

SOCIOCOGNITIVE CONFLICT REGULATION: HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF DIVERGING IDEAS

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Pe măsură ce individul se dezvoltă, pentru învățare apar diverse oportunități și constrângeri. Învățarea este mai eficientă dacă este luată în considerație dezvoltarea diferențiată în plan fizic, intelectual, emoțional și social. Dezvoltarea cognitivă, emoțională și socială a studentului, precum și modul în care aceștia interpretează experiența vieții sunt afectate de școlarizarea precedentă, familie, cultură și comunitate. Un mod de abordare a personalității o reprezintă teoria social – cognitivă care pune accent pe originile sociale ale comportamentului și pe importanța proceselor cognitive, în toate aspectele funcționării umane. Conflictul socio-cognitiv e considerat ca o condiție necesară a progresului cognitiv deoarece este o sursă de schimbare a individului și a sistemului în care acesta evoluează. Conflictul individului cu propria gândire nu este posibil decât în condițiile de interacțiune cu alte discursuri sau acțiuni. Cercetarea asupra stilurilor cognitive nu ar trebui abandonată, pentru că existența unor tendințe, preferințe individuale în prelucrarea informației, rămâne un fapt care e greu de contestat.

Keywords: *sociocognitive conflict, conflict regulation, achievement goals, learning, differentiation, cognitive development.*

Sociocognitive conflict arises when people hold different views or ideas about the same object, and it has the potential to promote learning, cognitive development, and positive social relations. The promotion of these outcomes, however, depends on how the conflict is solved and with what goals. Mastery goals predict epistemic conflict regulation and the elaboration of multiple ideas, performance-approach goals predict competitive conflict regulation and the promotion of one's own ideas, and performance-avoidance goals predict protective conflict regulation and yielding to other people's ideas. Conflict regulation thus determines

the conditions under which confronting diverging ideas results in positive cognitive and relational outcomes.

As the individual develops, various opportunities and constraints arise for learning. Learning is more effective when differentiated development is taken into account physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. The cognitive, emotional and social development of the student, as well as the way they interpret the experience of life are affected by previous schooling, family, culture and community. One way of approaching personality is the social-cognitive theory that emphasizes the social origins of behavior and the importance of cognitive processes in all the aspects of human functioning. Socio-cognitive conflict is considered a necessary condition for cognitive progress because it is a source of change for the individual and the system in which he evolves. The conflict of the individual with his own thinking is possible only in the conditions of interaction with other speeches or actions.

Social-cognitive theory differs from other theories of personality in that it emphasizes two distinct processes: observational learning and self-regulation. Observational learning refers to the ability to learn complex behaviors by observing others. Self-regulation refers to the ability of the individual to influence his own behavior, rather than to react mechanically to external influences. Both observational learning and self-regulation involve the participation of cognitive processes and both are influenced by rewards and punishments, but not determined by them. Social-cognitive theory emphasizes the social origins of behavior and the importance of cognitive processes in all aspects of human functioning: motivation, emotion and action. Therefore, it has several characteristics that distinguish it from other approaches:

- highlighting the individual as an agent of action;
- overbidding the social origins of the behavior;
- highlighting the importance of cognitive processes in the development and functioning of the personality;
- emphasis on systematic research.

W. Doise and G. Mugny believe that individual progress can be generated by social interactions, but not any kind of social interaction has the characteristics conducive to development for which interactions between individuals are constructive only if there is a confrontation between divergent solutions. The dynamics of cognitive development

result, in fact, from a conflict of social communication: “the full possibility of interindividual confrontation is necessary for the interaction to be constructive” [3]. Oprea is of the same opinion considering that not every socio-cognitive conflict can lead to intellectual progress, and “cognitive progress is directly proportional to the possibility of a situation of socio-cognitive conflict, an opportunity that offers everyone the opportunity to develop a collective response” [6].

Research in the field has shown that social interactions play an essential role in triggering cognitive conflict, which has led to the introduction of the concept of socio-cognitive conflict in specialized terminology. It “combines the driving role of learning conflicts, developed by Piaget, with that of social interactions, which we find equally in H. Wallon and L.-S. Vygotsky. Socio-cognitive conflict is seen as a source of change in the individual and refers to the confrontation of one’s own experience of knowing with those other participants, who may suggest solutions for the development of new cognitive tools. Socio-cognitive conflict occurs in the confrontation between subjects in different stages of cognitive development and forced to solve a problem together. Within this conflict, the use of differences in solving a certain problem has a favorable educational impact, initially between child and adult, later between individual and group [7].

Socio-cognitive conflict is seen as “the main mechanism of individual cognitive progress” because it is a source of change for the individual and the system in which it evolves [5].

The term “socio-cognitive conflict” is borrowed from social psychology, and authors such as G. Clermont will articulate it to the Piagetian conception, trying to emphasize the interactive aspect that intervenes in the formation of intelligence. Jean Piaget, whose latest research practice ignores the intervention of social factors in cognitive development, proposes at the same time a conception of cognitive development by explicitly involving the social factor. The conclusion that concludes the article “Genetic logic and sociology” is “that social life is a necessary condition for the development of the individual in his very nature, making him move from autism to personality.” [8]

The post-Piagetian school in Geneva (Doise, Mugny, Perret-Clermont, etc.) continued, following in the footsteps of J. Piaget, to investigate the influence that the social environment has on the development of the

cognitive structures of the individual, the learning process is one of socio-cognitive type, the child developing intellectually through interaction with others.

Research by the Geneva School of Genetic Social Psychology (Doise, Mugny) has shown that the child's cognitive progress follows the path of classical Piagetian theory. If J. Piaget's approach was "social cognitive", according to further research, the learning process is "social-cognitive". In other words, there is a causal link between social interaction and cognitive development. The individual progresses in the process of cognitive structuring, only through interaction, more or less common, with others. The development of intelligence is not limited to balance factors and internal regulation, it is not related only to individual factors, to the physiological characteristics of the individual. Genetic social psychology advances the idea that cognitive development consists in a progressive structuring of individual relationships with the environment, the acquisition of social experience becoming the fundamental factor.

Although conflict situations tend to be avoided in training activities, this trend is wrong because conflict avoidance tends to undermine interpersonal relationships and team performance, as well as increase competitiveness. The creation of intellectual conflicts usually involves discussions among learners, although it is found that discussion remains a rarity in schools. Then there is the possibility of learning from the mistakes of the other [7], the confrontation between the correct and the wrong model causing a socio-cognitive conflict.

Doise and his group developed an approach after which, at each stage of his evolution, the individual develops certain organizational skills that allow him to participate in increasingly complex interactions, resulting in new individual coordination. Socially constructed cognitive tools are acquired individually, any new cognitive construction based on the acquisitions acquired during previous interactions [3].

The main applications of the cognitive perspective in education:

- emphasizing the active role of the student in learning - the use of memorization strategies. These strategies can be simple, such as repeating the material (which often involves superficial processing) or complex strategies of elaboration and organization (accompanied by in-depth processing).

- the importance of self-regulation in learning - (self-regulation will be the subject of study in the next module)

- a more nuanced understanding of individual differences. An error in solving a task can be due not only to the lack of certain cognitive structures, but to a variety of factors: from inattention, reduced working memory capacity, lack of effective memory strategies, to reduced ability to refresh, or monitoring, and control of learning.

- the role of the teacher is to facilitate learning by: –organizing the material: organizing schemes, conceptual models, hierarchical models, –elaborating: suggesting analogies or mnemonics, –active involvement of students in authentic learning tasks: problems, questions that require processing higher level of material, providing examples and applications, testing project-based knowledge. [2]

Models of learning based on socio-cognitive conflict are limited to the psychocognitivist and sociocognitivist paradigms. The basic thesis of these models is that learning, as a factor and essential mechanism in achieving cognitive progress of the student, involves the interaction between people, interaction generating sociocognitive conflict, which becomes a source of psycho-individual development. This school also viewed the social interaction achieved within the group as a very important factor of individual cognitive and relational development. Socio-cognitive conflict determines a strong interest in research, understanding the mechanisms that give progress during social interaction. The whole socio-cognitive conflict determines possibilities to accelerate the development of intelligence, ie the genesis of the operating structures. When a child has a problem, an individual has several response registers, ie they can apply cognitive schemes in relation to the current cognitive level.

From an interactive perspective, S. Messick believes that cognitive style could be seen as a moderating variable that describes individual differences in the selection and use of lower-level cognitive strategies [4]. Such a conception is in line with a definition of style as a higher-level heuristic that organizes more specific strategies, trends, and capabilities into functional patterns characteristic of an individual.

We consider the conflict to be a natural feature of human activity, regardless of the solutions we find, the tasks we are trying to accomplish, or the relationships we have with others. The conflict can give rise to the

motivation to solve problems that otherwise go unnoticed, which can lead to creative behavior, increased cohesion of the group and loyalty among its members. That is why a focus on efforts for effective conflict management is welcome.

It is good to emphasize the semantic differences between conflict resolution and conflict management. Resolving a conflict situation implies its disappearance, which can hardly be achieved when management involves control, monitoring the conflict throughout it. In the case of conflict management, the negative aspects are mitigated while resolving them requires their complete elimination. All the more so when we refer to the socio-cognitive conflict we realize how necessary an adequate management is, taking into account the fact that this kind of conflict is a generator of progress. The essential elements for conflict control are: effective communication and conflict analysis accompanied by an appreciation of broader social dynamics. For socio-cognitive conflict, the following principles are required that a good manager should know and apply:

- Maintain a positive relationship during the conflict by actively listening, using open-ended questions to clarify messages.

- Differentiate between events, behavior and their interpretation, evaluation of different options.

- Focusing on the problem, not on people, using concrete, specific, behavioral terms in describing the situation and not general ones, using appropriate language.

- Using direct communication without reacting to one's own arguments, clarifying questions, asking for information to understand the situation, avoiding blaming and labeling the interlocutor, assessing the impact of the conflict on the relationship or group.

- Identifying barriers to conflict resolution. These can be: judging the person and not evaluating the message, looking for counter-arguments, premature reaction, listening to the interlocutor to identify mistakes and not to understand the message, the belief that only he is right.

- Using problem-solving skills to address conflict. [9]

Negotiation is of particular importance in the management of socio-cognitive conflict. As is well known, any formal or informal discussion with someone who wants to get our consent for something is a negotiation. In terms of a positive approach to negotiation, people

or groups are considered to be negotiating partners and not opponents, and negotiation is considered the art of creating agreements instead of potential disagreements. The elements of the negotiation are:

- Communication that provides information exchange;
- The context that refers to the set of circumstances, connections between groups or individuals, events that may influence the outcome;
- The goal is to focus the actions to achieve the desired purpose;
- The type of relationships that can be cooperative or confrontational;
- Resources that can be human or material.

In fact, negotiation is a process of mutual communication, used to determine a basis for understanding between the two conflicting parties. In psychological and educational counseling, the management of socio-cognitive conflict has a special significance. It puts in the hands of the counselor the levers for resolving conflict situations in school groups and beyond. We must keep in mind that the social environment has a special influence on cognition and that conflict situations are not only deliberately generated by the teacher to create an atmosphere of competition. The conflict is natural and its disappearance is impossible. However, it is necessary to manipulate it constructively, in the interest of those involved. The counselor needs to improve his or her conflict management skills by becoming more competent, but he or she also needs to consider his or her communication skills.

It is also very important to distinguish between conflict resolution and their management, as real resolution can rarely be found.

The following conflict situations may arise in the educational process:

- Conflict of teaching - training between the traditionalist conception of the educational process understood as the process of transmitting assimilation of knowledge and the formative conceptions that assign to the teacher and the student the role of partner in the training process.

- Teaching-learning conflict, the role assigned to the student: passive or active.

- Teacher-student conflict, quite common for various reasons: the displaced attitude of the student in relation to the teacher, the subjective notation.

- Student-student conflict, often manifested both in the learning process due to the different level of knowledge but also due to their different manifestation in the conditions offered by the group.

- Conflict of knowledge - knowledge, concerned with the full transmission of knowledge required by the curriculum, sometimes the teacher neglects the didactic transposition of the contents.

As a consequence, the conflict goes beyond the structural plan of the pedagogical situation and settles in functionally. Conflict can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive depending on what we do with it. Therefore, the teacher must know how to control the conflict situations that arise, taking into account three levels of appreciation:

- the strategic level, which aims at the correct choice of the target;
- the tactical level, which implies the correct choice of the solution method;

- common sense, which means that the manager should not confuse the strategic elements with the tactical ones.

From the above, we can conclude that it is the teacher who notices, deciphers, interprets, solves, supports the internal cognitive mechanisms, orients, facilitates, guides active, independent or collaborative knowledge. Or, the teacher has possibilities, techniques to guide the learner, depending on the type of personality, so as to support the practice of cognitive mechanisms.

Research on cognitive styles should not be abandoned, because the existence of trends, individual preferences in information processing, remains a fact that is difficult to dispute. The cognitive evolution of the individual cannot be dissociated from the social environment (class, work group) in which he is placed. Cognitive structures develop not only through maturation and individual exercise but also through social transmission and interactions with others. The group is a privileged place where individuals collectively achieve superior cognitive performance to individual due to competition, reporting to each other's results and cooperation. Under these conditions, even less advanced individuals can progress through interaction with others. The existing conditions in the group benefit not only the least advanced, but also the gifted who can enhance their knowledge. The confrontation of different points of view adapted by the group members in the conditions of social interaction leads to the development of cognitive processes in one or more participants.

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