

Education in Conflict Resolution Using ICT: A Case Study in Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Education in today's society has meant that new challenges arise, including training on coexistence and a culture of peace in technological media. This article presents the results of a study that aimed to identify how information and communications technology (ICT) can support training in conflict resolution in Colombian public education. To address the use of technology for training in conflict resolution in this experience, the authors took into account the following categories of analysis: peaceful strategies or techniques for conflict resolution; methods and models for conflict resolution; and best practices with ICT. The research results helped identify the relevance of the use of technological tools for education in conflict resolution at an early age and the importance of providing training for teachers in these cross-sectional areas of school contexts.

KEYWORDS:

Coexistence, Education, Peace, Technology, Training

INTRODUCTION

Coexistence together with the culture of peace and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are cross-curricular areas (Zurbano, 1998; Gairín, 2008) that currently influence the curricula of educational institutions and that have been considered as pillars for the future Education (Delors et al., 1996; Morin, 1999). Thus, it is important to strengthen conflict resolution using ICT. Moreover, conflict resolution is one of the dimensions of Education for Coexistence and a Culture of Peace (Educación para la Convivencia y la Cultura de Paz - EpCyC) (Gobierno Vasco, 2004).

One of the major concerns currently present in the Colombian education system, the context of this research, has to do with the high rates of school violence recorded in both the classroom and virtual settings (Chaux, 2013; Narváez and Salazar, 2012; Cepeda and Caicedo, 2012). In this regard, it is of great importance for the academic community to strengthen strategies for conflict resolution in the classroom.

In this context, it is proposed a research focused on identifying the contribution of ICT to conflict resolution in a public school in Bogotá. These contributions will strengthen the planning and design of guidelines around the construction of experiences or classroom projects that seek to enhance the teaching and learning in conflict resolution based on technological tools.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Undoubtedly, the exercise of coexistence and a culture of peace has been affected by the use of technological tools to the point that, for students and for teachers and administrators, it has become

necessary to encourage programmes that contribute to media and information literacy (Diergarten, Möckel, Niding and Ohler, 2017; Yu, Lin & Liao, 2017; Hayes, 2016; Johnson-Grau, Gardner, Slater & McLean, 2016) and digital citizenship (Ribble, Bailey and Ross, 2004; Blevins, LeCompte and Wells, 2014; Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones, 2014). Thus, “Nowadays, mass media being referenced as a basic source of information has great importance in development of cultural, social, political, democratic conscious and especially in the development phase of culture of conscious citizenship” (Karaduman, 2015, p. 3039).

Education for students to develop skills related to conflict resolution using ICT is a subject of interest that has gained strength in the teaching and academic community in recent years. Several studies have focused on enhancing and researching the relationships that may arise with the use of ICT to support training processes for conflict resolution (DeVoogd, Lane-Garon and Kralowec, 2016; Olsher, 2015).

Some authors have focused on the effects of ICT on behaviours that can occur in students, such as cyberstalking or cyberbullying (Mateus, Veiga, Costa and das Dores, 2015; Hase, Goldberg, Smith, Stuck and Campaign, 2015; Garaigordobil, Martínez, Páez, and Cardozo, 2015; Del Barco, Mira, Verdasca, Castaño, and Carroza, 2013; Menay and de la Fuente, 2014; Fisher, Gardella, and Teurbe-Tolon, 2016), whereas others have focused on proposing prevention programmes that help foster conflict resolution using nonviolent actions (CFIE Valladolid, 2012; Garaigordobil and Martínez, 2014; Ortega, Del Rey and Casas, 2013; Del Barrio, 2013; Corredera, 2015; Clayton, Ballif-Spanvill and Hunsaker, 2001; Suárez, 2014; Collados, 2014; DeVoogd et al., 2016). It is noteworthy that addressing conflicts is also contemplated within the new dimensions of what has been called cyber-coexistence (Ortega, Del Rey, and Sánchez, 2012).

The definition of conflict has changed over time. For example, for Burnley (1993, cited by García, 2004), a conflict is a communication process that is part of human life and therefore has implications for education. Meanwhile, Torrego and Funes (2000, cited by Ibarrola-García and Iriarte, 2012) state that conflicts are moments in which two or more people disagree about their different interests, needs, or ideas and in which emotions come into play.

Taking the above into account, it is important not to consider conflict as being synonymous with violence because violence is ‘The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation’ (World Health Organization, 2003, cited by García and Guerrero, 2012, p. 14). In the words of Etxeberria, Esteve, and Jordán (2001, p. 82), ‘it is not legitimate to associate conflicts with violence because, although a conflict signifies everyday situations of social and school life in which there are clashes of interest, discussions, and the need to address the problem, violence is one of the ways of confronting this type of situation’.

For the purposes of this research, some of the theoretical aspects that are part of conflict management are those that consider the formulation of the categories of analysis, which are peaceful techniques or strategies for the resolution of conflicts, methods and models for conflict resolution, and best practices with ICT.

Peaceful techniques or strategies to resolve conflicts include identifying activities or actions supported by technology that seek to contribute to conflict resolution; for this aspect, the ideas of several authors have been taken into account (UNICEF-ANEP, 2008; Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2014; Torrego and Moreno, 2003; Chaux, 2012; Fernández et al., 2011): contributing to the rejection of physical, verbal, or psychological violence; encouraging the explanation of conflicts and the construction of solutions together; promoting the importance of recognizing and respecting agreements; and implementing spaces for debate, dialogue, the expression of feelings, and the generation of ideas.

The modalities to resolve conflicts involve spaces that are provided to address and resolve conflicts, typically guided by the teacher. Among these modalities, UNICEF-ANEP (2008) highlights

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