



PSIWORLD 2013

## Conflictual states within the school organization – a study regarding the perception of the teaching staff and school managers

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### Abstract

We must admit that the conflictual states are a reality within the school organizations and if we continue to ignore them they will not vanish, at most they will perpetuate in time. In trying to improve the organizational context of the school, it is necessary to develop an interdisciplinary approach for the resolution of conflicts. The school must enter into an organizational self-learning process to eliminate the tendencies of derailing from reforms. For the organizational practice of schools in Romania, the field of conflict resolution is an emerging field and as a result, it is characterized by an extremely high dynamic.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Romanian Society of Applied Experimental Psychology.

*Keywords:* conflictual states; conflictual causes/sources, conflict management; conflict's managerial culture, interdisciplinary approach for the resolution of conflicts .

### 1. Introduction

The studies on conflict management within the school organization are oriented by the same principles as the valid ones in the other fields of research within the educational field. The empirical approach to analyze conflictual states at the level of the school organization as well as to identify resolution strategies is specific to the direction promoting the combination of paradigms and quantitative and qualitative methods, capitalizing on the design of the mixed methodology in each stage of the research.

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While studying conflict, the participative observation gives the possibility to discover detailed data about the thoughts and beliefs of those involved in the conflict as well as their behavior. The observation carries the advantage of noticing the real behavior of people in a natural context, by grasping the multitude of factors conditioning human actions and interactions.

Jodelet Denise (2007) considers that observation will allow us to become a witness of the social reality that we will be studying and in many cases, as a result of the interaction established with the observed persons, a co-author of this reality. It is the most qualitative of the research methods, producing descriptive rather than quantifiable information. To obtain valid qualitative information, we used the observation method together with other methods, such as the questionnaire-based survey.

## 2. Methods

The research questionnaire represents a technique and more exactly an investigation instrument, consisting of a series of written questions and possibly graphic images ordered logically and psychologically, which through the administration by questionnaire operators or self-administration, determines the surveyed persons to provide answers that will be written down (Chelcea, 2004). The questionnaire is an instrument used in the research of different aspects of the organizational life. The construction of the questionnaire is done in close relation with the objectives, hypotheses and strategy of the research.

We suppose that the opinions of the school managers are correlated differently with the opinions of the teaching staff on the frequency and causes/sources of the conflictual states within the school organization.

The goal of the research was to conduct a study of impact regarding the perception of both the teaching staff and managers on the conflictual states and their causes at the level of the school organization in the context of organizational changes. The carried out research is a descriptive research, while the sample must allow the extension of results for the whole collectivity. To accomplish such a thing, we used a random sampling method which involves knowing with anticipation the probability of including each individual in the sample. To obtain the sample, we used statistics for the number of headmasters and teaching staff in Olt and Dolj Counties as well as data on their distribution urbanely and rurally. Thus, we resorted to a proportional stratified sampling which imposed the formation of the sampling by extracting the number of subjects in each layer directly proportional to the relative dimension of their population in relation to the whole population surveyed. By using this method, the sample of headmasters, composed of 380 subjects, was divided into 152 subjects from Olt County (of which 90 within the urban environment and 62 within the rural environment) and 228 subjects from Dolj County (of which 128 within the urban environment and 100 within the rural environment). Also, the sample of the teaching staff, composed of 1000 subjects was divided into 458 subjects for Olt County (of which 271 within the urban environment and 187 within the rural environment) and 542 subjects from Dolj County (of which 245 within the urban environment and 297 within the rural environment). To the question “Which is the frequency of conflictual states in your school?”, we recorded a high percentage of the interviewed managers who consider that the conflictual states are very rare, in contrast with the school principals who continue to consider that conflicts are negative aspects of both the managerial activity and the organization they are running.

“We don’t have conflicts in our school” is an answer in almost 90% of the interviews with the school managers in which the topic of conflict is present. The school headmasters use terms such as misunderstandings and dissensions, but in a way that does not affect the activity of the school organization. It is quite normal if we think that it is hard to admit a state that would cause image “loses” both for the school and personally. The school managers’ habits of hiding the things they do not like, of always delaying the acknowledgement of these states, are still unfortunately present within schools even to this day.

The answers of the interviewed school headmasters highlight the fact that the conflictual phenomena within the school organization are perceived as strongly negative aspects of the life of the organization they run. The teaching staff is more inclined to acknowledge the existence of conflictual states, even though in their answers the conflicts have negative connotations.

The acknowledgement of the presence of conflictual states within the school organization, by the teaching staff is consolidated also by the answers to the question: “Do you consider conflictual states to be important realities of your school?” The quantitative analysis of the extent of conflictual states, from the teachers’ point of view, has

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