

**Teacher Identity in the Resolution of Teacher-Student Conflicts: A Literature Review**

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## **Abstract**

This literature review covers a time range from 2002 to 2013 and the main countries participating were USA, Colombia, Mexico and some from Europe. This project aimed at exploring how teacher identity can influence the resolution of teacher-student conflicts in the classroom. This paper also intends to settle ideas around conflict, as it is necessary to explore it from different perspectives to better understand how it plays out in the field of teaching. Conflict involves multiple shades of manifestation and treatment; the transformation it awards may result in a coexistence that will determine the quality of the relation between teachers and students, thus impacting the quality of education itself. The document analysis led to the conclusion that teacher identity plays the most important role in addressing conflict when it gets into the classroom. Evidently, the way teachers deal with it will help to construct or destruct, to humanize or dehumanize students.

***Keywords:*** coexistence, conflict, teacher-student relation, teacher identity.

## **Resumen**

Esta revisión de literatura se realizó en un rango de tiempo de 2002 a 2013 y los principales países participantes fueron Estados Unidos, Colombia, México y algunos de Europa. Este proyecto tuvo como objetivo explorar cómo la identidad del maestro puede influir en la resolución de conflictos en el aula. Este trabajo también tiene la intención de aclarar las ideas en torno al conflicto desde diferentes perspectivas para comprender mejor como opera en el campo de la enseñanza. El conflicto involucra múltiples matices de manifestación y su tratamiento. La transformación que genera puede resultar en formas de convivencia que definitivamente determinarán la calidad de la relación entre profesor y alumno y, por lo tanto, la calidad de la educación. El análisis del documento llevó a la conclusión de que la identidad del maestro juega el papel más importante en el manejo de los conflictos cuando aparecen al aula. Evidentemente la manera en que los maestros enfrentan los conflictos puede construir o destruir, humanizar o deshumanizar a los estudiantes.

***Palabras clave:*** convivencia, conflicto, relación profesor-alumno, identidad docente.

## **Degree Requirement**

This literature review project is submitted as a requirement to graduate from the Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching (Licenciatura en Inglés) at the School of Humanities and Education, Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, in Medellín, Colombia.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Statement of the problem**

There are certain things that cannot be taken away from the classroom. One of these things is conflict. According to Kolangui Nisanof and Parra Rosales (2013), if two people are enclosed in a room, and one of them has authority over the other to make them do work against their will, the possible result is that this obligated person ends developing a rebellious character. Thus, conflict cannot be removed from the classroom, but it certainly can be a powerful tool of transformation, which is crucial in order to develop a better environment that will lead us to meaningful learning. A teacher's job is not only to teach, but also to "identify, verbalize, and debate what exactly must be left behind to reach a peaceful future" (Bermeo Osorio, 2017, p. 74)

### **1.2. Literature review**

The research that different authors have been advancing contextualizes and promotes a verified understanding that provokes in the researcher an impulse to continue pushing ahead with mastered contributions to value the potential that conflict can have in itself. This review seeks to collect solid information in order to optimize my contribution to this important field of study.

First of all, conflict should bring a positive rather than a negative idea, an idea focused on improvement results. It is possible to migrate to a better concept of conflict that could be called "conflict transformation" when we consider that "conflict can keep progressing in two different ways: constructive and destructive" (Gawerc, 2006, p. 440). With this in mind, the progress of conflict in the classroom will depend exclusively on the teacher, which will be managing it according to their identity.

This review does not seek to remove conflict or minimize it. It rather seeks to adopt a new perspective of what conflict is and the new behaviors it engenders that will help to coexist with it. Kolangui Nisanof and Parra Rosales (2013) suggest that this newly adopted behavior will set students with enough internal resources to coexist with conflict

and put aside aggressive responses. Then, it will lead teachers to coexist with constructive and humanizing conflict.

Teacher-student relation plays an important role here, because it is in their interaction where conflict is generated. Cesares Arrangoiz (2011) argues that this interaction should promote peace, respect for life and for diversity, development based on effort, daily work, and community building. Then, he sustains that the path to improve the present that we live now and the future of society is made by daily learning, continuous search of transcendent values, communal solidarity, and self-development.

On the other hand, peaceful coexistence between teachers and students can be boosted by non-violent activities, cooperative activities. Cooperation eliminates every possible boundary and opens gates that can ease the tension that exists in conflict. Besides, cooperation attributes a stronger dynamic to the teacher –student relation by strengthening a peaceful class environment. As Gawerc (2006) states, “getting to know the other side” can take place as a group activity that will bring “a sense of common humanity” which can be possible as long as the different members of the group meet under equal conditions (p.118)

Gawerc (2006) also argues that promoting spaces for dialogue in order to connect with others’ interests and desires is a must. This attitude will heal tensions, decrease misunderstandings, and, most importantly, humanize the other and help to create resilience. Then, members involved in conflict can start creating a synchronization on cooperative activities aimed at strengthening relations. There are four important aspects that individuals should meet to overcome conflict: “accepting other’s narratives as legitimate, critically examining one’s own group’s acts and contribution to the conflict, feeling and showing empathy for others’ suffering while building trust in the other; and finally being inclined to getting involved in nonviolent activities” (p.448).

After exploring what conflict is and how it is manifested and treated in the teacher-student relation, it opens up the gates that lead to the path of resolution. Kolangui Nisanof and Parra Rosales (2013) suggest that conflict needs to be faced, not hidden. Facing conflict helps to build peace by transforming and regulating it, instead of pretending it does not exist, which can promote negative feelings of frustration. This pedagogical process can also

bring reflexive and self-reflexive capabilities such as critiquing (Sanín & Álvarez, 1998). This process includes behavior transformation, which will feed teachers' identity, a crucial aspect for reaching peace.

But, this literature review light on a very important question where I will need to paraphrase Gawerc once again. "What is peace? The text states that it is problematic to define peace as the "absence of war or physical violence" (p.107). Peace can point out to reconciliation and psycho/social healing. We also can highlight that peace-making refers to a "negotiation process" that calls for a peace keeper, which has been underestimated in research.

This brings me to the "multiple steps and interventions" in the peace-building process, which lead us to the comprehension of the different levels that conflict transformation can bring: "context transformation; structural transformation (root causes); actor or leader transformation, which includes transformation of their beliefs and goals; issue transformation, which is a change of positions; and personal and group transformation, which is changing minds and hearts" (Gawerc, 2006, p. 440)

Also, there is a very true phrase that states "How conflict is remembered in society that is how the society promotes the avoidance of violence in the future". The article mentions a new paradigm through which by "getting to know the past, it is possible to build a better future" (Bermeo Osorio, 2017, p. 73). Then, it is accurate to say that teachers will try to solve conflicts as they remember it worked in the past. But this will not work for a society that is advancing this fast. Furthermore, for this author, "peace is not only absence of war but the presence of other elements like equity". Then it remarks that peace is the attempt to overcome contradictions from the root of conflict. The article also states that "promoting the development of cognitive capabilities to understand social and political conflict that the country faces". The article helps to establish caring relationships based on "mutual respect, harmony, tolerance, and more horizontal and less hierarchical relations" (Bermeo Osorio, 2017, p. 79)

Now, we can move forward and tell how teacher identity is involved in conflict resolution and peace building. First, we can see that teacher's identity is flexible, changing

and multiple. Moreover, it can be shaped in accordance with what conflict needs in order to generate a positive outcome.

It is important to take into account that learning and teaching are two very different things, and the ones who are searching for solutions for conflict between teachers and students need to have the difference very clear. Teaching is done by one individual, yet learning occurs inside another individual. This explanation of the difference is obvious, but the author says that it is worthy to be analysed because, if this relation of teaching and learning works effectively, it is because it must exist a unique relation between this two separated elements. There must be a link of contact or a bridge between teacher and students (Gordon & Garcia, 1998).

We face the premise that the management of conflicts depends on teacher's identity. In addition, Melo de Almeida (2014) speaks about a culture of peace that is based on respect for difference and diversity, eliminating the notion of enemy. Therefore, to promote peace and social cohesion is necessary that a constructive relation exists between people, an acceptance, and the respect for difference. Then, human groups that integrate a community can feel themselves valued as persons and as groups (Melo de Almeida, 2014, p. 1-2).

The main character in conflict is the teacher, and the identity of a language teacher can also be certainly influenced by the term of Matos, that represent a dual approach when teaching, humanizing and dehumanizing. This clarifies the role that teachers are expected to play in the educational system and impulses the conflict towards a positive outcome that will enrich education. It also explains with details the characteristics that teachers need to identify in order to overcome the challenge of getting peace after conflict. Peace is what is expected after conflict and with the help of the author a light of knowledge lets us see that teachers can adopt peace linguistics and promote peace (Gomes de Matos, 2014).

### **1.3. Research Question**

How can teachers' identity influence the resolution of conflicts in teacher-student relations?

## **1.4 Objectives**

### **1.4.1 General Objective**

To explore teacher identity in the resolution of conflicts involving teacher-student relations.

### **1.4.2. Specific Objectives**

- To distinguish the different paths that conflict can take and how it affects the resolution of conflicts.
- To recognize how the resolution of conflicts can bring new alternatives to improve schools and teacher-student relations.

## **2. Method**

This research was conducted through document analysis, which is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009)

Also, I used bibliographical sheets that were coloured according to the main concepts related to the research and a categories matrix that helped me to organize the content in a structural way and being able to organize coherently the information.

Figure 1. Category Matrix.

Matrix for Documentary Analysis										
Project Title										
Researcher										
Date of last update										
Theme	SubTheme	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
1	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
2	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
3	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
4	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
5	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
6	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
7	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
8	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
9	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
10	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
11	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	
12	Education	SAI Reference	SAI Word	Category	Summary	Finalized Evidence	Current Evidence	Initial Evidence	Observations and Comments	

Figure 2. Bibliographical Index Cards.

UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA LUISAMIGO		LICENCIATURA EN INGLÉS	
		Teacher's identity in resolution of conflicts teacher-student	
No. SALGAD001	Reference: Casares Arrangoiz, D. (2011). <i>Líderes y educadores</i> (1st ed., p. 118). México: Universidad del valle de México.	Location: Biblioteca Pública Piloto Medellín.	
Summary		Key Words:	
<p>The text was taken from a book that leaders and educators are gathered in the same practice field, and states that <b>teachers can reach out to that required transformation of educational system, but it demands high standards of commitment to teachers themselves and school community.</b></p> <p>To be a teacher requires a way of living and a values hierarchy highly oriented to humanism and to build a better society and its coexistence. Also, <b>it states that this should promote peace, respect to life and to the diversity, also that development based on the effort, daily work and own destiny and community destiny building.</b></p> <p>Key ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Casares Arrangoiz, 2011) sustains that the path to improve the present that we live now and the future of society, is made by daily learning, continue research of transcendent values, communal solidarity and self-development.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transformation, peace</li> <li>Coexistence</li> <li>Commitment</li> <li>Values</li> </ul>	
Observations:			
<p>This text could help to support the idea that transformation is required by society, and establish teacher as the transforming agent but also, this text does not pretend to show the teacher as the hero just because. It also mention what is a must for who wants to transform society. And also, It explains that this requires a serious commitment to promote development of the own and</p>			

**Figure 3. Sampling.**

Teacher Identify	Teacher-Student relation	Resolution of conflicts
<p>(Kolangui Nisanof &amp; Parra Rosales, 2013) state that if two people are enclosed in a room, where one of them has authority over the other one to make them do work against their will, the possible result is that this obligated person ends developing a rebellious character. Is it his fault or the situation fault? But certainly teachers can only get adapted and use some variables to create a learning environment and peaceful coexistence.</p>	<p>Because the learning-teaching process needs to work effectively, there must be a unique relation between these two separated organisms, a kind of link of contact or bridge between teacher and student". (Gordon &amp; Garcia de León del Paso, 1998, p. 22)</p>	<p>"Over the years, there has been heated discussion in the conflict resolution literature between those who perceive the cause of conflicts to be structural and those who perceive it to be psychosocial/psychocultural." (Gawerc, 2006, p. 43)</p>

### 3. Discussion

This research guided me on the path of a global understanding of how teacher identity can influence the teacher-student relation and how this identity can provide the resources to resolve conflicts emerging in this relation. The transformation of conflicts should bring a positive outcome; peaceful coexistence needs to be a typical environment and it should be welcomed by the proper management of conflicts performed by the teacher. Conflict should be constructive and not destructive; it should humanize and not dehumanizing. More non-violent and cooperative activities are required to finally reach a peace culture.

#### 3.1 Interpretations and Implications

The findings of this analysis make me think about conflict as the opportunity, as the risk that is worth to go through in order to feed future peace. It is also a challenge for teachers that can perceive conflict as a way of measuring the effectiveness of their own identity and how it is reflected in their classes. Further, conflict can be taken as a mechanism to evaluate the results that teachers' reactions are provoking on students in the middle-term. This principle is applicable not only to teachers but to society in general, that is, to individuals who coexist with other individuals on a daily basis.

As a way of conclusion, it is proper to say that thanks to conflict society has grown, thanks to conflict the human being has been able to assimilate differences as a way to enjoy variety, however the resolution of conflicts is not a fruit easy to eat and even less easy to plant, the easier thing to do is hidden it, ignore it, or remove it, but peace is not supposed to be free, and the price to pay is going through chaos without let it make a mess of your internal calm.

### **3.2 Conclusions and Recommendations**

I invite the ones who read this paper to welcome conflict. Even the universe was in conflict somehow. There is a short story that I want to share with you, dear reader. I have been working on this paper the whole day, and I wanted a break. Then, I just went outside because certain smell called me, and also because I was trying to get fresh ideas. I ended up having a very deep talk with my uncle, who lives here with us. He is a farmer and I am a man who is writing a paper. Without seeing it, the most two important characters on earth were having a conversation. The farmer whom we should thank for feeding those who are taught by teachers. We can learn from conflict, as long as peace remains inside. What is our identity? Am I in peace or at least I use chaos to create peace? My answer is we have to welcome and be alert for conflict. We should react, but only to overcome conflict, if we can. If we cannot, we just have to remember our identity.

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