

Conflict talk

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and keywords:

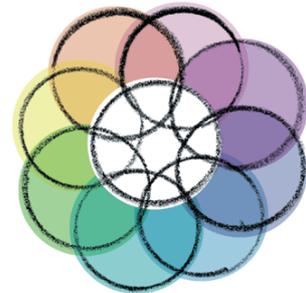
Conflict talk is a common but complex phenomenon. Research on conflict has been covered from different fields, e.g., philosophy, rhetoric, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and linguistics. Conflict is often seen as aggressive and hence destructive behaviour, arising from deficiencies in social skills and communication. However, conflict can also be understood as a constructive process with positive consequences (Iborra 2004, McWhirter 1999, 2000). Despite previous investigation into conflict in the social sciences, the study of actual discourse within conflict episodes and its corresponding features is relatively recent.

Keywords:

Conflict talk, verbal aggression, community, team work, decision taking

Materials:

- A sheet of paper
- Pen
- A set of cards for any card game



Duration:

3 one-hour class sessions

Number of participants:

- Five or more
- The ideal size for a group would be 20-25 boys (and girls)

Age:

10 -11 year old boys (and girls)

Aims:

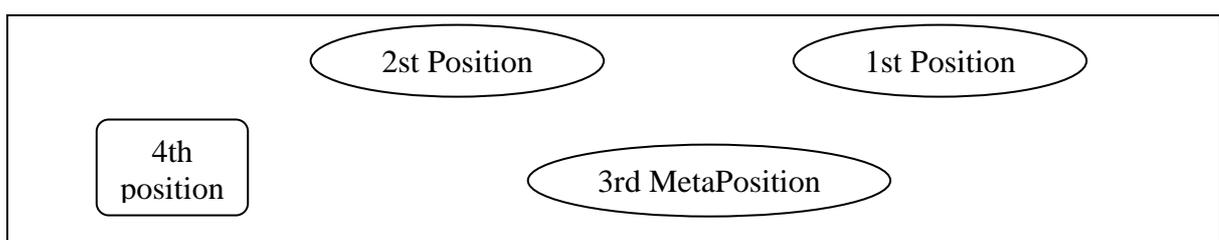
- To understand the factors involved in taking decisions in conflict contexts.
- To learn the skills needed in order to achieve "perspective taking" competences.
- To foster the cognitive-emotional development of the students.

(Short) Explanation:

By exploring real conflict scenarios students will be able to develop their perspective taking competences. Instead of performing artificial role playing boys will commit themselves to the exploration of actual conflict lived in class, leisure-time or their family context. Activities will move on from objective towards more subjective analysis.

Guidance for the game or exercise:

1. In groups of five to six people, boys will discuss what they know about conflict. If they like conflict or not, different examples, what they feel when they live a conflict, what they think. The purpose of this is to activate their previous experience about the topic of interest.
2. Students think of at least three examples of personal conflict experiences lived in two or more different contexts (school, family, friends, etc...) Once they have thought about the examples they can share them with their group. Sharing conflict stories provides an opportunity to “objectify” and externalize problems through talking. Sharing real conflict stories is also a way to identify common sources of problems among students and facilitates awareness of lived experiences. It may even serve to mitigate their importance.
3. New groups are formed of 4 students. Each student will explore one of his conflicts by turns as follows. They will take four different roles in rounds.
 - Boy A will tell his experience from his perspective.
 - Boy B will take the perspective of the other person involved in the conflict situation. He will try to express what he thinks that person was feeling or thinking.
 - Boy C will take an external perspective expressing what he thinks that happened taking into account both perspectives.
 - Boy D will make a summary of three perspectives A, B and C. He also will express the result of his observation of the performance of A, B and C.
 - As a final round all boys (boy A above all) will express what they felt during the exploration and what they think at this particular moment.
 - Roles swap so that boy A becomes D, boy B becomes A, boy C becomes B, and boy D becomes C.
 - The purpose of this activity is to facilitate the exploration of real interpersonal conflict from different perspectives.
 - Each perspective is practiced with different examples so it is easier to see what is remarkable about them.



4. There is a feedback session with the whole group in order to share experiences, questions, misunderstandings and insights.
5. The final activity, in groups of three boys, involves exploring again the same interpersonal conflict but this time each boy will take all the four different perspectives.
 - Boy A draws a point on the floor (or marks it by using a piece of paper or card) which represents his own subjective perspective. Then he draws another point representing the "other" perspective just opposite point A. At the same distance from A and B, the boy draws point C (the relational perspective). Finally, point D is marked a bit further in order to represent all the experiences from an external point of view.
 - Once all the points have been marked, boy A begins to live the experience from the perspective of each point. Boy B leads student A in this task just listening to what he says from every point. Boy C watches the relationship between A and B and whether they are following the instructions or not, whether boy A has any difficulty in adopting any perspective, etc...
 - Every boy takes the four different roles in turns.
 - Finally, all three boys share their experiences.
 - The purpose of this activity is to live the conflict experience again but from a subjective perspective as each perspective is directly lived by every student.
 - At the same time, the series of perspectives range from the subjective towards the objective end, in order to integrate the experience. Once it is "objectified" it is easier to think about it.
6. There is a final feedback session with the whole group to share their experiences and give some theoretical background related to conflict and perspective-taking.
7. Finally, all the students write what they have learnt on a sheet of paper during the session. Some of the experiences are read aloud by the facilitator.



Reflection:

With this series of activities following an experiential methodology, students will be able to practice the competences required to take several perspectives of one experience into consideration. It will be interesting to observe the complexity of social interaction, the differences in their discourse while holding a particular perspective and their awareness of their own and others' intentions, interests and emotions. It is also a good opportunity for them to go beyond their own perspectives.