clash of interests, values or emotional needs. Conflicts are especially natural in educational institutions, for instance between teacher-learner, learner-learner or among members of the pedagogical staff. But the key issue is how a conflict is managed: persons with high social-emotional competencies perceive the conflict not as hostility but as an opportunity for exchange of views, keep their emotions under control, and use empathic listening to arrive at compromise. Psychologically, the mechanisms of conflict-management are based on:

- Cognitive re-evaluation – the individual sees the conflict not as hostility but as an opportunity for growth.
- Emotional control – suppressing negative emotions and maintaining balance.
- Empathic listening – aiming to fully understand the other side's position.
- Assertive communication: using “I-messages” (for example: “In this situation I felt uncomfortable” rather than “You made me upset”) to carry out communication. Research shows that teachers with high social-emotional competencies detect conflict at an early stage and use positive analysis methods to prevent it. In the education system, the development of social-emotional competency is carried out along the following lines: training sessions for teachers to develop emotional literacy, empathy and stress-management skills; exercises for learners on emotional expression, positive communication and self-management; improvement of psychological service activities in schools where school-psychologists implement “emotional stability” programmes for learners and teachers; use of digital tools like interactive games, simulations, “emotional diaries” for self-awareness. Also, the social-emotional education (SEL) approach has been recognised as a key way in education not only to ensure academic achievement but also psychological well-being.

To prevent conflicts in educational institutions it is important to create a positive classroom climate where learners feel valued, to implement teacher emotional modelling (that is, the educator being an example of emotional regulation through his/her own behaviour), to use restorative approaches — for example, resolving problems by dialogue, reconciliation and understanding instead of punishment — and most importantly, the “healthy communication” methodology: open-ended questions, culture of idea-sharing, constructive discussion play significant roles. These mechanisms not only reduce conflicts but also strengthen

social-emotional competencies and ensure psychological safety in the educational institution. Development of social-emotional competencies is a major psychological factor in preventing conflicts in the education system. In an environment of healthy communication, empathy and emotional stability among teacher and learners, conflicts are resolved in a constructive way. Therefore it is necessary at the level of educational policy to implement SEL programmes, and to include modules on social-emotional education in teacher professional development courses.

Link between the level of social-emotional competencies and conflict-management styles

No	Participant group (classes/teachers)	Social-emotional competency level (Score: 1–low, 5– high)	Common conflict- management style	Conflict frequency (average per month)	Percentage of positive conflict resolution (%)
1	5th- grade learners (N = 30)	2.8	Neglect	4.2	35 %
2	7th- grade learners (N = 30)	3.6	Compromise	2.9	55 %
3	9th-grade learners (N = 30)	4.1	Communication- through resolution	1.7	73 %
4	Teachers (N = 15)	4.5	Empathy & dialogue	1.1	85 %
5	Group working with school- psychologist	4.7	Self- control, compromise	0.9	91 %

This table shows the relationship between the level of social-emotional competencies and the approaches to conflict management among various groups within an educational institution. The level of social-emotional competency was determined via questionnaire, measuring the learner's or teacher's ability to understand and manage their own emotions and to relate to others. The conflict-management style is the most frequently used approach (e.g., aggression, neglect, compromise, empathy, dialogue). Conflict frequency is the average number of disputes/misunderstandings per month (based on observations by teachers or class-leaders). Positive resolution is the percentage of conflict situations that ended constructively (the parties understood one another, no negative consequences occurred).

In modern psychology, social-emotional competency is considered as a criterion of "interpersonal resilience" — that is, the capacity of a person to find constructive communication even in conflict situations. In the educational process these components are formed via communicative processes between teacher and learner. For example, recognising a learner's feelings, the teacher giving positive feedback, and creating a supportive classroom environment form the foundation for social-emotional development.

Conclusion. The development of social-emotional competencies serves as a means to raise an

individual's psychological culture, to create a stable communicative environment in the educational process, and to prevent conflicts. Educators with such competencies demonstrate emotional maturity, empathic communication, reflective approach and compromise-based thinking in their practice. As a result, a healthy psychological climate, cooperation and mutual respect are achieved in the educational institution.

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