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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26203/ssmn-3h47>

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To cite this article: OBRAZTSOVA, O., (2018). Teacher's beliefs on conflict and conflict resolution. *Education in the North*, 25(1-2), pp. 259-274.



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Teachers' beliefs on conflict and conflict resolution study

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Abstract

Conflict is a natural part of life and a part of school life, too. Teachers might be involved in conflicts with students, their parents and colleagues. The point is not to avoid conflicts or to resolve them with administrative tools, but to handle them productively. Conflict management strategies are important in maintaining human relationships, positive classroom environment and school climate. To manage conflicts efficiently, teachers need knowledge and understanding of nature of conflict, special skills and methods of conflict resolution in practice, as well as readiness to conflict management. To analyse teachers' beliefs on conflict nature and conflict transformation the empirical study using mixed methods approach was organized. Participants were secondary school teachers and university teachers from Arkhangelsk and Severodvinsk (n=133). Methods used were interview of experts and questionnaire for teachers with close-ended questions and scaled questions constructed in the format of a typical five-level Likert items. The teachers realize the basic nature of conflict and humans' behaviour in it, but their beliefs are rather ambivalent. There are some differences in the beliefs of school teachers and university teachers; both groups of teachers chose the compromise as prevailing conflict strategy but recognize the lack of knowledge and skills in the field of practical conflict resolution. The study hasn't found out significant differences in teachers' beliefs associated with gender, age and teaching speciality.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution, Conflict Styles, Teachers' Beliefs

Introduction

Conflict is a natural part of life. Wherever we see the collision of goals, interests, needs, beliefs or opinions, a conflict may occur. The point is not to avoid conflicts or fear conflicts but to handle them productively. Conflicts are a natural and normal part of school life, too. Teachers might be involved in conflicts with students, their parents, colleagues and principals. In respect to communication with the students, nowadays a teacher is not the primary power holder in the classroom. Students can argue with the teacher, not follow his instructions or do contrary things. A conflict can be hidden, or a face-to-face struggle may occur in the classroom. As for the face-to-face struggle the situation is complicated by the fact of its publicity and the lack of time to assess the conflict situation. The teacher's desire to maintain social status, guided by his or her own idea of what the teacher is supposed to do and what is neither allowed, nor humiliating, may also become an obstacle for negotiation in the conflict situation.

Administrative response to conflicts is a widely spread tactic in schools. Handling conflicts is a more efficient and productive way, not only for resolving the current conflict situation but as an example of effective behaviour within communication. From this point of view every conflict being handled and resolved performs an educational purpose. That's why a teacher must be a conflict manager. Constructive conflict management strategies are important in maintaining human relationships, positive classroom environment and school climate. To be effective in conflict management and resolution a person needs understanding of nature of conflicts, a certain attitude to conflicts as resolved contradictions, and conflict handling skills.

The Russian researcher of conflict L.N. Tsoy points out that in our society the distorted view on conflict as a destructive process is prevailing, and many people are afraid of conflicts. That's why the actual task for practitioners is to promote the perception of conflict as a social value, the source for new possibilities. (Tsoy, 2001). On the other hand, the common practice of conflict resolution with administrative tools does not contribute to the new conflict culture.

In this way, the actual beliefs of teachers on conflicts, conflict styles, conflict resolution and transformation are to be studied. It is teachers who might become agents of new approaches to conflict resolution. However, in Russian-language studies there is a lack of empirical research on issues of teachers' perception of conflict, attitudes toward conflicts, preferred conflict styles. Thus, the topic of our study was determined as "Teachers' beliefs on conflict and conflict resolution".

Theoretical Context

For several years of research conflict has been studied from multiple perspectives. The term "conflict" has been used in different ways, referring to different forms or kinds of conflict. One can find more than 30 definitions of *conflict*. These definitions reflect various features of

conflict as a social phenomenon: struggle between two or more people over values; competition for status, power, or scarce resources beliefs, and other preferences or desires; expression of hostile attitudes; opposition and disagreement; antagonistic psychological relation or one form of antagonistic interaction; divergence of interest. (Rahim, 2001). Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. Pruitt and Rubin define conflict as “a perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously” (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986, p. 4). Wilmot and Hocker describe conflict as a felt struggle between two or more interdependent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or over differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness. (Wilmot and Hocker, 2011). Rahim (2001) summarizes different approaches to conflict and concludes that there are some elements that may be present in a conflict: opposing interests between parties, recognition of such opposed interests, and beliefs by each party that the other will thwart or has thwarted his or her interest. Conflict is “an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreements, or dissonance within or between social entities”. (Rahim, 2001, p. 32).

Practitioners when dealing with the strategies and tactics of conflict management and conflict resolution emphasize that conflict is an integral part of social interaction. Fisher et al defines conflict as “a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals”. Conflicts are a fact of life, inevitable and often creative. Disagreements and conflicts are usually resolved without violence, and often lead to an improved situation for most or all those involved. If it is clear that conflict is with us whether we like it or not, it is only another step to seeing that we actually need it. (Fisher et al, 2000, p.4).

For the purposes of this study, interpersonal conflicts are of interest: most of the conflicts which teachers are involved in daily and weekly, are interpersonal conflicts. Barki and Hartwick define three manifestations of every interpersonal conflict: cognitive, behavioural and affective. Cognitive is a disagreement between the parties when they think that a divergence of values, needs, interests, opinions, and goals exist. Behavioural implies debate, argumentation, competition, political manoeuvring, back-stabbing, aggression, hostility, and destruction that have been associated with interpersonal conflict. Affective denotes negative emotions that have been associated with conflict, such as fear, jealousy, anger, anxiety, and frustration. So, “interpersonal conflict is a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals” (Barki and Hartwick, 2004).

The most important issue for both theory and practice of dealing with conflict is the choice of strategy of behaviour in conflict. The researchers use different terminology for conflict strategies though their content is similar. The typology offered by Kenneth Thomas is well

known and widely used in practice. Intentions of a person in a conflict can be described along two independent dimensions – cooperativeness (attempting to satisfy the other's concern) and assertiveness (attempting to satisfy one's own concern). Five conflict styles are defined in terms of those dimensions. *Competing* (low cooperativeness, high assertiveness), *accommodating* (high cooperativeness, low assertiveness), *avoiding* (low cooperativeness, low assertiveness), *collaborating* (high cooperativeness, high assertiveness), *compromising* (intermediate in both cooperativeness and assertiveness) (Thomas, 1992; Thomas, Thomas and Schaubhut, 2008).

Competing is an attempt to satisfy one's own concern at the other's expense. Accommodating sacrifices one's own concern in favour of the others. Avoiding neglects both people's concerns by sidestepping or postponing a conflict issue. But sometimes this strategy is used when a person considers the conflict to be insignificant, or has a lack of information, or just prefers to apply efforts on something else. Collaborating is an attempt to find an integrative or win-win solution that fully satisfies both people's concerns. The result of collaborating is a mutual concordant resolution obtained at the end of a cooperative assignment. Compromise is the result of a situation when parties are ready to win or lose something in order to reach an agreement. The main aim is to stop the struggle and to reach a common satisfaction.

The search for definitions of *conflict* most widely used in the Russian resources and handbooks showed the prevalence of the same approaches: conflict is a collision, a struggle, a confrontation based on opposite or simply different interests and needs of the parties. Some studies focus on important and interesting problem of what features of personality that provide the efficient behaviour in a conflict are. The researchers negotiate about the *Conflictological competence* or *Conflictological culture* of a personality. N. Samsonova defines Conflictological culture of a personality as the endeavour (desire) to prevent and resolve social conflicts. But the specialists who deal with the conflict environment need more than just their desire to handle conflicts. They also need knowledge in the field of conflict transformation (theoretically based knowledge) and special methods and techniques of conflict resolution. So, to be ready and to be able to resolve conflicts a person has to possess knowledge (what is the nature of the conflict?), methods and tools (how is it possible to resolve conflict?), readiness to handle conflicts (Samsonova, 2002, p.12). It might be stated that the last one is very difficult to cultivate. The readiness to handle conflicts and to resolve them productively is connected with wide range of human traits: kindness, endurance, tolerance, self-control, impartiality, intuition, reflection, propensity to justice.

As for strategies of conflict handling and resolution used by school teachers, one can note a lack of empirical research in Russian. As for international databases, the results of researching various aspects of conflict management and conflict styles of school teachers are presented (e.g. Cornille, Pestle and Vanwy, 1999; Morris-Rothschild and Brassard, 2006;

Mahon, 2009). In the context of our study we find some results gained by Cornille, Pestle and Vanwy (1999) interesting. In their research they've found that teachers as a group are more likely to avoid conflict and be more accommodating than other professionals are, integrating (collaborating) and compromising are conflict strategies most commonly used by teachers.

The theoretical analysis of the problem allowed us to reveal its basic aspects and set the research questions of our study:

1. What is teachers' perception of conflicts and understanding of different signals in conflict?
2. How do teachers assess their own behaviour in the conflicts and what conflict styles do teachers prefer?
3. In what way do these perceptions and beliefs allow to assess teachers' readiness to manage conflicts and resolve them productively?

Research design and method

The sample included 133 teachers: 6 teachers considered to be experts in problem investigated were interviewed, 75 secondary school teachers and 52 university teachers were surveyed. All participants live either in Arkhangelsk or Severodvinsk. These two urban settings are located approximately 35 kilometres apart, Arkhangelsk is in the delta of the river, and Severodvinsk is on the coast of the White Sea.

Our study consisted of two stages: the preliminary stage was collecting experts' opinion to define the content of the notion "readiness of a person to handle and resolute conflict" and the basic stage was survey of teachers.

The group of experts consisted of 6 teachers who were actively interested and engaged in the problem of conflict transformation: they were the participants of different workshops on conflict management and had theoretical knowledge in this field, 3 teachers from this group deal with school reconciliation services. While interviewing experts we used unstructured open-ended interview. This type of interview may give the researcher an opportunity to test out his or her preliminary understanding of the topic and to highlight its new aspects and details. Open-ended questions are flexible; they allow the interviewer to go deeper; they encourage co-operation and help establish rapport with respondents (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005). Unstructured interview allows interviewees to use their own words and develop their own thoughts. Allowing interviewees to "speak their minds" is a better way of discovering things about complex issues (Denscombe, 2003, p.167).

These 6 teachers were asked the following questions: What styles of conflict handling do teachers use? Are teachers ready to use productive ways to resolve conflicts? If you know a

teacher who deals with conflicts effectively, what traits of character and behaviour of this person can you identify? What are the main features of a person who is ready to start positive negotiation and conflict transformation?

Analysing the answers of experts, we found out and defined the main features of such a person:

- a person is open to communication; he or she is ready to take the initiative in negotiations;
- a person is ready to make the first step to compromise (when nobody doesn't want it and waits for the initiative from the other party, the conflict situation may be not resolved for days and weeks);
- a person precepts conflict holistically: there are two or more parties in a conflict, every party has its own interests;
- a person strives for identifying individual goals and interests in the conflict of both parties; he or she is ready to see situation from the point of view of the other party;
- a person listens to the other party.

The basic ideas of these statements and assessments were taken into account when drafting the key-questions and statements of questionnaire, in particular in its scaled section.

Experts emphasized some important aspects of the problem. They identify the teachers' competence in the sphere of conflict management as deficient. For example, comprehending the main conflict styles, teachers often don't draw a distinction between *collaborating* and *compromising* strategies. This understanding comes due to special training (for example, in practical workshop on conflict management). Therefore, in the multiple choice question about the preferred personal conflict styles the answer identifying collaborating was excluded.

The questionnaire offered to the teachers consisted of three parts:

1. Personal information about respondent (3 questions);
2. Information about conflicts in their life and their opinion on conflicts (7 questions);
3. Scaled questions. The items were scored on a five-point Likert scale (from "completely disagree" to "completely agree").

It was constructed in the format of close-ended questions with one choice and closed-ended questions with multiple choice (2-3 answers), and also supplied with the possibility for a respondent to give the own variant.

Likert scale as an attitude scale is suitable for analysing a group of opinions, values and dispositions associated with a particular object. Likert scale assesses attitudes toward a topic by presenting a set of statements about the topic and asking respondents to indicate for each whether they strongly agree, agrees, are undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. The various agree–disagree responses are assigned a numeric value, and the total scale score is found by summing the numeric responses given to each item. This total score assesses the individual's attitude toward the topic. Although individual responses are normally treated as ordinal data, it is possible to create a score for a group of key statements, and work with them as interval data, using mode, median and quartiles. So, Likert scale allows to describe individual profiles of the participants, and to assess common attitude of the group to the issue using it as a summated rating scale. (Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen, p. 209).

The Likert scale questionnaire contained several general statements about conflicts and conflict management revealing the attitude of teachers to these issues. Seven of them were defined as key-statements to assess their personal attitudes to conflicts and behaviour in conflicts. These statements represented the key characteristics of the idea “readiness to manage and resolve conflicts”. These were issues that showed great difference of opinions among the participants:

1. In conflict there exists neither right party nor wrong party; each party has its own truth.
2. The most difficult thing in the conflict is to understand the position or motives of the other party.
3. Sometimes in conflict it is better to give up your interests if it brings the solution of the conflict.
4. Sometimes in conflict it is better to keep your own opinion and authority rather than to resolve a conflict situation.
5. It is very difficult to resolve a conflict situation if the other party does not admit its mistakes / wrongness.
6. In conflict it is very difficult to make concessions if the other party does not demonstrate the same wish.
7. If a conflict situation has developed between my colleagues or friends I will always support the party that was “offended”.

Statements 1-3 are measured in direct way: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree. For statements 4-7 scoring scale runs in the opposite direction: 5 = completely disagree, 1 = completely agree.

Findings

Characteristics of the sample

For the survey, the method of snowball or network sampling was used (Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen, 2009, p. 430). It was a volunteer sample; the questionnaire was anonymous, and was posted in Google Forms. The link to the questionnaire with the textual description of the study objectives was given to the teachers who are closely connected with the researcher in educational area (for example, teachers who help with organization of students' practice). These teachers could share this link with their colleagues directly or publish it in closed public in social network. Thus, teachers from at least 9-10 schools were surveyed. University teachers got the access to the questionnaire in a similar way, though all respondents are from one educational institution.

According to the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2013) school teacher's community in Russia is presented mainly by female teachers – 85%. In our survey 90.7 % of the sample are female teachers that corresponds to the tendency. In the group of university teachers 69% of the sample are female respondents, 31% - male respondents.

Table 1 presents the age characteristics of both groups. Young school teachers under thirty were more responsive in the survey – 41.3% of respondents. As for the university teachers the most responsive group was the group aged 30-39 – 30.8%. The age group of 50+ is presented in both samples – 16% and 19.2 % respectively.

Table 1: Age distribution of participants

Age group	School teachers n=75	University teachers n=52
Under 30	31 (41.3%)	11 (23.1%)
30-39	19 (25.3%)	17 (30.8%)
40-49	13 (17.4%)	14 (26.9%)
More than 50	12 (16%)	10 (19.2%)

School teachers are presented by the teachers of Languages and Literature (26.7%), History and Social Sciences (21.3%), Natural Sciences (12%), Math (10.7%), all other represented other specialities. The most active respondents among the university teachers were the teachers of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (53%), Natural Sciences (19.2%), Technical Disciplines (11.8%).

Perception of the conflict and conflict strategies

Teachers' answers show that school life is traditionally a more conflict life than the one in university. By the middle of the academic year 44% of school teachers have had conflicts with the colleagues, 39% with the students' parents and 57% with the students. Moreover 13.3% of teachers note that they have had more than 3 conflicts with students or they had

permanent or repetitive conflicts. In comparison, 32.7% of the university teachers told about the conflicts with the colleagues and 23% - about conflicts with the students.

The majority of teachers agree that conflicts are the part of our life and they are unavoidable (81% in both groups). At the same time fewer teachers are not afraid of conflicts and ready to deal with them in their life. 64% of teachers in both groups believe that it is better to avoid conflicts in order to maintain good relations with colleagues and students or to keep peace of mind. The best way to resolve any conflict is by making concessions from both parties (85% of school teachers and 80% of university teachers agree). Only 5 teachers disagree with this statement.

What are the personal strategies teachers apply while solving conflict situation? We suggested that teachers mark 1 or 2 strategies. In the questionnaire the strategies were not named directly but described as behaviour acts (Table 2).

Table 2: Preferred personal strategies in resolving conflict situation

	School teachers	University teachers
Compromise	80%	88,5%
Avoidance	43%	36,5%
Competing / win	15%	27%
Accommodation / loss	9%	7,7%

The most preferred strategy in both groups is compromise. And we see some differences in perception of avoidance and competing: university teachers are more focused on the competing and win-strategy, at the same time they are less focused on avoidance. Some teachers marked only one strategy as preferred, and only three of them chose competing (to win, to solve the conflict situation only "on my terms") as the only possible – 2 male teachers under 30 and 1 female teacher of age group 30-39. While assessing an interpersonal conflict the teachers' pay more attention to its cognitive and affective components, and again we see the difference in beliefs of school teachers and university teachers (Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3: What prevents people from initiating negotiations while resolving a conflict?

School teachers		University teachers	
Conviction in own beliefs	68%	Unwillingness or inability to understand the other party	75%
Anger or offense	61,3%	Conviction in own beliefs	67,3%
Unwillingness or inability to understand the other party	57,3%	Anger or offence	67,3%
Injustice towards oneself	44%	Injustice towards oneself	38,5%
Self-esteem	36%	Self-esteem	30,8%

Table 4: *What prevents you personally from initiating negotiations while resolving a conflict?*

	School teachers	University teachers
Injustice towards oneself	54,7%	67,3%
Conviction in own beliefs	46,7%	50%
Anger or offense	42,7%	40,4%
Self-esteem	34,7%	32,7%
Unwillingness or inability to understand the other party	14,7%	7,7%

When teachers assess human behaviour in conflict in general they quite clearly mark such a problem as misunderstandings between conflict parties. While assessing their own emotions and behaviour in conflicts they don't find the "Unwillingness or inability to understand the other party" item to be relative to themselves. Only 14.7% of school teachers and 7.7% of university teachers chose this answer. Some teachers used the open field to add their own answer to this question. They think that people don't often imagine the consequences of the conflict; they only see some particular actions but not the whole situation and cannot see the situation from the point of view of an opposite party.

The answers to the question "Why is it difficult to transform conflicts between teachers and students?" of both groups of teachers were similar. The reasons were ranked in the following order (respondents might choose 3 statements):

1. Students when in conflict are too emotional; they can't percept the situation rationally.
2. Students have the lack of competencies and skills in conflict transformation.
3. Teachers have the lack of competencies and skills in conflict transformation.
4. Teachers can't overcome the distance between them and students.
5. If a teacher uses compromise strategy students can perceive it as a teacher's weakness.
6. Teachers and student don't understand each other because of age factor.

One answer to this question was rather provocative: *It is difficult to convince students that they are not right*. 26.7% of school teachers and 9.6% of university teachers made this choice.

Readiness to manage conflicts and resolve them

In the scaled part of the questionnaire 7 statements were identified as important for the assessment of the readiness of a person to support or even to initiate the process of resolving conflict. The lowest score was 7, the highest score was 35. A person who gets high scores may be described as opened to communication in conflict situation, ready to understand the opposite party and to offer steps and even concessions to reach compromise or other positive solution. This person does not think "Only my opinion is right".

School Teachers have got scores from 14 to 28, median is 21; the group of teachers with highest scores (26-28) consists of 6 respondents – 8% of sample. University Teachers have got scores from 16 to 30, median is 21; the group of teachers with highest scores (26-30) consists of 4 respondents – 7.6% of the sample.

In order to define whether the scores of each group are significantly different, three quartiles were introduced. The first quartile (Q1) is defined as the middle number between the smallest number and the median of the data set. The second quartile (Q2) is the median of the data. The third quartile (Q3) is the middle value between the median and the highest value of the data set. For both groups of teachers the point for Q1 was 19 scores, the point for Q3 was 23 scores. So, the results of more than 50% of respondents are in the range from 19 to 23 scores, they show similar state of readiness to manage conflicts, and it is not of high level. In addition, we may conclude that there is no significant difference between two teachers groups.

The teachers' assessments of statements were rigorous, no questionnaire contained only "neutral" answers. Let us make some brief review of these assessments.

"In conflict there exists neither right party nor wrong party; each party has its own truth".

62% of respondents in both groups agree or strongly agree with this statement. At the same time, only 15.7% of the teachers do not agree with the statement

"It is very difficult to resolve a conflict situation if the other party does not admit its mistakes / wrongness".

It shows a strong contradiction in the perception of conflict situation, since we recognize that both parties in the conflict have their own truth how can one of them admit or not admit its mistakes?

"The most difficult thing in the conflict is to understand the position or motives of the other party".

62.6% of school teachers and 42% of university teachers agree or strongly agree with this statement. It indicates the readiness to listen to another party in a conflict and to recognize its right to own interests. While assessing their readiness to compromise 61% of the teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement

“Sometimes in conflict it is better to give up your interests if it brings the solution of the conflict”.

But another version of this intention –

“Sometimes in conflict it is better to keep your own opinion and authority rather than to resolve a conflict situation”

- shows that it is a more difficult thing. 45% of school teachers and 38% of university teachers disagree, which shows their readiness to concessions.

“In conflict it is very difficult to make concessions if the other party does not demonstrate the same wish”.

For 71.6% of the respondents it seems to be really difficult, they agree or strongly agree with this statement. Only 18 respondents, i.e. 14%, disagree or strongly disagree. It might be assumed that these teachers prefer avoidance as a main conflict style, but the questionnaires show that 14 of them mark compromise as personal choice.

The last statement:

“If a conflict situation has developed between my colleagues or friends I will always support the party that was ‘offended’”

shows the widest spread of assessments. It was the statement with the highest percentage of the neutral ratings - 51 respondents, i.e. 40%, marked the neutral answer. But 45.6% of the teachers disagree or strongly disagree with it showing understanding of a conflict situation as a disagreement and collision of values or interests.

The analysis of the respondents' answers indicated that, although teachers understand the nature of conflict as incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance of values and beliefs, for many of them it is rather difficult to perceive the parties of conflict as equal, without assessing them as “right” and “wrong”. Many teachers assess making concessions and steps to compromise in conflict situation as important, but probably not as important as personal interests, opinions and authority. 15.7% of teachers – 20 respondents from both groups – have got low scores on attitude scales, lower than average, median and Q1. This group of teachers may have problems in handling conflicts because of misunderstanding of conflict nature, inflexibility, inability to assess conflict situation with detachment.

Discussion and Conclusion

Before making conclusion, it is appropriate to identify some limitations of this study. The group of school teachers was represented mainly by female respondents – approximately 90% (this corresponds to the gender balance in the education system in Russia). In the group of university teachers 69.2% of respondents were female. There might be gender difference in choice of conflict strategies, in the expression of emotions, empathy, intuition and other personal characteristics associated with the perception of a conflict situation and readiness of a person to initiate the process of its resolving. On the other hand all respondents from school teachers group have the basic education in pedagogy and psychology that provides the basis for the effective tactics in communication with their students. Almost a half of university teachers group have never dealt with the pedagogical theory. In our study the low level in understanding of the nature of the conflict showed the teachers of technical disciplines. However, the study hasn't found out the significant differences in teachers' beliefs on conflict and conflict transformation associated with the gender, age and teaching speciality.

Both teachers' groups prefer compromise as the main conflict style, avoidance takes the second place, and it is more prevailing than competing and accommodation. These data are consistent with the data from some other studies (e.g. Cornille, Pestle and Vanwy, 1999). In perspectives of the study it would be interesting to analyse teachers' strategies of conflict management depending on target audience (colleagues, parents, middle-school students, upper-class students).

In general, teachers of both groups show basic understanding of the conflict's nature, but their beliefs are rather ambivalent. Teachers agree that conflict is a natural and normal part of life. At the same time 64% of teachers believe that it is better to avoid conflicts. Teachers are aimed at compromising as the efficient strategy of conflict resolution. At the same time they show low level of understanding what kind abilities and efforts compromising requires from people. For some teachers it is difficult to avoid the "teacher is always right" position, they perceive the position of another party not simply as different but wrong.

In interpersonal conflict teachers' pay more attention to its cognitive and affective components, but for some teachers it is rather difficult to perceive conflict situation with detachment, without assessing another party as hostile, and its position as wrong or false. To manage conflicts productively and be ready to resolve them a teacher needs to be reflexive in order to perceive conflict situation and understand that he himself or she herself belongs to one of the parties. It is very important to recognize that the conflict needs to be resolved, and while resolving it using compromise or collaboration a person must show openness, flexibility, self-control, readiness to make concessions in the situation when other party might show unreadiness. In this case teachers show humanism, wisdom and a model of positive behaviour.

Are compromise and collaboration the best styles of conflict resolution for teachers? This question seems to be debatable. Teachers constantly deal with conflicts, school teachers in particular – in our study 57% of school teachers told about conflicts with students. Sometimes conflict situation is insignificant and can be ignored or can be redirected to another one or postponed or solved with the help of a joke. It might be good for teachers to be flexible in different conflict styles and to define what style of conflict management is applicable in the situation. And at this point we return to the ideas expressed in the beginning of our manuscript: today a teacher must be a conflict manager, which means that a teacher must be able to understand nature of conflict, show a certain attitude to conflicts as resolved contradictions, and possess conflict handling skills. Or, in other words, a triangle described as knowledge, readiness and skills (Samsonova, 2002).

Both groups of teachers in our study recognize the lack of knowledge and skills in the field of practical conflict resolution. It's necessary to include practical workshops and trainings on conflict management into pre-service and in-service teaching. The analysis of the curricula in the field of teacher education at our university shows that such discipline as "Conflictology" is suggested only within a few Bachelor's programmes and only as an elective course. As for the Master's Degree Programmes, courses in conflict management are found within the programme called "Educational Management". In any case, studying Conflict Management within initial teacher education gives only the basic knowledge and skills. In-service teachers' training is more important, and practical workshop on conflict management for teachers in a specific school embodies the idea of school as learning organisation.

This study was inspired by the three years cooperation of the Northern Arctic Federal University (Russia) with the Centre of Peace Studies of Tromsø University (Norway) in the framework of the project in Peace Education. During the project a group of teachers took part in several workshops and trainings in conflict management, and then tried to share the most interesting practices in their organisations. Their activity showed the interest of school teachers to practical work with conflicts, the relevance of these practices and the possibility of mastering them in the framework of in-service learning and peer-to-peer training.

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