

Conflict as a Challenge for Personal Growth in the Educational Team

Konflikt jako wyzwanie dla rozwoju osobistego w grupie edukacyjnej

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Abstract: In interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, catechist and catechised, as well as in teaching and catechetical teams, communicological blockages and defence mechanisms are part of everyday life. These subjects have different expectations of each other, which in turn triggers resistance in the person. In their concrete experience, there are different observations, reflections and formation of abstract concepts. Conflicts are not always a bad thing. For Gestalt pedagogy, conflict situations present an opportunity for personal development, deepening relationships and growth of the whole group. Gestalt pedagogy uses methods to resolve conflict situations in a way that helps the individual to become aware of and reflect on his or her own feelings, memory traces, reactions and perspective on the conflict situation. Knowledge of the mechanisms of resistance and Gestalt methods for resolving communication blocks is a useful tool for team members (especially for novice teachers and mentor teachers) to build better quality relationships. Good relationships within a team can increase success at work.

Keywords: conflict, Gestalt pedagogy, drawing, verbalisation, mentoring

Abstrakt: Blokady komunikacyjne i mechanizmy obronne są naturalnym elementem relacji interpersonalnych między nauczycielami a uczniami, katechetami i katechizowanymi, a także między członkami zespołów dydaktyczno-katechetycznych. Uczestnicy tego typu interakcji mają wobec siebie różne oczekiwania, co z kolei może wywoływać opór pozostałych. Na ich konkretne doświadczenia składają się różne obserwacje, refleksje, a także tworzone pojęcia abstrakcyjne. Konflikty nie zawsze są złe. Według pedagogiki Gestalt sytuacje konfliktowe stanowią szansę na rozwój osobisty oraz na pogłębianie i podniesienie wartości relacji całej grupy. Pedagogika Gestalt wykorzystuje metody rozwiązywania sytuacji konfliktowych poprzez zrozumienie i analizę własnych emocji, śladów pamięciowych, reakcji i postrzegania sytuacji konfliktowej. Znajomość mechanizmów oporu i metod Gestalt służących pokonywaniu blokad komunikacyjnych może stać się przydatnym narzędziem dla członków danej grupy (zwłaszcza dla początkujących nauczycieli i nauczycieli-mentorów) sprzyjającym budowaniu lepszej jakości relacji. Z kolei, lepsze relacje w zespole, przekładają się na sukces w pracy.

Słowa kluczowe: konflikt, pedagogika Gestalt, rysunek, werbalizacja, mentoring



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INTRODUCTION

Dealing with conflict is a difficult and stressful situation for most people, but for young people can be the most difficult. Studies show that 90% of conflicts between students are resolved in a destructive way or are never resolved (De Cecco and Richards 1974). In this area, American scholars have concluded that avoidance, force and threats are the main strategies for dealing with conflict (Johnson et. al. 1995). When people are in conflict, they are concerned with satisfying their own needs and achieving their own goals (usually a source of conflict because the needs and goals of the individual or group are not congruent with those of the other), and with maintaining appropriate relationships with the other party to the conflict (Johnson and Johnson 1994). More recent research supports the fact that emotional intelligence has an impact on conflict management. A greater ability to identify and regulate emotions has an impact constructive solutions (Skordoulis et al. 2020).

In the international LOOP¹ project, the researchers propose, based on their findings, the necessity of structured management of novice teachers, as well as training for mentor teachers. Mentors have many roles: observer, role model, advisor, quality controller, critical friend, evaluator and leader. A mentor provides beginners with useful advice to improve teaching methods and practices. Open communication between mentor and mentee is crucial for success. Mentors should avoid one-way communication (giving instructions and criticism to the beginner) and should instead use two-way communication (where both the mentor and the mentee have a say in the relationship). This form of mentoring involves a dialogue between the beginner and the mentor. To this end, the LOOP project has developed a handbook for mentor teachers and also a handbook for new teachers.² Among the so-called modules in the Beginner Teachers' Handbook, Module 5 is about awareness and resolution of stress, which is also a conflict-causing factor.

Data from the Education at a Glance (OECD 2020, 439) and TALIS surveys show that the number of teachers over 50 has increased significantly. This means that there will be major replacements of teaching staff in the coming years. The above-mentioned survey reports that only 37% of teachers use ICT. This means that many beginners will be able to teach their mentors many new things about using ICT tools.

Research shows that good workplace support (emotional, informational and instrumental support) increases employees' personal satisfaction, which in turn affects work performance and reduces burnout (Cranmer et al. 2016, 3-4).

The training of mentors and the teaching of conflict resolution should therefore be present in all educational institutions and also in parishes or pastoral centres. In interpersonal relationships between teachers and pupils, catechist and catechised, and in teaching and catechetical teams, communication blockages and defence mechanisms are part of everyday life. However, in practice, we do not

¹ LOOP project. Erasmus +. Empowering Teachers, <https://empowering-teachers.eu>.

² Spletna stran projekta LOOP: <https://empowering-teachers.eu/policy-experimentation/>.

find a programme for the systematic resolution of conflicts, but it is assumed that everyone knows how to do this. Most conflicts remain unresolved, are resolved in a destructive way or even break down cooperation and communication.

1. GENERAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS AS A TRIGGER FOR CONFLICT

In interpersonal communication, we strive to be as successful as possible in communicating or encoding our thoughts, desires, feelings and intentions. We also expect others to receive our messages fully, to decode them correctly and to understand us, which we can only learn through feedback. Approaching this ideal is sometimes more successful, other times less so. Despite our best efforts, many times we are disappointed. Often there are conflicting expectations between the person and the environment, which leads to conflict.

Thomas Gordon lists twelve communication barriers that prevent successful communication. These include: ordering, threatening, moralising, giving preconceived solutions, using bare logic to persuade the other person to take my feelings into account, judging and criticising, unmotivational praise, humiliation, explaining things that no one asked you to explain, comforting or belittling, substituting argument, asking intrusive questions (Gordon 1991).

Some of these ways are in themselves very negative, others somewhat less so. Take 'consolation' as an example. This becomes negative when it is not properly understood. If someone is suffering, we cannot say to them, "Don't worry. It's nothing. Everything will be all right." We are denying the fact that he is really suffering. In such a case, it is necessary to listen and understand the individual's pain. Gordon suggests active listening, which requires three things: 1) Giving a sign of attention. When someone is speaking, we do not remain silent and expressionless, but express ourselves in a way that lets the other person know that we are listening (e.g. by saying "yes", "I understand", "good", etc.). 2) Asking questions. When someone is telling us something, it is good to ask a moderate number of questions, which can help our interlocutor understand that we are paying attention to what they are telling us. 3) Processing and reconstructing information. Feedback is expected in narration, not just judgement or advice (e.g. "So, if I understood correctly, that means ..."). Poor communication, poor expression and consequently poor understanding can cause tensions, which can lead to conflict.

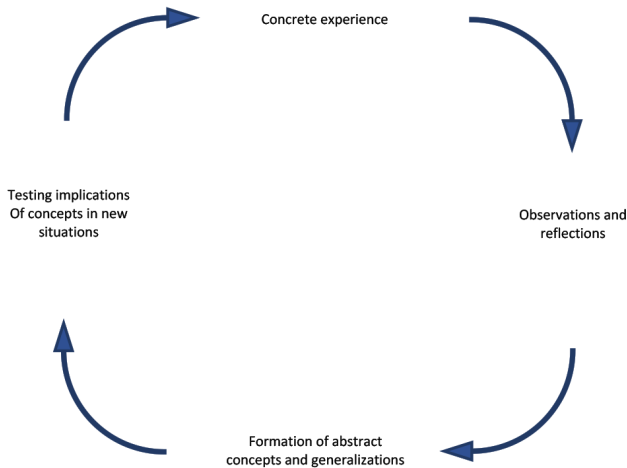
A theologian and Gestalt trainer Alfonz Žibert goes even deeper than communication itself and mentions conflicting expectations: on the one hand, there are one's own expectations, on the other hand, there are the expectations of others. This triggers resistance in the person, because it is a concrete experience in which different observations are made, thoughts are reflected upon, abstract concepts are formed (Žibert 2013, 29).

According to psychologist Tania Radionova, the opposite expectations of others trigger resistance. A person should become something he is not and does

not want to be. Such tension can lead her into an intrapsychic conflict or a spasm in which she cannot experience change. Gestalt therapy helps to get out of such a situation by changing the focus: from the conflict between the expectations of the environment and one's own willingness to engage, to the conscious experience of oneself in the here and now (Radionov 2007).

Educational theorist David Kolb is critical of classical educational practice for being too abstract and lifeless and for neglecting the concrete experience of a person. In his argument, he refers to the Lewinian experiential learning model (Figure 1), which emphasises two aspects: concrete experience and feedback. The former validates abstract concepts, as personal experience is the focal point in learning and gives support to abstract theory. Feedback, which is the basis for a continuous process of goal-directed action and performance evaluation, is essential in the process of social learning and, of course, problem solving (Kolb 2015, 89).

Figure 1: The Lewinian experiential learning model



Given the situation (described in the introduction), there is a great need for proper conflict resolution among beginning teachers and mentor teachers. Psychologist David Johnson believes that young people need to be trained in conflict resolution. He proposes a five-step strategy: 1) define the conflict together; 2) exchange positions and interests; 3) reverse perspectives; 4) come up with at least three mutually beneficial agreements; and 5) reach an agreement (Johnson et al. 1995).

Effort should be made to ensure that any agreement reached is not merely superficial.

2. AWARENESS OF RESISTANCE MECHANISMS

Gestalt therapy and Gestalt pedagogy have developed a method that is very effective in resolving conflicts.

According to Gestalt therapists, it is through a person's contact and defence mechanisms that we can determine whether or not that person is being authentic with themselves and with others (this section is taken from Lamovec 1995, 20-33). There is a bipolar dynamic between contact and withdrawal: the more contact there is, the less chance there is for withdrawal. The two together form a whole, while at the same time alternating as character and background. If we try to force contact, withdrawal occurs and we achieve a false contact. Contact happens where the boundaries touch. A special form of contact is interpersonal contact, such as the I-You relationship. This can be ideal when both participants allow each other to fully express their experience. Gestalt therapist Lamovec is convinced that in Gestalt therapy, creating an atmosphere of acceptance is a prerequisite for the overall work. The next task is to sharpen the awareness of boundaries. Individuals differ greatly in their view of the boundaries between themselves and the world. For some they are weak and unclear, for others they are too rigid, impermeable and narrow. The first group includes persons who have not developed their individuality and therefore tend to merge, to lose themselves in the other. The fusion of boundaries is referred to as confluence, which is a defence mechanism that prevents contact (Lamovec 1995, 20).

Defence mechanisms include confluence, retroflexion, introjection, projection and deflection.

Confluence or fusion expresses the tendency to erase the differences between oneself and another person, most often between people who spend a lot of time together (e.g. spouses). It is characterised by an unspoken agreement between two people, which, although it reduces the number of conflicts, leads to inconveniences: feelings of guilt, resentment, judgement of others. It is basically a fear of individuality, of separation. The person pays too little attention to himself: what are his desires, his feelings. Therefore, such a person must first learn to pay attention to his own experience. The questions are: "What do you want at this moment?", "How do you feel?", "What are you actually doing?". Confluent people carry a lot of unspoken demands that they are not aware of, and they expect others to read their desires and fulfil them, so they are disappointed again and again. This is also what they expect from the therapist.

Retroflexion is a behaviour in which the individual redirects his problem onto others, not feeling that his problem belongs to him, but feeling it as alien. It develops in people who lived in a repressive environment as children. Helpless, fearing punishment, the child shuts down because the environment is stronger than he is, uses most of his energy to contain forbidden impulses and creates a strong barrier between himself and the environment. Retroflexion helps us in many situations by

clenching the muscles of the jaw and neck, or around the eyes and chin, to stop us from crying out. The problem arises when the behaviour becomes a habit. In Gestalt therapy, attention is paid to the process of repression, the individual is encouraged to identify with the tendency that inhibits and represses. It helps him to regain the awareness that it is he who is actively exerting the pressure. In language, retroflexion is traced by the use of the plural (e.g. 'we consult', 'we persuade', 'we reproach', etc.), so that we do not know to whom the message is addressed. In Gestalt therapy, one tries to find the person to whom the client wants to say something, to reproach.

In introjection, on the other hand, we feel an alien tendency, thought or point of view as our own, even though we have not really integrated it into our personality. In retroreflection, Gestalt therapy tends to accept and integrate the dissociated part, whereas in introjection it tends to dismantle or abandon the inappropriate elements. Introjects are all those forms of behaviour, feeling and evaluation which, under environmental pressure, we have accepted even though we have not assimilated them. They lie inside us like undigested food and "make us want to vomit." Instead of getting rid of them, we repress our feelings of disgust and allow the alien to poison us. Such a person is characterised by passivity, their words do not match their behaviour. Because the environment is more powerful than he is, she does not learn to make her own demands. He chooses an environment that does not threaten him, but at the same time does not give him the possibility to satisfy his own needs. The person tries to be satisfied with what he gets, because he or she does not dare to express his or her own feelings and often represses them. Gestalt therapy, when working with introjects, first tries to reactivate disgust and resistance in order to empower the person to reject the inappropriate, and then to learn to say NO decisively.

Projection. The ability to project allows us to put ourselves in the other person's shoes, to get closer to them and to understand them better. It is about assuming the feelings of others based on our own experience. Projections can be right or wrong. Gestalt therapy aims at accuracy of projection by using the technique of paraphrasing: the interlocutor's statements are repeated in his or her own words for as long as it takes for the interlocutor to fully agree with what is being said, including all the emphases. Gestalt therapy also sharpens the accuracy of the projection by making a strict distinction in the linguistic expression between what is observed, what is felt and what is assumed. A typical example in everyday conflicts is that someone "accuses" you of being angry with them – this is their assumption and is not certain to be fact. Gestalt therapy also uses projection as an empathy technique: suggesting that the individual becomes the other person they are talking about in order to identify with the part of the experience they have alienated. Projection as a defence mechanism develops in such a way that the person does not approve of his feeling, but attributes it to the environment. In this way, he inhibits his own expression and fills himself with prejudice.

Deflexion or dilution is a behaviour that "reduces the intensity of direct contact with another person." In problem-solving, it manifests itself by trying

to circumvent it by speaking too generally, avoiding the point of contention, making eye contact, using softer expressions. Emotions are also bland in such a conversation. When making contact with us, such a person reacts by watering down our attempts: showing a bored face, making cynical remarks, turning everything into a joke. In Gestalt therapy, the person is encouraged to focus on the core of the problem, taught to express himself directly, and given feedback on how others are experiencing him.

Having discussed the defence mechanisms that fall within the scope of Gestalt therapy, we now return to the field of Gestalt pedagogy, which addresses such potential problems in a preventive way adopting the same principles, premises and objectives.

3. THE BASICS OF GESTALT PEDAGOGY

If a person is unfree because of the past or the present moment, Gestalt pedagogy can help them to be free to be creative and playful. It is play that enables relaxation (which depends on trust), physical and spiritual creative activity, and awareness of one's own experience (Winnicott 1974, 66). Gestalt writers Christian von Ehrenfels and Ferdinand Weinhandl, stress that Gestalt is concerned with the totality and unity of the person, and not just with fragmentary sections of his or her phenomenality. Gestalt therapy, whose founders are Fritz and Lore Perls and Paul Goodman, emphasises that the principle of the "here and now", the observation of non-verbal modes of expression and the principle of holistic understanding are essential to Gestalt pedagogy (Hufnagel 2011, 7-8).

Olaf-Axel Burowo summarises all the principles of Gestalt pedagogy in twelve points: the principle of person-centredness; the principle of contact-centredness; the principle of the here and now; the principle of awareness; the principle of learning through experience; the principle of Self-Support; the principle of closed or good Gestalt; the principle of integration; the principle of dialogical teaching and learning; the principle of responsibility; the principle of synergy; the principle of voluntariness (Burow 1981, 86-87; Burow 1998).

Of these principles, the most important for conflict resolution are: focus on contact, learning through experience and the principle of responsibility (Nežič 2019, 194-196). In conflict situations, people avoid contact and thus prevent each other from presenting their own goals and needs, which can be restored through the Gestalt pedagogical method. It is also true that Gestalt pedagogy helps to encourage responsible action when people find themselves in irritable emotional states of conflict. Through their own experience of successful conflict resolution, they gain an experience of inestimable value (Nežič 2021, 137-141).

The aims of Gestalt pedagogy are summarised by Heinrich Grausgruber and are as follows: perceiving and recognising personal needs, interests and possibilities; promoting sensitivity and the capacity to experience; fostering the

capacity and skills for independent learning and responsible action; overcoming (external) disturbances and (internal) blocks in the contact process of learning or acting responsibly; and overcoming (internal) barriers to learning. Development of the capacity for critical-constructive communication and productive cooperation; awareness of the relationship between freedom and responsibility when it comes to making decisions about oneself in social relationships; recognition of ecological, social, cultural factors and connections, fostering a willingness to engage in these areas (Grausgruber 1994, 289). Of these goals, overcoming internal blockages and awareness between freedom and responsibility are central in a conflict situation.

The following methods can be distinguished in Gestalt pedagogy: identification or projection; imagination or imagination exercises; exercises for perceiving oneself and others; body work and movement; role-playing and simulations; creative media; exercises for group communication and raising awareness (Neuhold 1997, 17). The identification or projection method can be very helpful in conflict resolution. The concrete conflict situation can be expressed by those involved in the conflict through drawing e.g. trees, being aware that each tree represents a person (Haldot 2011, 92).

3.1. Important elements in conflict resolution in Module A

In the formal training of a Gestalt educator, counsellor, leader or supervisor, we find elements that include conflict resolution. In the following, we will limit ourselves to Catholic Gestalt pedagogy.

Among the principles, goals and methods of Gestalt pedagogy, some are particularly focused on conflict resolution. The training programmes of the Faculty of Theology, the Association for Christian Gestalt Pedagogy, the Institute for Integrative Gestalt Pedagogy and Pastoral Care (IIGS), founded in 1972 by Albert Höfer, other institutes and associations in Europe (Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia), united under the umbrella organisation of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Vereine für Integrative Gestaltpädagogik und Seelsorge* (ARGE-IGS), enable participants to develop deep self-knowledge through exercises, feedback and reflection. This helps them to better understand others and improve their pedagogical work. The knowledge they have acquired through undergoing this process can be passed on to others in three different fields of work: therapeutic assistance (special pedagogy, defectology, crisis intervention, monitoring personal progress), teaching and didactics (school teaching) and pastoral care (catechesis, liturgy, spiritual direction, spiritual exercises) (Hufnagel 2011, 17). The Institute offers four levels of training: Module A – training for Gestalt educators, Module B – training for Gestalt counselling and pastoral care, Module C – training for Gestalt group leadership and Module D – training for Gestalt supervision (Hufnagel 2011, 16-17).

The training of participants in Module A consists of ten units, which must be spaced at least two months apart. The first unit (*My self as the image of a tree*) thus

emphasises listening (if I listen to others, I hear myself), discovering the richness of the interior being of each member, the power of the group in discovering one's own vocation, creating an atmosphere of trust as a condition for working with people. The second unit (Moses and the path to freedom) focuses on the importance of details and on empathising with biblical figures, and includes a "tunnel" exercise as an example of an initiation rite. In the third unit (The miracles of Jesus), work is done in groups of three and the process of changing attitudes is followed. In the fourth unit (Thou shalt be a blessing), the role of the group in reinforcing the individual's decision is emphasised, followed by looking at pictures (umbrellas), reading fairy tales to each other in groups of three (the key phrase in the fairy tale is further illustrated by the physical posture). In the fifth unit (I am God's beloved creature), the work continues in groups of three, with the participants taking on the roles of observer, companion and leader, and following the figures (deepening – the author reads three statements and has them read to the other members; focusing on detail – the author of the character adopts a similar posture to the character and the whole group can illustrate the posture of the figure). In the sixth unit (Me in relationships), participants make a sociogram with coins and buttons (a grid of my relationships in the present, past and future), feel the dialogue in relationships with their bodies, practise the ability to disengage, empathise, tolerate conflict and present their own identity in a pedagogical-didactic square. In Unit 7 (Bibliodrama), they identify with the different roles that appeal to them most, they face the problem of "black and white painting on the example of Judas", it is stressed to them that "my self always needs YOU." In Unit 8 (My Goals), the verification of my goal in the group is emphasised and therefore the didactic exercise of signing a contract in public (in front of the group) is carried out, and the difference between group and individual goals is clearly demonstrated. In Unit 9 (Sources of my strength and spirituality), it is about experiencing previous generations as treasures and learning about different competences (Hufnagel 2011, 19-28).

From the above units, we can highlight the first, sixth and seventh units as the most important for conflict resolution: listening to the other (learning to see the other's needs as well, not only my own), setting a sociogram (finding out which relationships in my life are weighing me down), and realising that I cannot live without relationships ("my self always needs YOU").

4. CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH VISUAL AND VERBAL EXPRESSION

In conflict resolution, there is always the question of how to express the problem so that the conflict does not escalate. A very effective method used in Gestalt pedagogy is expression through drawing. By using the method of artistic expression, we give the individual and his product a central place. In the beginning, an appropriate environment is first established through Guided Fantasy Journey

and then the individual is invited to express his thoughts by drawing a picture, making a sculpture out of a special mass, gluing or collaging, writing a poem, etc.

This is followed by a verbalisation (or reading of the pictures – products) which takes into account the verbal-linguistic intelligence of the individual. Through verbalisation, which is accompanied by a trainer, the individual can gradually deepen his or her personal growth. It is about developing a meta-linguistic capacity that enables the individual in different ways to become aware, to experience, to see himself or herself, to deepen interpersonal relationships, to try out new (z)possibilities, to solve problems and to activate his or her resources (Siegel and Payne Bryson 2013, 80).

Karl Hadolt, a professor of Catholic religious education, describes the success of resolving conflict by incorporating drawing. Using a concrete example, he describes how a teacher of religious education implemented conflict resolution in an 8th grade class burdened by the guilt of large-scale organized theft. The class was divided into four groups: one planned the thefts, one carried them out, and one took charge of distributing the stolen items. The value of the thefts was between €700 and €1400. Instead of involving the police, he used the Gestalt pedagogical method to solve the problem. He distributed wax cards and drawing sheets to the pupils and invited them to draw the class in the shape of trees in the forest, with each tree representing one pupil. At the same time, he wrote on the board the phrase: “Every tree has a heart.” A few days later, he involved the parents in the process, invited them to a parents’ meeting, explained the situation and showed them the drawings, which were deliberately not signed by the authors. The parents were convinced that their child had not drawn ugly things and behaved in a protective manner. The teacher spoke to each pupil personally and asked questions: Which tree are you? Where are you standing? What is special near you? After six weeks, he repeated the drawing. At the same time, it was also Christmas time, so he included in the process the sacrament of confession and the collection of savings for the poor in the missions. His approach gave the students the opportunity to identify with the problem, repair the damage, clear the guilt, experience forgiveness and the possibility of a new beginning. If the police had intervened in this case, the children would have been burdened with an official report of theft in their careers, while at the same time destroying classroom relationships. In other drawings, which were very similar in attitudes to the first but different in characteristic details, the children felt and communicated: ‘I am able to repent, I am basically a good person’ (Haldot 2011, 91-94).

Haldot is convinced that the dimensions of the symbol interconnect deep-psychological, anthropological, interactional and religious dimensions. He has clear criteria when describing the drawings: 1) the general impression (how the drawing looks, what mood is conveyed by the colours, shapes, lines; what first catches the eye, how the drawing relates to the opening verse-theme, where the pupil stands as a tree and how he stands in relation to the other “trees”), 2) taking into account

the statements of the class teacher and other teachers (context, in which the pupils are), 3) the pupil's statement (where he/she is, how he/she feels, specifics), and 4) the comparison of the two drawings (how and what has changed in the drawing, what is different from the previous one, what has stayed the same) (Haldot 2011, 96).

Gestalt pedagogical approaches open up the person in a number of creative ways, while motivating him or her to analogy. For example, biblical stories, other stories, dreams, fairy tales and symbols are used. Various examples of conflicts from the Bible, such as family quarrels, deceit, divorce or even murder, can be helpful in confronting and resolving conflicts (Žibert 2013, 111). The person is encouraged to use analogy again and again and in different ways: turning a biblical text into a bibliodrama, using the symbol of a tree to express oneself, expressing emotional states through dance, etc., which allows for a more intense intracommunication. Later, she translates this expression into interpersonal communication: she verbalises or "reads" the drawing or product.

The theologian and Gestalt trainer Iva Nežič Glavica summarised Höfer's steps of verbalisation in the following six steps: "1. What do I see? (Description of the picture – the author of the drawing listens.) 2. What particularly appeals to me? (Focusing – the author of the drawing listens.) 3. How do I feel as a person, object, animal in this picture? (Identification – the author of the drawing is listening.) 4. The group members give the drawing different titles. (The author of the drawing listens.) 5. The author of the drawing chooses one title and talks about his picture in the third person singular. The group members listen and at the end, together with the teacher, they can ask questions, starting with the question 'what' or 'how come that ...'. The author is not obliged to answer all the questions. 6. I want you to ... The group expresses its wishes to the author, which may be summarised by the exclamation 'Please hear us' or by a prayer" (Nežič 2012, 115).

The steps of verbalisation can be applied to the client's writings, bodily postures, statues, photographs, dreams, biblical texts, the student's experiences (in everyday or religious experiences). The client must pay attention to external and internal perception and to the process at hand. The trainer must not impose his ideas on the client, but together with the group, offer him security, guide him, help him to accept his positive and negative qualities, resolve difficulties and activate his resources. It is an art that the trainer must also learn, as he is forced to step into the background and work from there like a midwife assisting at a birth (Höfer et al. 1979, 31).

CONCLUSION

Conflict is part of our interpersonal relationships. Knowledge of communication blockages and resistance mechanisms, as well as experience of concrete problem-solving, are essential for resolving our own conflicts.

In this study, we find that there is a lack of basic knowledge about communication blockages and defence mechanisms among employees in

educational institutions. Knowledge of the complex processes in interpersonal relationships can be a good starting point for applying simple methods of Gestalt pedagogy. Expression through drawing, play, role-playing, sociograms, etc. enable a person to more easily verbalise his or her feelings, experiences and problems. If we want to help teacher trainers and novice teachers in the future, it will not be enough to use materials such as those of the LOOP project, but it will be necessary to provide them with concrete training. As educators become more able to recognise and regulate emotions, they will be better able to recognise and regulate their own emotions and thus contribute to more constructive dispute resolution and compromise.

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