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Conflict Management Among Secondary school Students

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Abstract

Conflict between students is a common problem in the schools. If they are not supervised and controlled in a practical way, it can prevent school from reaching its goals and objectives and will have negative impact on school climate. One of the approaches for reducing conflict between individuals or groups at home or in the school or work place is mediation. Teaching students conflict management and resolution skills may provide them with necessary tools to solve their own conflict in a productive and practical way. This kind of training can also improve students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and communication skills. Main thrust of this paper is on the exploration of the history of mediation and explain essential elements of adult and peer mediation programs. Then it follows by discussion about advantages, limitations and techniques adopted for its management and redressal

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1. Introduction

Students' behavioral problems and abnormalities in school are not new phenomena. Undesirable activities of students include a vast range of unacceptable behaviors such as lack of participation in class programs, causing disturbance for other students, violence (verbal, physical), destroying the school building, equipment and facilities. Methods used in Iranian schools for solving conflicts depends on the position where they see the undesirable behavior as a result of student's personal problems and those of the family and the student's cultural environment. These methods therefore, apply force and use the reward /punishment system to eliminate such behaviors. Warning, reproach, calling the parent to school, physical punishment and in some cases expulsion from school are among common methods used in school against the students violent behaviors. These methods which are often carried out

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without considering the children needs, expectations, students` behavioral conflicts and problems. In fact, by generating negative feelings in the students, these methods result in some other undesirable behavior in the future. By investigating methods for confronting with the students behavioral conflicts in other countries, it becomes obvious that in the recent decades new viewpoints have been offered in the field of analyzing students` behavioral problems. Accordingly, different policies are used for preventing and reducing conflicts. Before addressing these methods, first it is necessary to define conflict and its type.

1.1. Conflict Definition

Conflict refers to some form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising within individuals or a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group. conflict pertains to the opposing ideas and actions of different entities, thus resulting in an antagonistic state.(Tschannen-Moran, 2001)

1.2. Types of conflict

Because of diverse and varied definitions of conflict, attitudes towards it and images of its role are also varied. Conflict in schools takes different forms; for example teachers seem reluctant to obey the principals, they do not seem to follow rules or accept extra work, they do not easily get along with their principals. Principals too adopt an authoritative approach, for example they pressurize teachers for an uninterrupted working of the school activities. It, therefore, becomes common that conflict between teachers and the school principal occur frequently at any time in the school. In institutions, conflict occurs between various individuals because of their frequent interaction with each other. Conflict is an expression of hostility, antagonism and is understanding between the staff members.(Gebretensay Tesfay ,2002)

Bearing all in mind, conflict is classified into the following four types:

a) Interpersonal conflict refers to a conflict between two individuals. This occurs typically due to how people are different from one another.

b) Intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual. The experience takes place in the person`s mind. Hence, it is a type of conflict that is psychological involving the individual`s thoughts, values, principles and emotions.

c) Intra-group conflict is a type of conflict that happens among individuals within a team. The incompatibilities and misunderstandings among these individuals lead to an intra-group conflict

d) Inter-group conflict takes place when a misunderstanding arises among different teams within an organization. In addition, competition also contributes for intergroup conflict to arise. There are other factors which fuel this type of conflict. Some of these factors may include a rivalry in resources or the boundaries set by a group to others which establishes their own identity as a team. (Denohue, and Kott.1992)

In addition to this category, Jehn and Mannix(2001) have proposed a division of conflicts into three types: relationship, task, and process. Relationship conflict stems from interpersonal incompatibilities; task conflict is related to disagreements in viewpoints and opinion about a particular task, and process conflict refers to disagreement over the group`s approach to the task, its methods, and its group process. They note that although relationship conflict and process conflict are harmful, task conflict is found to be beneficial since it encourages diversity of opinions, although care should be taken so it does not develop into process or relationship conflict.(Denohue, and Kott,1992)

Amason and Sapienza(1997) in turn differentiate between affective and cognitive conflict, where cognitive conflict is task-oriented and arises from differences in perspective or judgment, and affective conflict is emotional and arises from personal differences and disputes.

1.3. Factors Leading to Conflict

Auerbach and Dolan (1997), Rahim (2001), Champoux (2003) , De Janasz, et al.(2006) and Mohamad Johdi & Raman (2011). identified the causes of conflicts. They are specialization, common resources, goal differences, interdependence, authority relationships, status differences, jurisdictional ambiguities, and, roles and expectations.

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