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MOTIVATIONAL BACKGROUND OF CONFLICTS AMONG PRESCHOOL AND EARLY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

ABSTRACT. Cywińska Małgorzata, *Motivational background of conflicts among preschool and early school-aged children* [Motywacyjne tło konfliktów między przedszkolakami i dziećmi w wieku szkolnym]. Studia Edukacyjne nr 24, 2013, Poznań 2013, pp. 129-142. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2576-8. ISSN 1233-6688

The motivational background of interpersonal conflicts developing among preschool- and early school-aged children comprises competitive, normative and identity-related aspects. The motives provide a basis for distinguishing different types of childhood conflicts: competitive conflicts, conflicts of norms, and conflicts originating from the sense of identity. Competitive conflicts arise due to the following motives underlying children's conflict-inducing interactions: the motive of possession, attractiveness, maintaining a bond with a partner or recognition. Conflicts of norms, on the other hand, are reflected in the motive of loyalty and in the motive of absolute compliance with rules adopted for games and other activities. Conflicts motivated by the sense of identity focus on defending one's rights or views. Teachers, educators and parents should be familiar with reasons that trigger conflicts among children in middle and late childhood in order to be able to properly organize the teaching and education process, and constructively resolve any emerging conflicts, thus giving conflicts a developmental dimension. Adequate understanding of motivations underlying children's conflicts also determines the process of developing the culture of conflict among children.

Key words: interpersonal conflict, stages of the conflict process, stage of entry into conflict, motives of conflict interactions among children, conflict types

Introduction

Interpersonal conflict is a concept which is not amenable to a precise definition because of its multifaceted nature. One of the most common trends in defining the concept makes a reference to the Latin term "conflictus" meaning an event which, in the context of interpersonal relations, may concern aspirations or activities, goals, views, beliefs, attitudes, interests, values, tendencies or expectations, i.e. broadly understood disagreement, contradiction or discrepancy¹.

¹ M. Cywińska, *Konflikty interpersonalne dzieci w młodszy wieku szkolnym w projekcjach i sądach dziecięcych* [Interpersonal Conflicts among Early School-Aged Children in Children's Projections and Judgements], Poznań 2004, p. 14.

Since I believe that a major role in interpersonal conflicts should be attributed to the expectations of individuals, i.e. "...more or less conscious judgements and beliefs regarding the occurrence or progression of specific phenomena or behaviours"², the overview of interpersonal conflict presented below refers to the theory of perception of conflict situations and expectations put forth by Alan Mintz³. Mintz argues that the fact of an individual subjectively waiting for the future development of a situation by itself has an impact on the individual's behaviour and decision-making – and hence on the progression on the entire conflict process: from the individual's motivational sphere to ways and means of conflict resolution. Consequently, if interaction partners consider that the behaviour of one of the parties contradicts their expectations – or if their expectations are rejected altogether – the situation gives rise to feelings of disappointment and frustration which, in turn, may trigger an interpersonal conflict. The most prominent manifestation of interpersonal conflicts, as I assume, occurs when one or both of the conflicting parties expect (or even demand) the abandonment of specific objectives or views in order to satisfy the party that seeks to gain such concessions. The role of expectations in interpersonal transactions, and thus also in cross transactions occurring in conflict situations is also emphasized by Walter Mischel who distinguishes three main types of expectations: expectations for relations between behaviours and outcomes, expectations for relations between stimuli and results, and expectations concerning one's own effectiveness⁴.

With regard to the first type of expectations, an individual seeks to identify such behaviour patterns which, in particular circumstances, are the most likely to produce a positive outcome. An individual's ability to predict the occurrence of a given event on the basis of constantly appearing stimuli reflects the second of Mischel's proposed expectation types. The third type comprises judgments about one's own effectiveness and capacity to organize and execute actions in such a manner as to achieve a defined level of execution.

Interpersonal conflicts are often linked to the following phenomena: rivalry, competition, protest, tension, aggression, struggle, antagonism. The terms are either equated with interpersonal conflict or recognized as the

² Z. Zaborowski, *Stosunki międzyludzkie* [Interpersonal Relations], Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow-Gdańsk 1976, p. 56.

³ J. Krivohlavý, *Zwischenmenschliche Konflikte und Experimentelle Spiele*, Bern-Stuttgart-Wien 1974, p. 573-575.

⁴ J. Neckar, *Waltera Mischela interakcyjna teoria osobowości* [Walter Mischel's Interactional Theory of Personality], [in:] *Współczesne koncepcje osobowości* [Contemporary Concepts of Personality], vol. III, ed. A. Galdowa, Cracow 1995, p. 43-44.

inherent properties of conflict situations, clearly indicating the destructive nature of interpersonal conflicts and the explicitly negative attitude held towards the opponent⁵. The Latin terms “confligere” or “conflictatio”, meaning a collision, dispute, discussion or clash, however, give rise to the assumption that conflicts may also have an integrative and constructive influence on the individual (e.g. as in disputes or discussions). It should also be noted that, as Henryk Białyszewski aptly points out, all conflicts in practice involve a mix of both integrative and disintegrative elements – a fusion of both socially destructive and valuable attributes. The type of impact exerted by interpersonal conflicts on the individual is determined by whether integrative or disintegrative aspects prevail⁶. The destructive nature of interpersonal conflicts is manifested, among others, in the use of various overt and covert forms of fighting by interaction partners (direct physical and/or verbal aggression, harassment, sabotage, boycott) which escalate rather than eliminate existing differences that provoke hostile and antagonistic attitudes. The constructive dimension of conflicts, on the other hand, occurs for example when both interaction partners make an attempt to work out a mutually rewarding solution (“I win – you win”) by taking into account the needs and goals of both parties. In this way, they pave the way for restoring equilibrium to the subject-environment system, i.e. for removing or alleviating the existing disagreements.

More precise analyses of the concept of “interpersonal conflict” also frequently stress the importance of obstacles encountered by conflict participants. Ernest R. Hilgard, for example, considers conflicts as events which constantly confront people and present themselves as obstacles in the process of gratification of needs. They are analyzed as situations that require making choices and overcoming difficulties on the path leading to the achievement of predefined goals⁷. In his theory of conflict, Kenneth Thomas⁸ assumes that conflicts typically arise along with the realization that the other person is (or may be) an impediment preventing the attainment of specific goals. Donald R. Peterson⁹ perceives conflict as an

⁵ C.F. Fink, *Some Conceptual Difficulties in the Theory of Social Conflict*, Journal of Conflict Resolution, 1968, no. 4; K. Balawajder, *Konflikty interpersonalne: analiza psychologiczna* [Interpersonal Conflicts: A Psychological Analysis], Katowice 1992.

⁶ H. Białyszewski, *Teoretyczne problemy sprzeczności i konfliktów społecznych* [Theoretical Problems of Social Contradictions and Conflicts], Warsaw 1983, p. 47.

⁷ E.R. Hilgard, *Wprowadzenie do psychologii* [Introduction to Psychology], Warsaw 1967, p. 735-737.

⁸ K. Thomas, *Conflict and Conflict Management*, [in:] *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, ed. M.D. Dunnette, Chicago 1976.

⁹ D.R. Peterson, *Conflict*, [in:] *Close Relationships*, eds H.H. Kelley, E. Berscheid, A. Christensen, J.H. Harvey, T.L. Huston, G. Levinger, E. McClintock, L.A. Peplau, D.R. Peterson, W.H. Freeman and Company, New York 1983.

interactional process. In his conflict model, the emphasis is placed on the observation that conflicts arise when actions taken by one person obstruct actions to be taken by another person.

Publications focused on conflicts developing between individuals also analyze the phenomenon as a state or a process, as briefly hinted above. The former approach concentrates on the determinants of conflict situations. Morton Deutsch¹⁰ distinguishes seven major aspects determining conflicts. These include: personality traits of conflicting parties (intellectual, social and mental capabilities of conflict participants, their value systems, motivations, etc.), the domain of relations existing between parties (their mutual perceptions, attitudes, expectations, judgements, degree of emotional closeness), the nature of issues underpinning conflict situations (e.g. the degree of awareness of conflicting interests), the social environment in which conflicts arise (including predominant social standards), individuals staying in various types of relationships with conflict participants (their interest in the progression and final resolution of conflicts), the behaviour of conflict participants (strategies and tactics), consequences of conflict outbreak both for opponents and other concerned parties (anticipated interpersonal gains and losses motivate decisions as to whether to get involved in a conflict, and determine the evolution and ultimate resolution of conflicts).

Accounted for in the processual aspect, interpersonal conflicts reveal the changeable nature of conflict, i.e. the influence of the event(s) occurring within the conflict situation on the progression of the conflict process. The processual dimension of conflict is addressed, among other theoretical frameworks, in the concepts of conflict proposed by Louis R. Pondy, Kenneth Thomas or Donald R. Peterson. Louis R. Pondy, for example, accounts for conflict as a process encompassing multiple episodes including latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifested conflict and conflict aftermath. All the episodes, the author emphasizes, have a mutual effect on one another. The classification developed by Kenneth Thomas comprises five major conflict events: frustration, conceptualization, behaviour, others' reactions, and outcome. "The mutually intertwined events make up an individual conflict episode. The conflict process proceeds in sequences of episodes"¹¹. Donald R. Peterson discusses conflicts in their three main phases: the initial phase which reveals the conflict emerging as a result of a specific initiating event, the middle phase with

¹⁰ M. Deutsch, *The Resolution of Conflict. Constructive and Destructive Processes*, New Haven and London, 1973.

¹¹ K. Balawajder, *Komunikacja, konflikty, negocjacje w organizacji* [Communication, Conflicts and Negotiations in the Organization], Katowice 1998, p. 68.

interactions occurring between conflict participants and the final phase marked by problem resolution¹².

In all the conflict models summarized above interpersonal conflict is viewed as a dynamic process undergoing changes that are extended in time and comprise distinctive transitional states of varying intensity, i.e. episodes, events, stadia, stages, phases. All the conflict schemes and models discussed above incorporate a phase of entering the conflict phase, a phase of conflict escalation and a phase of conflict resolution.

Above all, it needs to be stressed that disagreements and clashes of mutually exclusive categories (aspirations, goals, views, attitudes, interests, expectations, etc.) are natural and inevitable in human relations. Such interpersonal friction is a consequence of differences between people exemplifying their individualism.

Motives underlying children's involvement in conflicts

Interpersonal conflicts begin with a phase in which "the expectations of individuals (...) are in disharmony with the actual situation determining the realization of their goals..."¹³. The phase thus refers to a social situation creating an unfavourable climate for the individual to attain their objectives – in other words, a difficult situation (the concept also comprising conflict-inducing situations). Zbigniew Zaborowski claims that they are the at the bottom of all interpersonal conflicts¹⁴.

The phase of entering a conflict and the conflict-inducing situation itself are related to the problem of creation and construction of motivation. A motive (or a set of motives making up the motivational background determining the child's actions) is a driving force which gives momentum to the child's activity geared towards the achievement of specific goals. The goals can be broadly divided into two classes: positive goals (those we strive for) and negative goals (those we are bent on avoiding). A similar division can be made in motivational processes. There is positive motivation, which determines "aiming towards" (with desire as its most common manifestation), and negative motivation, which determines avoidance (as in attitudes based on apprehension or reluctance). The desire – or apprehension – produces a state of psychoneurotic tension in relation to a given object. It is thus an internal process stimulating the achievement or evasion of particular circumstances, while its intensity determines the power

¹² Ibidem, p. 65-73.

¹³ H. Białyszewski, *Teoretyczne problemy*, p. 55.

¹⁴ Z. Zaborowski, *Stosunki międzyludzkie*, p. 97.

of action (mobilization of energy). Ultimately, it may give rise to either positive or negative emotional states, stemming either from the fulfilment of desires or the realization of fears. The typical features of motivational processes (motives) mentioned above should therefore be recognized as determining how a person behaves in a given situation¹⁵.

In order to properly address the question of causes (motives) underlying conflict-type interactions in preschool children (especially in the later part of that stage) and early school-aged children which reflect the phase of children entering a conflict, it is necessary to devote some time to discussing their developmental characteristics. The emergence of opposition in interactions taking place between children (i.e. refusal, contradiction, disagreement) is a sign showing that children are developing the foundations for their individual identity, especially personal identity structures related to the formation of their "self" structure¹⁶. It is a sign of the larger phenomenon of identification with personal goals and standards such as individual beliefs, needs, values, motives, ways of thinking, criteria of assessment. All of these are derivatives of children's developmental attributes and their environmental experiences referring especially to the effect exerted by dominant figures in the family environment. The tendency is evident in my own studies which have demonstrated that conflicts arising from the sense of identity, which exemplify the motive of defence of one's rights or beliefs, feature very prominently already in conflict-type relations occurring between children aged five and six¹⁷. It is clear that children in this age bracket are aware of their rights, which is why they often stand up in defence of their views and beliefs, their right to participate in games and pursue them in a specific manner ["... there would be an argument between me and my friend if she didn't want to play with me...", "... if I wanted to play the game differently than they did..."].

From the point of view of interpersonal conflicts and cross transactions involved in them, attention should be paid to the fact that children below

¹⁵ T.M. Newcomb, *Social Psychology*, New York 1958, p. 81; J. Reykowski, *Z zagadnień psychologii motywacji* [Issues in the Psychology of Motivation], Warsaw 1970, p. 19; Z. Putkiewicz, *Motywacja* [Motivation], [in:] *Podstawy psychologii dla nauczycieli* [Fundamental Psychology for Teachers], eds J. Strelau, A. Jurkowski, Z. Putkiewicz, Warsaw 1977, p. 150-152.

¹⁶ A. Brzezińska, *Spoleczna psychologia rozwoju* [Social Psychology of Development], Warsaw 2000, p. 239.

¹⁷ The results of my own studies on conflict situations among preschool children are presented in: M. Cywińska, *Konflikty interpersonalne wśród dzieci* [Interpersonal Conflicts among Children], Poznań 1995. The publication analyzes a total of 60 children aged five and six using a set of research techniques including projection, observation and conversation.

nine years of age present, as Lawrence Kohlberg argues, pre-conventional level of moral reasoning. This means they prefer an egocentric perspective reflecting the focus on themselves and their own needs, desires and goals. They are centred on perceiving the world from their own viewpoint stemming from the position they hold in it. Jean Piaget demonstrated in a number of empirical materials that children up to around six years old, in their preoperative phase, found it difficult to distinguish between their own perspective and the viewpoints of other people, and were not yet competent in causal relationships. They may, therefore, have difficulties with decentration and, consequently, with mutual communication, setting joint goals (e.g. objectives of cooperative play) and with understanding what other people need to be able to attain their goals¹⁸.

Even though Piaget's thesis that children under six or seven years of age find it difficult to perform decentration has repeatedly been questioned¹⁹, there are no doubts that the ability to tune into other people's viewpoints requires practice. It can thus be concluded that the most common conflicts among preschool- and early school-aged children which occur, as shown in my studies²⁰, due to the motive of possession (children taking or snatching objects from other children, or refusing to give various objects to other children) and the child's desire to hold on to a particular object necessary for the achievement of a specific goal, have their root cause in the children's egocentric attitude to the world and in their craving to "rise up". This motivation for action, aimed at the achieve-

¹⁸ R. Stefańska-Klar, *Późne dzieciństwo. Młodszy wiek szkolny* [Late Childhood. Younger School Age], [in:] *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka* [Psychology of Human Development], vol. 2, eds B. Harwas-Napierała, J. Trempała, Warsaw 2002, p. 136-139.

¹⁹ M. Donaldson, *Myślenie dzieci* [Children's Minds], Warsaw 1986.

²⁰ My own studies referenced in the analysis of conflicts among younger schoolchildren are projection studies conducted in a cohort of 150 children from three primary schools based in Poznań. Using the method of attributive projection which assumes the ascription of one's own motives, feelings and behaviours to other people, the children were led into a fictitious conflict situation featuring a number of participants (characters from projection stories reflecting the children's peer group or the family environment). The usefulness of projective questions (verbal techniques) for analyzing the conflict process among children has been emphasized by many scholars including M. Thomas, B. Wright, L. Boehm or L. Düss. Projective techniques, as J. Rembowski notes, are much better suited for that purpose than straightforward questions. It seems that when children are asked direct questions about conflicts situations with which they are confronted, they might be excessively concerned about potential disapproval by people around them or, as J. Rembowski phrases it "produce anxiety typical of examination-like situations" (J. Rembowski, *Metoda projekcyjna w psychologii dzieci i młodzieży. Zarys technik badawczych* [Projectional Method in the Psychology of Children and Adolescents. An Overview of Research Techniques], Warsaw 1975, p. 268). For a thorough analysis of the above-mentioned studies, see M. Cywińska, *Konflikty interpersonalne dzieci*).

ment of one's own desires and personal benefits (and quite frequently also at strengthening or improving one's status within a peer group), is very consistent with the competitive streak that is so representative for children in this age category. Referring to the social-cognitive development framework put forth by William Damon, it must be concluded that conflicts motivated by the desire to possess may also concern the way in which children define justice. Among four- and five-year-olds justification is based on external factors: "I should get more because I'm older". In five- to seven-year-olds, on the other hand, justice always means absolute parity, with everyone receiving an equal share²¹. My own studies have also shown that in the seven to ten age range the motive of possession acquires a prominent normative dimension, being linked to the standard of non-violation of other people's property. It reflects each individual's natural right to possess things which, at the same time, excludes the things from the scope of potential actions of the partner²². The normative dimension of the motivational background of childhood conflicts also exhibits a clear awareness of moral principles which can also be noticed in the motive of absolute compliance with rules agreed for games and other activities, triggering conflicts especially in the late phase of the preschool age and demonstrating children's moral rigorism. It is precisely the rigorous attitude that, as Piaget claims, determines children's unconditional condemnation of every deviation from rules and principles of conduct, either imposed by adults or children themselves (e.g. "...during playing children argue because someone does not do things as agreed...", "...someone made a wrong pawn move...", "...in a game one of my friends fired a shot at another friend, and he was alive, and...", etc.).

The late preschool period and, primarily, the early school period are two phases during which children experience a marked increase in the intensity of their social life. The need to function in a community and take part in group activities (belong to the "children's population") acquires a very distinctive dimension²³. The need is also a backdrop against which a range of social vices that are typical for the period (vanity in girls, boast-

²¹ S.V. Sandy, K.M. Cochran, *Rozwój umiejętności rozwiązywania konfliktów u dzieci: W okresie od wieku przedszkolnego po dorastanie* [The Development of Conflict Resolution Skills in Children: Preschool to Adolescence], [in:] *Rozwiązywanie konfliktów. Teoria i praktyka* [Conflict resolution. Theory and Practice], eds M. Deutsch, P.T. Coleman, Cracow 2005, p. 316-317.

²² S. Katafias, *Normy moralne etyki „względnie normatywnej” Czesława Znamierowskiego* [Czesław Znamierowski's Moral Norms of "Relatively Normative" Ethics], [in:] *Człowiek i wartości moralne. Studia z dziejów polskiej niezależnej myśli etycznej* [People and Moral Values. Studies into the History of Polish Independent Ethical Thought], eds Z.J. Czarnecki, S. Soldenhoff, Lublin 1989, p. 391.

²³ M. Debesse, *Etapy wychowania* [Stages of Upbringing], Warsaw 1996, p. 69.

fulness in boys) come into existence and become motives underpinning children's conflicts with their peers. Among boys from grades 1 to 3, it is the motive of recognition, and for girls from the same grade range – the motive of attractiveness. It appears that the motives could be linked to the feeling of competence and effectiveness in action which emerges in this age category. As Maurice Debesse states, students in this period seek success and if they achieve it, they feel joy, pride and self-satisfaction. The motive of recognition which plays a major role in the origin of conflicts involving boys "is expressed with the need to be recognized as a competent person who is as good as others, or even better, at work, school, sport, etc."²⁴ ["... the boys quarrelled over who is stronger...", "...whose homework assignment was done better...", "...who is a better student...", etc.]. Girls, on the other hand, as shown in my studies, seek success, recognition and self-contentment not in the presentation of their competence but rather in the exhibition of their physical attractiveness (appearance, fashionable outfits) ["... the girls quarrelled over who is prettier..."; "...who has nicer hair..."; "...who has better clothes..."].

Functioning in a peer group is also conducive to showing and experiencing friendship. In school-age children the lack of a good friend is seen as a reason for loneliness and low self-esteem. Every child in this age group wants a friend. One of Gary W. Ladd's studies showed that having a good friend in the classroom was associated with better school results and with the formulation of better opinions about school among children²⁵. Friendship carries a range of tangible benefits including: help and assistance, appreciation, emphatic understanding which strengthens one's "self". Friends are expected to exhibit specific behaviours, which is stressed particularly by girls from grades 2 and 3, who consider the motive of maintaining their bond with a partner and the motive of loyalty to be major reasons for starting a conflict. My own studies have shown that girls often argue because their girl friends have failed to keep their secret or they are playing with someone else. The tendency is also seen in the studies conducted by other authors. For example, M.L. Clark and Monnie L. Bittle demonstrate that girls expect a lot of kindness, loyalty and empathic understanding from their friends. In addition, they prefer individual to group friendships²⁶.

²⁴ B. Szmigielska, *Spoleczno-uczeniowa teoria osobowości Juliana B. Rottera* [Julian B. Rotter's Social Learning Theory of Personality], [in:] *Współczesne koncepcje osobowości* [Contemporary Concepts of Personality], vol. III, ed. A. Gałdowa, Cracow 1995, p. 13.

²⁵ J.S. Turner, D.B. Helms, *Rozwój człowieka* [Human Development], Warsaw 1999, p. 326.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 327.

Recapitulating, the motivational background of children's conflicts has competitive, normative and identity-related aspects. On that basis, it is possible to distinguish specific types of children's conflicts, i.e. competitive conflicts, conflicts of norms, and conflicts originating from the sense of identity. In the opinion of children aged five and six years old, and seven-ten years old, the main factor triggering off interpersonal conflicts with their peers is the desire to possess certain objects (props) and to underline the inviolable nature of their possessions. Other competition-related motives for their actions during conflict situations include the motive of attractiveness and the motive of maintaining their bond with a partner (girls from grades 1 to 3) as well as the motive of recognition (boys from grades 1 to 3). The motives listed above thus reflect children's competitive conflicts. Non-competitive conflicts, growing out of the loyalty motive (as manifested by the motivation of schoolgirls from grades 2 and 3) and the motive of absolute compliance with rules agreed for games and other activities (typical of children aged five and six years), represent conflicts of norms. Another group of conflicts which I also classify as non-competitive include conflicts arising from the sense of identity which is reflected in the motive of defending one's rights or views. The motive is very distinct for the stage of entry into conflict among five- and six-year-olds.

Final remarks

Motives which underpin children's attitudes leading to the outbreaks of conflicts in the peer group determine the nature of children's coexistence among peers. Consequently, teachers, educators and parents should explore the reasons for children's behaviours in order to properly organize the teaching and education process consisting of the following measures:

- provision (especially in groups of preschool children) of a larger stock of identical aids and props for games and activities (to address the motive of possession combined with the children's tendency to imitate others and competitive traits);

- adoption of a code of conduct agreed together with children: introduction of a catalogue of contracts. Contracts prove useful in the process of learning compliance with one's rights and obligations; they offer explicit guidelines for children's conduct in diverse preschool and school situations. "On the one hand, contracts are always based on a certain obligation, order and specific requirements – they may mobilize the child to pursue certain actions and perform their duties as well as they can (...).

The fact that contracts are cooperatively agreed also carries an element of freedom, liberty and self-determination”²⁷.

Among obligations which play a key role in children's conflict situations attention should be paid, among others, to those that refer to the use of aids and props – and rules governing their exchange, respect for ownership, adherence to rules of the game adopted by children and the code of conduct in friendship.

Since children's relations often involve cross transactions, it also seems important to discuss not only obligations towards others such as respect for the partner's needs, desires and goals – but also mutual rights in view of the sense of identity developing in children at this stage, including the right to refuse playing with another child, the right to express their particular views (on the condition that they are not to be imposed on others) or the right to select a child (or children) to play or spend time with, etc.

Teachers and parents who are sufficiently aware of the motivational background of childhood conflicts and are able to analyze, together with children, the motives of their actions undertaken during conflict situations, are also helpful when it comes to constructive ways of conflict resolution. Contentious issues can be used for stressing the positive role of conflicts in children's life and the refinement of their intellectual, emotional, social and moral competences. Children's expression of opposition in peer relationships, including analysis of conflict situations to determine intentions and motives for actions, has a clear developmental dimension, as noted by Sandra V. Sandy and Kathleen M. Cochran²⁸. It is associated with the need to gain insights and integrate various points of view and different perspectives in interpreting the same phenomenon. The tension (cognitive dissonance) between the perspective of one child and the standpoint of another child (or other children) is a factor triggering own explorations implicating a better understanding of social and interpersonal world; it thus becomes a key determinant of children's development.

Adequate understanding of motivations underlying children's conflicts (and their dynamic nature) also influences the process of formation of the culture of conflict among children. This entails the need to develop children's skills in:

²⁷ A. Olczak, *Umowa w codzienności dziecka* [Contract in Children's Daily Life], *Życie Szkoły*, 2005, no. 1, p. 12-13.

²⁸ S.V. Sandy, K.M. Cochran, *Rozwój umiejętności rozwiązywania konfliktów u dzieci: W okresie od wieku przedszkolnego po dorastanie* [The Development of Conflict Resolution Skills in Children: Preschool to Adolescence], [in:] *Rozwiązywanie konfliktów*.

- recognizing their own and other people's emotions, defining and managing them (especially undesirable feelings: anger, frustration, disappointment, sorrow, jealousy);
- empathy ensuring appropriate conflict perception (including one's own and other people's behaviours) and "detachment of people from the problem", analysis of situation from the point of view of the opponent together with their needs, desires and goals;
- using constructive behaviour strategies in conflict situations to prevent aggressive attitudes during the conflict;
- cooperating, joining a group, forging and maintaining friendships;
- resolution of conflicts (mainly divergent) and shaping of creative competence necessary to work out a mutually rewarding solution.

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Motywacyjne tło konfliktów między przedszkolakami i dziećmi w wieku szkolnym

Streszczenie

Motywacyjne tło konfliktów interpersonalnych między przedszkolakami i dziećmi w wieku szkolnym obejmuje aspekt konkurencyjny, normatywny i tożsamościowy. Rodzaje motywów stanowią podstawę dla odróżniania różnych rodzajów dziecięcych konfliktów: konflikty na tle konkurencyjnym (motyw posiadania, atrakcyjności lub uznania), konflikty norm (motyw lojalności i absolutnej zgodności z zasadami przyjętymi dla różnych działań) i konflikty związane z poczuciem tożsamości (motyw własnych praw i przekonań). Aby właściwie konstruować proces nauczania i edukacji oraz konstruktywnie rozwiązywać konflikty, nauczyciele, pedagodzy i rodzice powinni być zaznajomieni z przyczynami wywołującymi konflikty między dziećmi.

Słowa kluczowe: konflikty interpersonalne, fazy konfliktów, motywy konfliktów dziecięcych, typy konfliktów