



## **Systemic Conflict Management**

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## 5. Systemic Conflict Management

When (cyber)mobbing occurs at school or reaches into the realm of school life, schools clearly have to react. They have a legal mandate that obliges them to. School administrators, teachers, and education professionals bear responsibility for addressing every case of (cyber)mobbing, together with the victim and his legal guardians, as well as the offender. The question is not *whether* to respond, but *how* to respond. Also not open to discussion is the issue of whether conflict management should be undertaken. Again, the question is only *what kind* – with what quality criteria, principles of action, and degree of transparency.

Spontaneous conflict management improvised in an acute situation can be a success, but it can also cause considerable 'collateral damage' and great suffering. It is hard to find well-structured, institutionally anchored arrangements with goal-oriented, systematic interactive work done by trained educational teams. In teacher training, this is hardly even mentioned (cf. Wedemann 2014; Scheithauer et al. 2007).

The concept of "conflict management" contains the word "management"; it derives from the Latin "manum agere" and literally means "to lead by the hand". Exactly that: conflict parties, the persons surrounding them in their school classes, and all those involved in educating them at school and in the family need to be taken by the hand and escorted by qualified professionals. Often, the response to a tense situation has to be rapid and goal-oriented, and there is no time for extensive discussion. Still, decisions should not simply be arrived at intuitively. On the basis of Systemic Conflict Management (SCM), it is possible to cultivate an approach that is pedagogically enlightened, well-reflected, sustainable, and oriented to societal principles of law and justice.

Although most of the texts in this handbook relate to (cyber)mobbing among school students, there are various ways in which educators and parents can also be targeted. Practitioners and professional organizations, such as the German teachers' union GEW (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft), report that teachers are relatively often the victims of mobbing. In a GEW study from the year 2007, eight percent of teachers reported having been the target of mobbing activities. Since then, the number is likely to have risen. The estimated number of unreported cases is high, because many teachers hesitate to reveal their difficulties (see GEW study on cybermobbing, 2007). The authors of this handbook consider it important to call attention to this situation, although the focus here is on (cyber)mobbing phenomena among school students. The procedures and methods for dealing with (cyber)mobbing that are described in this chapter can be just as effectively applied when a teacher outs himself as a victim and requests help. In Chapter 3 (section on "The Case of Mr. Beutelsbacher"), a situation is depicted in which a teacher became a victim of (cyber)mobbing. We therefore refer deliberately to conflict participants, conflicting parties or persons, rather than merely students. The only variants not included in this systematic treatment of SCM would be conflicts among teachers or between teachers and school administrators.

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### Principles of Action in Systemic Conflict Management

- 1 Every treatment and regulation of a conflict is oriented toward adherence to human rights, civil rights, and children's rights.
- 2 Each of the conflicting parties has the right to be heard.
- 3 No conflicting party can be forced to incriminate himself.
- 4 Accusations may only be brought against a conflict participant if the facts and circumstances are proven or backed by plausible witness statements. Otherwise, the person must be given the benefit of the doubt.
- 5 A restriction of the rights of a member of the school community can only be levied by the teachers, the headmaster, or in an emergency by the police. Such a restriction must be founded on the principles of law and order.
- 6 No person active in addressing the conflict can claim any right to personal, individual violence. Everyone is exhorted to communicate non-violently.
- 7 In addressing the conflict, any and all forms of violence are countermanded. The responsible parties are confronted with their own harmful behavior. This applies particularly in cases where criminal acts have been committed that violate human rights, civil rights, or children's rights or that discriminate against persons due to their family or ethnic origin, their appearance, skin color, gender, or level of achievement in school, or when hate speech is directed against such persons.
- 8 Any use of force that is rectified as self-defense or defense of a third person must nonetheless remain within the bounds set by constitutional standards.
- 9 Protection and support for persons who have been damaged are given priority.
- 10 The fundamental principle is observed of separating the person and his/her behavior, respecting the dignity of the person while at the same time systematically eschewing the use of force. The person is not the focus of examination in solving any given conflict, but rather the damaging behavior. The dignity of every person is respected.
- 11 Following the tenet that helping is more important than punishment, the school community approaches the persons who have made offense, offering options for support and reconciliation that are oriented toward the basic principle of inclusion. These offers take precedence over negative educative or regulatory measures tending towards exclusion. This presupposes, however, that no endangerment of others occurs, and that the offenders are willing to accept support toward modifying their behavior. Conflict regulation should aim at promoting pro-social personality development.
- 12 The treatment of serious conflicts is undertaken – wherever feasible – by a team, with its members striving for the greatest possible clarity concerning their own social roles. Decisions on disciplinary measures are made only by the persons legally responsible for them.
- 13 All conflicting parties participate in the planning and realization of the conflict regulation, and the process is kept transparent for all those involved.
- 14 Teachers, students, and parents as well as external cooperation partners (such as school social workers or school psychologists) are involved in the development of procedural standards, cooperative structures, guidelines, and formative principles as a means of school development.
- 15 In conflict regulation, data protection regulations are observed.

## Systemic Conflict Management (SCM)

### The three subprocesses of Systemic Conflict Management (SCM)

#### Structural management

Four levels of implementation for structures (Chapter 5.3.1)

1. interpersonal
2. class group
3. individual school
4. school district/region

#### Personnel management

Qualification measures and Formation of Teams (Chapter 5.3.2)

Defining social roles, professional requirements, work commissions, reporting duties

#### Process management

Setting out and defining procedures (Chapter 5.3.3) – five basic modules and five elements within the module on strategy for action – to be subsumed into the discussion of Phases of Action (Chapter 5.5)

### The five modules of operative process management in SCM (Chapter 5.4)

#### Module: Principles of Action (Chapter 5.4.1)

Separation of person and behavior, condemnation of violence, priority of protecting victims, helping is more important than punishment, the right to be heard, the benefit of the doubt, observing data protection standards, maintaining transparency for and participation of all those affected, teamwork (excerpt)

#### Module: Diagnosis (Chapter 5.4.2)

Areas of conflict (Chapter 2.1.1)	conflicts in living together and working together
Levels of conflict (Chapters 2.1.2 and 5.4.2)	intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, systemic and cooperative levels
Characteristics of conflict (Chapter 5.4.2)	hostility, lacking potential for nonviolent resolution, damage to persons, violation of values and norms, complexity, and responsibility
Scale of conflict (Chapter 5.4.2)	(A) atmospheric disturbance, (B) tousling and roughing around, (C) relatively serious conflict, (D) serious conflict, (E) threat or crisis

#### Module: Teamwork (Chapter 5.4.3)

Social roles (Chapter 5.4.3)	roles within the conflict treatment team: headmaster, homeroom teacher, conflict manager, conflict helper, assistant conflict helper, prevention expert (e.g. media educator)
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#### Module: Strategy for Action (Chapter 5.4.4)

Element: modes of action (Chapter 5.4.4)	Self-regulation, regulation on request, compulsory regulation, threat intervention, and crisis intervention
Element: types of action (Chapter 5.4.4)	Support, interference, and package deal (if – then)
Element: levels of action (Chapter 5.4.4)	Intrapersonal, interpersonal, peer or class group, family and school, communal or regional level
Element: methods of action (Chapter 5.4.4)	Methods for pedagogical interference and for support (e.g. Systemic Mobbing Intervention, Brief Intervention / restitution for deeds and damage done)
Element: phases of action (Chapter 5.5)	1. First response and positioning, 2. Threat or crisis intervention, 3. Conflict regulation, and 4. Follow-up

#### Module: Documentation and Reporting Duties (Chapter 5.4.5)

Requirements for documentation and reciprocal information following established standards and based on forms to be completed

The Element 'Phases of Action' provides a fundamental structure for the process

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## 5.1 Characteristics of SCM

Systemic Conflict Management (SCM) has the following fundamental characteristics:

### ■ Systematic procedure

Systematic procedure, here in the context of handling conflicts, is thought through in advance, making it well structured, well prepared, and transparent for all its participants from the outset. It adheres to procedural standards, principles for action, and quality criteria – suited to the situation of the individual school – that are negotiated by students, parents, and the faculty. The methods described in Chapter 4, SMI and SBI, along with restitution for deed and damage as described below, are regarded as core methods for the practical work of conflict treatment.

### ■ Systemic approach

The systemic approach to the process of dealing with conflict does not simply focus on the persons directly involved in the individual incident, but rather factors in the social environment where it occurs – including the persons interacting in the subsystems school, family, and peer group – and in doing so takes into account that there are reciprocal influences between the individual and his surroundings.

### ■ Prevention by fostering development

Conflict, threat, and crisis are not simply regarded as unpleasant burdens, but rather as pedagogical challenges, as opportunities and learning situations – for the (delinquent) student and his victim as well as for those doing educational work in the school and for their cooperation partners in youth agencies, school counseling, and the police.

### ■ Personnel and organizational development complement individual case treatment

The operative process of managing a conflict case (process management) profits from complementary longer-term efforts – such as personnel and organizational development work in the school itself and among cooperation partners in local youth agencies, school psychology services, and at the police – aimed at creating sustainable structures (structural management) and professional competence among

staff (personnel management) on the level of the class, the school, and the town or neighborhood. Ideally, such structures are anchored in policies of school development and communal education planning, so that concrete cases can be addressed quickly and with long-term success.

SCM thus defines itself as a systematic approach to structural, personnel, and process management anchored in a particular school or class and oriented toward standards of quality and guidelines for action.

### ■ Teaching democracy by way of experience

SCM fosters the development and personality formation of young people by initiating and reinforcing pro-social behavior and transporting fundamental democratic values. It fulfills all the prerequisites for professional handling of conflicts.

## 5.2 Advantages of SCM

Introducing Systemic Conflict Management (SCM) at a school has considerable advantages for the students, parents, teachers, administrators, the external support persons in youth agencies and psychological services. Here, we will list eight of the advantages:

### ■ Confidence in procedures

The knowledge that a school is applying a tested strategy and has a clear assignment of roles and professional capacities saves time and worry.

### ■ Democracy education in a learning situation

Conflicts typical in cases of (cyber)mobbing are very unfortunate circumstances that need to be overcome as quickly as possible. They can, however, also be regarded as opportunities for learning pro-social skills.

### ■ Goal-oriented and flexible procedure

Often, the borderline between degree of conflict escalation can be blurred. SCM offers a diagnostic roster for estimating the gravity of a conflict, as well as procedural steps that build upon one another and can be adjusted to the individual case in a flexible manner.



### ■ Preventing the escalation of violence

There are instances where the primary interest is not to solve a conflict as quickly as possible, but rather to recognize a conflict-in-the-making and intervene early to de-escalate it and forestall the conflict through constructive efforts that have sustained effect. SCM thus reduces the undesirable 'cost' of hostilities and of escalating conflicts for the students, their families, and the school.

### ■ Participation

Procedures and methods are defined in advance. For students, parents, and teachers, this makes the process more transparent and enables their democratic participation, while fostering trust and also – through educational partnership and teamwork – relieves the burdens on homeroom teachers and headmasters.

### ■ Enhancing the educational profile

SCM bridges gaps pertaining to fairness, cooperation, and competence that the traditional school system often encounters in dealing with conflicts. SCM helps to broaden the understanding of prevention work so that it is no longer simply seen as a task for socially committed teachers, but defined as a holistic effort encompassing all facets of the mandate for guidance and education borne collectively by the school. SCM compensates structural deficits and heightens the educational profile of a school or an individual class.

### ■ Conserving resources through synergy

SCM promotes cooperation with external support systems on an equal footing, for instance with youth support agencies, particularly school social work, school psychology services, and the police. Interfaces for this are established, roles are clarified, cooperation is intensified, and synergetic effects result.

### ■ Protection from burnout

SCM helps protect educators against overload on the job and reassures them that they are doing all that is possible and necessary to fulfill their social and professional responsibilities. SCM fosters teamwork and sharing of responsibility.

## 5.3 Subprocesses in SCM

SCM is not a method, it is a program. It serves several major aims: planned, systematic handling of conflicts and professionalization of individuals dealing with the process, as well as organizational and personnel development at schools and in youth support agencies, with their subsystems. A subsystem at a school could be an individual class – SCM would then be implemented by the homeroom teacher, as a facet of classroom management. A subsystem of a youth support agency could be their school social work services, using SCM to shape the cooperative relationship in the field of conflict support. Where SCM is applied to an entire school, it can contribute to enhancing the overall educational profile of the school.

In addition, SCM can even serve as a communal or regional program for the social sphere by fostering networking activities among all those working in the field violence prevention and crime prevention (schools, school social workers and psychologists, police) – through intensified cooperation that is very effective and makes optimal use of resources.

Depending on the circumstances in a school and the environment where its students live, SCM takes the existing conditions (difficulties, potentials, resources) as a starting point, with five maxims in mind:

- Development emerges from the recognition of what exists.
- The doors to change are opened from within.
- Work done in organizations and their subsystems is done by people. Any changes have to be accepted and supported by these people.
- Development within organizations requires both bottom-up processes (good practice) and top-down processes (good leadership).
- Development calls for good will in the form of public recognition, a healthy way of dealing with mistakes, and availability of personnel, spatial, and financial resources.

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In practice, this implies that when (cyber)mobbing phenomena appear in a class, a committed homeroom teacher and a developmentally oriented headmaster will come forward with programmatic suggestions on how such conflicts are to be addressed in the future, and will involve school administrators, faculty, parents, and student representatives in the planning. On the level of city or community administration, the responsible officials confer with regional school authorities, the communal youth authorities, psychological counseling services, a (public) youth support agency, and the police to formulate a tailor-made suggestion on how serious conflicts can be approached and mutual cooperation initiated.

### Introducing SCM into a school

It takes some time to anchor SCM securely in the educational profile of a school; haste will not help. It is better to proceed in small steps and, if possible, phase by phase:

#### Step 1 – Introduction on the interpersonal level

Individual teachers, school social workers or psychologists acquire competence in SCM. They qualify themselves to apply the conflict diagnosis roster and are better able to assess conflicts and then advise students, parents, teachers or school administrators in difficult situations. The clarity and professionalism of their recommendations will speak for itself, so that SCM receives recognition at the school.

#### Step 2 – Introduction on the class level

SCM is then applied on the level of individual classes or parallel classes. One or more homeroom teachers agree to approach future conflicts using SCM. Small teams are formed and reach agreement on strategies for action. When an individual case comes up, the team asks the headmaster for re-confirmation of approval, then seeks support from external sources (school social work or psychological services). SCM will establish itself readily as an effective approach, and the first projects will appear as 'beacons' to the rest of the school.

#### Step 3 – Introduction on the school community level

Faculty, school administration, and parents perceive SCM as a meaningful and necessary tool for educational work. They want more. A steering group is formed to plan the binding structures being introduced throughout the school. The formal decision-making bodies of the

school pass a resolution to establish the structures in the school's program. Supporters are recruited within the local community. Available resources are consolidated, and new ones created. The school instates SCM as an integral part of its everyday functioning, and in doing so raises its own profile. Promotion of development, prevention of violence, and democracy education now become characteristic for the school in the perception of the public, serving as a model for others.

#### Step 4 – Introduction in neighboring schools

Various schools in a city or region affiliate with one another. Resources are consolidated. Youth support agencies, school psychological services, and police support the schools in their structural development work and operative process of dealing with severe conflicts. In the context of communal planning for education and youth support measures, SCM is treated as a standard part of social education, schooling, and prevention. The city or region serves as a beacon for others.

In the following, we present the three subprocesses of SCM with their aims, measures, and tasks.

### 5.3.1 Creating Structures (Structural Management)

This subprocess serves to create the structures necessary for conflict resolution. Structural management (like personnel management) needs to be pursued in advance, independent of acute demand, that is, long before an individual case makes it indispensable. Previous preparation of operative process management provides, in cases of (cyber)mobbing, the foundation for decisions on a strategy for action that is tailored to the individual case.

In structural management, colleagues, administrators, and external partners, with input from student and parent representatives, determine procedural standards, handling methods, personnel and time resources for conflict resolution in an organigram and a portfolio of procedures and methods. During the follow-up after a conflict intervention, the stated goals are compared with the actual outcomes. Where indicated, consequences are drawn for future processes, and adjustments made.

This is an essential aspect of structural management. Procedures and methods have to be adjusted to suit the circumstances in a particular class or school.

**Aim:** to create functional structures on the level of individual classes, parallel classes in one form, in the individual school and/or community/district

**Task:** planning, description, and adoption of binding agreements on cooperation, procedures, and ethical-pedagogical principles for the process of conflict resolution

**Measures:**

- analysis of the current status of existing structures
- formulation of procedural standards to be entered into the portfolio of procedures
- determination of standardized methods to be placed in the portfolio of methods
- description of time and personnel resources to be invested
- where applicable, negotiation of standards for cooperation with external partners in school social work, school psychological services, counseling centers, and police
- participation of faculty members, parents, students, and external partners in processes of school development
- transparent information policy for all participants
- evaluation of outcomes and adjustment of procedural standards and methods
- adjustment of principles for action, process descriptions and methods, undertaken at meetings of the steering group
- preparation of an organization plan with an organigram

### 5.3.2 Qualifying Personnel (Personnel Management)

Personnel management is both a preparatory task and an operative one. This subprocess aims at professionalizing the work of those responsible for addressing conflicts, and the formation of teams. Social roles within the team are defined, and professional requirements,

tasks, and reporting duties are spelled out. The persons actively dealing with conflicts need particular poise and advanced methodical skills. They have to achieve and maintain this qualification by participating in relevant continuing education programs and through professional supervision.

On the basis of such personnel development measures, a school (or a community with several schools) will be able to organize teams to work together. SCM calls for two types of teams:

- The **SCM steering team** works on an ongoing basis for as long as the SCM program is in place. On the meta-level, it steers and evaluates the process of structural and personnel management.
- The **SCM case management team** is an operative unit working for a limited period of time on an individual conflict case, and can be temporarily expanded to include conflict support assistants and external professional colleagues.

**Aim:** formation of a functioning steering team and a case management team

**Task:** recruitment, planned qualification measures, and professionalization of the team members

**Measures:**

- analysis of the current status among personnel
- conferences held to foster participation of faculty members and external support systems
- designation of social roles, individual tasks within the team, and documentation and reporting duties
- negotiations initiated toward establishing cooperation with external partners
- formal agreements on cooperation, with special attention given to data protection
- promotion of transparency and acceptance thanks to frequent oral and written information relating to feedback and work outcomes
- organization of continuing education measures
- evaluation of process documentation to assess the need for further development of professional competence among the active persons.



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### 5.3.3 Defining Procedures for Individual Cases (Process Management)

By process management, we mean direct conflict management in an individual case. When structural and personnel development measures have been successfully carried out (see above), they form a solid foundation for process management, since procedures, principles of action, and quality standards have already been agreed upon and the participants are qualified to assume their roles and tasks.

**Aim:** Resolution of a particular conflict and promotion of personality formation among the conflict parties

**Task:** Addressing and working through the conflict (in accord with the procedures set out in structural management)

#### Measures:

- case-related definition of mandate and positioning of the participating professionals in dialogue with other supporting figures (see Chapter 5.5.1)
- appointment of an operative SCM case-working team, a conflict manager, conflict helpers and their assistants (see Chapter 5.4.3) by the headmaster or at his/her request, followed by positioning of the team in accord with their individual roles and tasks

- clarification of the conflict events, systematic analysis of the conflict, development of a suitable strategy for action, planning for regulation of the conflict with the participation of the conflict parties and (where indicated) with their parents, selection of appropriate methods allowing for action on the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels as well as with the school class(es) involved (extensive description of these measures follows in Chapter 5.4)
- Coordination and monitoring of the measures, documentation of the process, written and verbal information to those participating as stipulated in the established roster for documentation and reporting duties

### 5.4 Building Blocks of SCM

Working to resolve serious conflicts escalating on various levels, while striving for high educational aims, is not a walk in the park. It is associated with emotional and social risks, both for those directly involved and for those who intervene. Intervention in cases of (cyber) mobbing can be compared with mountain hiking, where bad weather conditions can reduce visibility. So it's hardly surprising that mountain climbers' rules can easily be applied to addressing (cyber)mobbing

#### 10 Mountain climbers' rules (also applying to SCM)

1. Do your preparation thoroughly. Adjust the equipment to the challenge (in the preparatory phase: implement structures). Inquire about the weather and the local conditions (diagnostics).
2. Don't start off on your own (team principle).
3. Choose a route that is suited to your degree of expertise (professional competence).
4. Avoid overexertion and involve the whole group, taking everyone's capacity for pace and endurance into account (participation of conflict parties).
5. Leave a message about what path you've taken (transparency).
6. Turn back if you stop making progress (priority is protection of victims and your own safety).
7. Get help when you're in trouble (network).
8. Play close attention to correct technique (method skills) for climbing, securing, and navigating (diagnostic skills) and keep yourself in good shape (continuing education and evaluation).
9. The more difficult the terrain, the more important it is to have persons with special skills (advanced training) running the team (headmaster and homeroom teacher, conflict manager and helpers) and contributing their experience (continuity and consistency of actions).
10. Allow these principles to guide you (ethical tenets and guidelines).

Modelled after the Mountainclimbing Rules of the German Alpine Association.

conflicts, and the SCM described here has taken inspiration from them.

SCM focuses on secure footing for action and on ensuring that neither the conflict parties nor the professionals involved will be endangered by the intervention and, figuratively speaking, stumble into a rock slide. SCM stands for mindfulness and awareness in working through conflicts, so as to avoid collateral damage.

Planfully resolving a conflict in SCM encompasses five *building blocks* that interlock with one another (see below) and proceeds through four *phases of action* (see Chapter 5.5).

The five building blocks are:

#### 1. Principles of action

The principles of action form the legal and ethical foundation for all actions taken.

#### 2. Diagnostics

Conflict diagnosis is the basis for assessing the conflict events and the resulting plan for action, upon which the strategy for action is built. Diagnosis is a cross-sectional task that applies to the entire on-going process of conflict resolution.

#### 3. Teamwork

Working in a team is mandatory in severe cases of (cyber)mobbing. The wide range of tasks and roles simply cannot be mastered by one individual person.

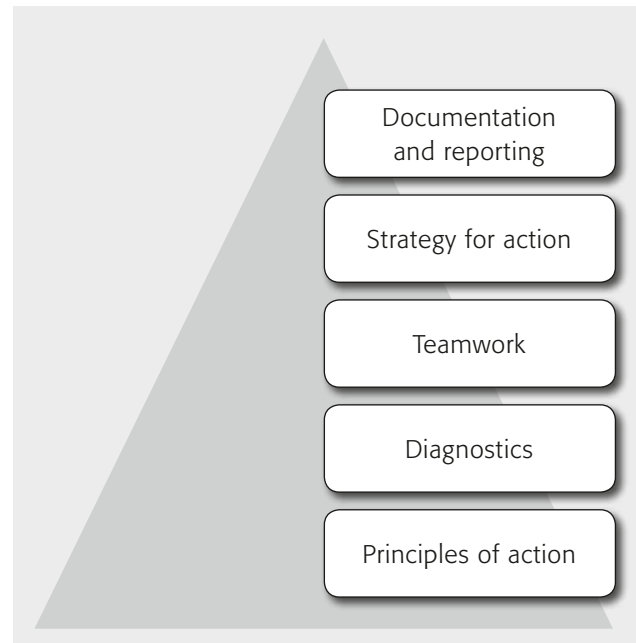
#### 4. Strategy for action

The strategy for action is determined by the mode of procedure, the level, the direction, and the method of conflict resolution.

#### 5. Documentation and reporting duties

Documentation and reporting need, like diagnostics, to be cultivated continuously during the process of addressing a conflict – as proof of the legality and conformity of procedure, and as a means of providing all persons active in the team with current information.

### Building Blocks of Systemic Conflict Management in the Partial Process of Operative Process Management



#### 5.4.1 Building Block 'Principles of Action'

##### Human Rights

We can't undertake measures against (cyber)mobbing without simultaneously advocating respect for human rights: "Human dignity is inalienable." But experience shows that fundamental human rights are often violated, for example in school classes where (cyber)mobbing is underway, and that this often occurs in plain view of the classmates, parents, and teachers.

As human beings we are not immune to developing negative feelings toward students who behave aggressively or violently. Such feelings can range from antipathy to overt aggression. Therefore it happens that in pedagogical approaches to heated conflicts likely to escalate, there can be mention of forcing students to admit their mistakes and to apologize immediately, or letting them know "who has the say". If things get to this point, then it is time to pause and reflect on the situation. At such an impasse, children and adolescents are particularly dependent on reasonable adults who have themselves well under control.

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Violence evokes violence as a response. If we are not careful enough about our own behavior, this true saying will take shape in reality. It can happen too easily that we expect others to observe fundamental human rights while disregarding them ourselves.

For this reason, those active in addressing a conflict should join in developing pedagogical principles oriented towards an anti-authoritarian style of education and adherence to fundamental human rights. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "There is no path to peace, for peace is the path."

These principles should be set out in writing. They form the basis for a mutual approach towards the pedagogical interaction that will ensue while addressing the conflict. Their significance should be emphasized by requesting that each member of the team sign a personal declaration of adherence to them (on pedagogical posture, see Chapter 7).

### Data Protection

An important fundamental right that we all have is the right to determine how our personal information is treated. This basic right is often violated in cases of (cyber)mobbing – and again in the course of addressing the conflicts. Students should never be sounded out, and one should never force them to incriminate themselves. When "gathering information" from students, one must conform to (data protection) rules: the intent of an interview has to be clear to the student from the outset, and the student's permission is required before any information can be passed on to others (with exceptions made only in extreme cases). Children have fundamental rights, like everyone else! It has to be ensured that children, as their age and maturity permit, comprehend the purpose and intent of an interview or of relaying data to others. If this is doubtful or if the events have a certain magnitude, teachers should inform the children's parents. Particular attention should be paid to this aspect with elementary school pupils or children up to the age of 13.

For school social workers, school psychologists, and teacher-counselors, the rules on sharing social data differ (at least in Germany). Trust and confidentiality are the foundations of their work. They are "bearers of secrets" and as such are subject to § 203 Sect. 1 Nr. 2 and Nr. 5 StGB (Penal Code), which call for strict confidentiality.

Similar restrictions apply to teachers (at least those who are tenured public servants) according to § 203 Sect. 2 Nr. 1 StGB, since they are public officials. However, transmitting information to others is forbidden only when it is unauthorized. In cases where there is reason to assume that a child may be endangered or that a felony has been committed, school social workers, school psychologists, and counselors may, or rather must, reveal the information they have.

By contrast, the rights and duties of teachers differ fundamentally when it comes to revealing information. Generally, teachers are expected to handle confidential information about their students with reticence. However, whenever events occur that could be detrimental to the normal course of school life or could impinge on the rights of individual persons, the teachers have to inform the school administration and the parents, even if the affected students have not given their permission. The legal framework in such cases is the educational partnership between parents and the school as defined in School Law.

In practice, this implies that a teacher is allowed and required to inform other persons even about relatively minor incidents soon after they come to his or her attention – as opposed to the greater confidentiality granted to school social workers, school psychologists, and counselors.

It is therefore important that members of a conflict intervention team be trained on their legal duties and their social roles in the context of data protection. This is consolidated when they sign a written declaration on data protection.

### Team Principle

The fundamental tenet that severe conflicts should be approached wherever possible by a team does not only derive from the insight that individuals can be professionally or personally overtaxed. It also protects those involved from complacency, unfair behavior, arbitrariness, lack of principle, and a high rate of error. The prerequisite is, however, that the team members acknowledge and respect the responsibility and tasks of their team colleagues and that they cultivate a feedback culture allowing for critical questions. In SCM, the task of maintaining this culture is considered an aspect of personnel management.

### 5.4.2 Building Block: Diagnostics

In this section on 'diagnostics' we present a standard procedure used in SCM.

#### Goals

- Shed light on the conflict events – clarify the matter at hand – secure proof
- Arrive at a reliable assessment of the conflict events
- Prepare a sustainable regulation on all the levels of conflict
- Safeguard an intervention that is in process

#### Guiding Questions

- Which of the conflict participants are on 'center stage', which persons are background actors?
- Who observed or witnessed the conflict events?
- Is the report of the person seeking help corroborated by observers or by indisputable evidence (e.g. chat exchange)? Does the experience as reported emerge as an actual occurrence with verifiable facts?
- Which persons and whose property have been or are being damaged?
- What values and norms were violated in the course of the conflict events?
- What degree of severity and complexity does the conflict reveal on its various levels?
- How are the conflict events reflected on the different levels of interaction (the intrapersonal, interpersonal, class and peer systemic, institutional, and the educational partnership – see also Chapter 2.1.2)
- How great is the danger of further, or even violent, escalation? To what extent are the conflict participants lacking in empathy, self-control, and readiness to accept non-violent solutions?
- Does the responsibility for escalation of the conflict rest on one party, or on more than one?

#### Description of Procedure

Conflict analysis provides orientation to the team during all phases of treatment and needs to be updated continuously. In this procedure, the conflict helpers and their assistants (see Chapter 5.4.3) play an essential role. Their task is to clarify the conflict events by conducting standardized interviews with the conflicting parties (see working materials, below).

The clarification of events is considered complete when...

- the reports given by conflicting parties match up and there is no doubt about their veracity, or
- persons who observed the conflict can describe it with high credibility, or
- the events can be re-traced univocally through media sources, such as chat exchanges, voice mail, images, or videos.

The quality of these interviews and their documentation is very important for a circumspect and sound resolution of the conflict. The persons conducting them have to be well-trained and practiced; in SCM, this responsibility lies with the personnel management (see Chapter 5.3.2).

Doubts may arise, for example if one conflict party is putting pressure on or manipulating the other, or if the damaged party due to anxiety and social insecurity is unable to remember and describe the events fully. This can occur easily in mobbing processes that have been in course for some time. Empathetic support given by helpers can reduce such insecurity and often contributes to more clarity.

Frequently, reports on what has happened and been experienced differ significantly. It could be that one party portrays the events in such a one-sided manner that it is impossible to assess the conflict reliably. Furthermore, it can remain unclear for a long time to what degree the conflict has encompassed more and more individuals, beginning to have effects on the class and peer-group level. Particularly when (cyber)mobbing is in the stage of consolidation or manifestation, the generation barrier presents a veritable 'wall of silence', so that great effort has to be

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invested in clarification. But this is worth the effort, since only proof of the events and their consequences can undermine denials and allow for pedagogical action to be initiated.

The ways in which conflict events begin, develop over time, and come to an end can differ enormously. This also applies to the severity and complexity of conflict events and to the hostility manifested through them – ranging from minor disagreements among peers all the way to violently escalating struggles spilling over onto the level of the educational partnership between school and parents, or upending the framework of norms and values for an entire class system. Minor disturbances or jostling among peers do not call for conflict management.

But cases of severe, risk-laden conflict processes definitely do. The challenge is to distinguish the one from the other. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that any conflict can escalate at any time. In complex cases, it is essential to ‘take the pulse’ constantly and to keep an eye on all the levels of conflict events. Sometimes, indications of a severe mobbing incident emerge from a report on a conflict that was initially assessed as “superficial”. Only by means of persistent probing is the dramatic extent of events brought to light. This makes it all the more important that we be attentive, perceive any and all signs of conflict, and do not settle on an assessment made too early and too casually.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze conflicts closely, to document the results whenever a certain severity is given, and to report to the team and especially to those who decide on procedure. In the analysis, the characteristics of the conflict events are assessed. On this basis, the events are categorized on a conflict scale and the levels on which the conflict is being carried out are designated.

### Materials that can be Prepared and Re-used

- Guidelines for conducting a discreet survey
- Form and guidelines for conducting and documenting an interview with a person seeking help
- Form and guidelines for conducting and documenting an interview with an accused person
- Form and guidelines for conducting and documenting an interview with a conflict observer
- Form for realizing and documenting a conflict analysis

### Frequent Mistakes and Risks

- Not all the conflict parties are asked about the events.
- Observers of the conflict are overlooked.
- The quality of the interviews is insufficient. The conflict participants are not fully listed; some characteristics or levels of the conflict are not brought up in the interview. Factual matters (e.g. observable behavior) are not distinguished from experiential aspects (thinking, feeling, wishes), which need to be asked about separately.
- Conflict parties are compelled to participate in interviews.
- Those conducting the interviews evaluate the interviewees, judge them morally and (more or less subtly) reproach them, instead of maintaining neutrality.
- In a confrontative interview, an accusation is disclosed by a conflict helper instead of the conflict regulator or the other conflict party.
- The interviewer does not request permission to share the data gathered in the interview.
- Interviews are not or not sufficiently documented.



**Excursus: Characteristics of a Conflict Event**

Conflict characteristic	Definition
Hostility	Intent to do harm ("I'm going to get him!")
Insufficient potential for non-violent solutions	Lack of willingness or deficits in personal capabilities (self-control, compassion, respect) and communicative skills (negotiating wishes and demands) to solve a conflict non-violently
Damage to persons or property	Degree of bodily or psycho-social damage done to individuals/communities, or damage to their property
Violation of values and norms	Severity of an offense against the school and house rules, class agreements, penal code or basic human and children's rights
Complexity	Extent of participation, number of persons or conflict levels involved
Responsibility	Measure of responsibility for the escalation of the conflict

**Hostility**

Hostility is defined here as an indicator of damage potential for the other conflict party (win-win, win-lose, lose-lose) on the cognitive, motivational, and behavioral planes.

**Insufficient potential for non-violent solutions**

Here we mean the ability of conflict parties to maintain self-control, eschew violence, and take recourse to non-violent options for dealing with an internal or external grievance.

**Damage to persons or property**

This encompasses any emotional, physical, social, or material consequences of the conflict. Assessing the damage – apart from material damage – is highly subjective and has to be respected as such.

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### Violation of values and norms

Damage done to a person can result from an accident caused by gross negligence, without any specific violation of values and norms. By contrast, a violation of values and norms is defined as offense against fundamental human rights or children's rights, against legal norms (such as the penal code, copyright law, etc.) or the school ordinance or house rules of the school. The more severe the legal penalty for norm-violating behavior in a conflict, the more difficult it is to assess the violation of values and norms. For diagnostic purposes and in developing the strategy for action based on a diagnosis, it is of great significance to distinguish between criminal offenses liable to public prosecution and criminal offenses prosecuted only upon application by the victim. The former are more or less severe felonies that are punishable by prison sentences or fines. However, these legal distinctions are complicated. It happens often in the course of (cyber)mobbing conflicts that an image of a person is published without permission. Technically, this is a moderately severe offense that can be punished by a fine or up to one year in prison. But prosecution is only initiated when requested by the victim. Should, however, the images contain pornographic material showing children or adolescents, then any police officer is compelled to initiate proceedings as soon as this comes to his attention in his official function. Likewise in cases where a crime against a person is being threatened (threat of homicide, for example): the police are required to investigate without delay upon learning of it. For those involved in SCM and analyzing conflicts, it is important to have a network of partners whose professional skill enables them to provide reliable legal counsel.

### Complexity

The higher the number of persons caught up in the conflict events, the more different levels and subsystems will be affected within the family, school, and community: the greater the complexity of the conflict events. With (cyber)mobbing, a high degree of complexity can always be assumed. The complexity of a conflict is also increased when parents, teachers and administrators have differing opinions, or when the cooperation between school and parents doesn't function well because parents question or undermine the educational mandate of the school. Along with those directly affected, the families are then also a factor in regulating the conflict. Their participation is necessary in order to avoid the arising of a new conflict and/or a situation in which they themselves, intending to support their children, become actively involved in the conflict events (on the role of parents in (cyber)mobbing processes, see also Chapters 2.1 and 5.4.4, on the element: level of action).

### Responsibility

Who takes the step up to the next higher level of violent action? Practically speaking: who initiates the escalation that brings the conflict to the attention of the entire school class? Who is the first to take physical action? Is this person responsible or are there several persons who share the responsibility? The measure of responsibility determines the mode and measure of restitution to be made.

The characteristics of a conflict in process are assessed in terms of their severity or their extent, with A (= minor extent) to E (=maximal extent) – in analogy to the conflict scale to be discussed in the following section.

Relating to the characteristic 'hostility', for example, scale A would signify that a person has no negative feelings and still feels well-disposed towards the other person despite the conflict. Hostility rated as scale E, on the other hand, would indicate that the person harbors strong feelings of hate towards the other and wishes to destroy him or her psychologically, even at the expense of serious self-damage.

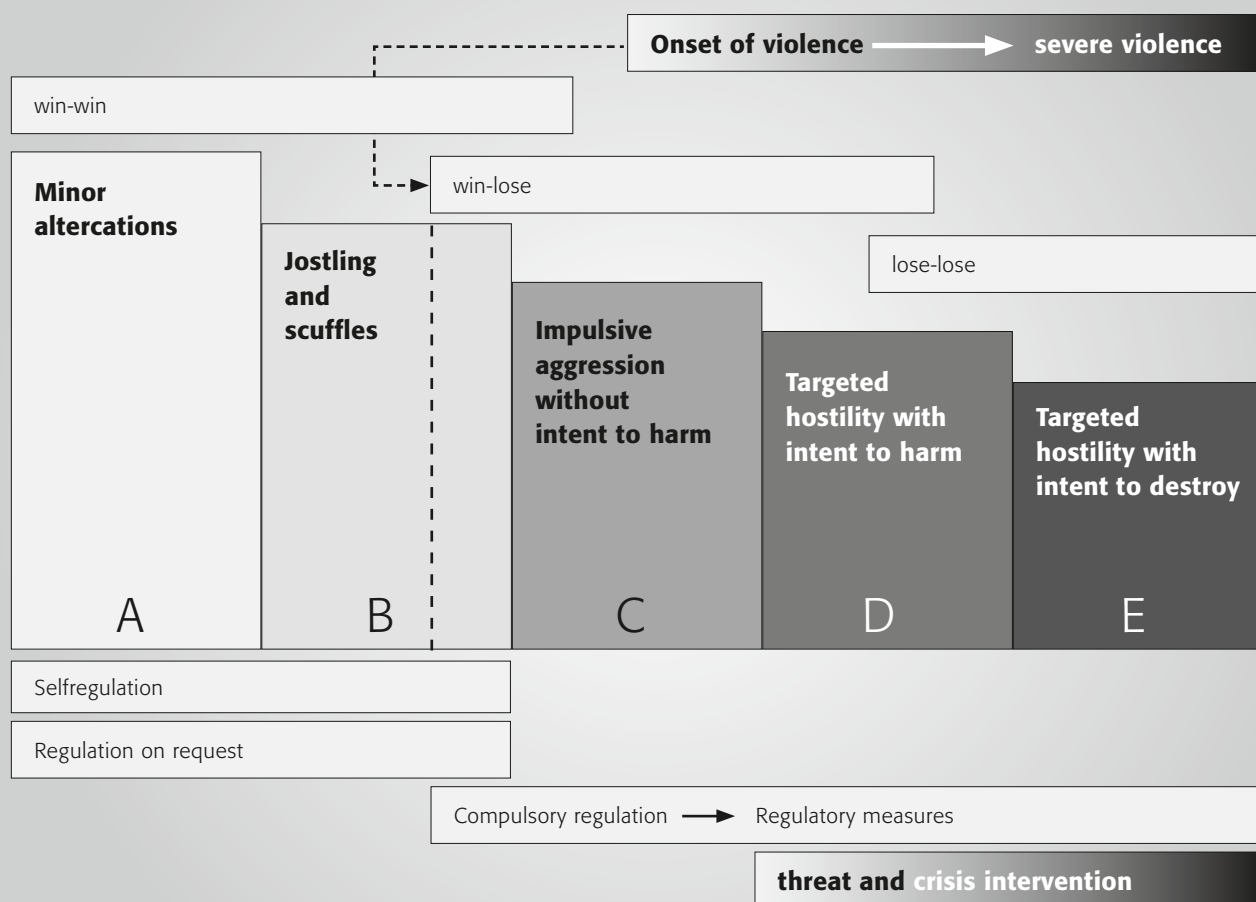
### Determining the Scale of the Conflict

Deriving from Friedrich Glasl's conception of the "degrees of escalation in a conflict" (cf. Glasl 2004; Glasl 2007), we have developed the following scale to describe conflict intensities.

Just as in the assessment of conflict characteristics, we differentiate here in categories from A to E. Not every conflict necessarily begins at A and proceeds to E, but it can happen. Simultaneously, the estimation as a win-win, win-lose, or lose-lose situation indicates

the developmental trend in a conflict process and makes the dynamics of escalation easier to comprehend. In the last of these situations, lose-lose, one person wishes to damage the other "even if I suffer losses myself". In the same way that a medical diagnosis forms the basis for decisions on treatment, determining the scale of a conflict suggests guidelines for addressing the conflict in the form of strategies for action (see Chapter 5.4.4).

### Scale of Escalation for Conflict Processes in the Context of a School or a Youth Agency



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### 5.4.3 Building Block: Teamwork

#### Never walk alone!

One individual person cannot manage to perform all the pedagogical tasks that are necessary towards conflict resolution. Regulatory action, pedagogical measures or sanctions, interviews, conflict support, coaching and counseling, systemic mobbing intervention, follow-up: one person alone would simply be overtaxed, both in terms of time resources and due to the restrictions on his or her role/function as headperson, teacher, school social worker, or school psychologist. Generally, working as a team is required, and in severe cases it is absolutely mandatory. However, the necessary professional skill doesn't just descend from heaven, it has to be acquired.

#### Form a Team in Advance

Teams that are well-attuned work together more easily. If an operative SCM team is already up and running, then it won't need to be formed amidst the confusion in an acute situation of threat or endangerment. Of course, one person can perform more than one function. But a switch from one role to another should always be communicated carefully.

### New Roles in the System

Various persons in differing social roles take part in conflict events. It is important to distinguish between these roles. In a school class or peer group there will be the roles of: offenders, victims, assistants, claquers, defenders, and non-participants (see also Chapter 2.2). In the school context there are also the roles of regulators and parents. When addressing conflicts with Systemic Conflict Management, two new roles come into play on the professional side: the conflict helper and the conflict manager. All interactions among the participants are then chaired by the *conflict manager* or conflict helper. They take on challenging tasks and should therefore be specifically qualified for it through continuing education. The conflict manager prepares team meetings and decisions, formulates the conflict diagnosis, makes recommendations on assessing the conflict, suggests a strategy for action, advises school administrators and homeroom teachers, evaluates the procedure to provide feedback whenever agreements and standards are not adhered to, and is responsible for documentation. The *conflict helper* conducts interviews with those seeking help or confrontative interviews with those accused, and also leads social training sessions and Systemic Mobbing or Brief Interventions. He or she counsels and coaches victims and students responsible for offenses along with their parents, conducts three-way talks, arranges reparation and loss adjustment, and supports the homeroom teacher during follow-up. On the level of the class or peer group – if necessary – two new roles may also be introduced: the buddy and the human rights observer. The buddy, as a support person for the victim, can intervene directly in conflict events, while the human rights observer can only take note of violations of values and norms and then report on them – without naming names – to the conflict helper or the homeroom teacher (see Chapter 5.5.4).

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### Building up an External Network

When building your network, don't restrict it to persons working inside of your own school system. Seek contact with external persons who can play a part within the realm of school, such as school social workers, school psychologists, parents, or volunteers. In addition, gather information about the offerings of nearby counseling centers or media education agencies. Once you are well informed and have established such contacts, the basic structures are set up for an emergency, in which case you can then concentrate on the tasks at hand rather than having to catch up on research.

Get in touch with the local police and ask about options for cooperation and about the rules that would apply to it. Police officers are familiar with the penal code. They can advise you in assessing behavior that violates norms. You should, however, keep in mind that when certain offenses come to their attention, police officers are required to initiate proceedings.

Collect information about the availability of counseling services and therapeutic offerings. (Cyber)mobbing can cause traumatization. Sometimes, victims need professional help quickly. What options are there? Do they have long waiting lists? Are individual consultations possible? etc.

### Implementation of a Steering Group

For better quality of procedure and the satisfaction of all those actively involved, it is highly recommended to develop and secure structures within the school, with the help of a SCM steering group, through ongoing school development measures in the areas of structural management and personnel management (which are both partial processes in SCM). This steering group is responsible for setting up an SCM team in advance and, before any incident has occurred, addressing together with the team members the tasks, roles, and skills that will be in demand in the event.



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### Excursus: The Realm of School vs. the School System

Before working systemically within a school, it's necessary to clarify its affiliation with a system. Different systems distinguish themselves from one another predominantly through the definition of their mandates, rules, and decision-making structures.

Teachers and headmaster belong to the *school system*. The headmaster is authorized to issue directives to the teachers. Both make decisions on educative or regulatory measures and have an individual, legally defined mandate that obliges them to act.

By contrast, the position of school social workers is quite different. They are a part of the *youth support system*. Its core mandate is assistance for minors and, in certain contexts, the protection of children. Among the fundamental principles of school social work are: voluntary recourse to it, confidentiality, its participatory precept, and the goal of working towards inclusion. School psychology is guided by comparable principles and it refrains, in similar fashion, from dictating educative measures or otherwise pursuing pedagogical aims in the narrow sense. Neither school social work nor school psychology is bound by directives of the school administration.

When these separate systems work together closely and systematically, an overriding field of action is created. In the broadest sense, this can be regarded as a newly consolidated system for conflict resolution – *Systemic Conflict Management*.

School social work and school psychology do their best work when the school is open to them and allows their activity within the *school realm*. In this way, a *subsystem* within the school realm is formed that is both a part of the school system and of the youth support system. Again, it applies that the subsystem needs to have its own rules, standards, and decision-making structures. In discussing teamwork here, we are referring to such a subsystem within the school realm. Needless to say, such structures don't create themselves. Seeing to their development is one of the tasks of structure and personnel management.

Important: In a team, *roles* need to be clarified and be taken on by competent persons – *independent of the original profession* of the person filling a given role. Apart from the homeroom teacher and headmaster (regulators), none of the other team roles are restricted to members of any particular profession and they all can be assigned, for example, to teachers, school social workers, or school psychologists.

The following chart gives an overview of the social roles to be filled during a conflict within the school realm.

### Role Distribution in Systemic Conflict Management

	Role	Task(s)
Regulators	Decision maker of the first order <i>School headmaster</i>	responsible for orderly process of school activities, regulates conflicts, decides on the convocation and composition of the SCM team and serves as its chairperson, hears the conflicting parties (parents, victims, students responsible for offenses, and their families), levies educative measures or sanctions formally treated as administrative acts, provides counsel for victims, offenders and their families in the role of a regulator
	Decision maker of the second order <i>Homeroom teacher</i>	responsible for classroom management, informs parents about all relevant developments relating to them, decides on educative measures that are not formal administrative acts, offers options for interaction, provides counsel for victims, students responsible for offenses, and their families in the role of a regulator
Helpers	Conflict manager <i>Professional who is trained in Systemic Conflict Management</i>	prepares team meetings and decisions, formulates the conflict diagnosis, makes recommendations on assessing the conflict, suggests a strategy for action, advises school administrators and homeroom teachers, evaluates the procedure to provide feedback whenever agreements and standards are not adhered to, and is responsible for documentation
	Conflict helper(s) <i>Professionals qualified in social training and mobbing intervention, or mediation and reparation</i>	conducts interviews with those seeking help or confrontative interviews with those accused, leads social training sessions and Systemic Mobbing or Brief Interventions, advises on cultivation of values in the class, counsels and coaches victims and students responsible for offenses along with their parents, conducts three-way talks, arranges reparation and loss adjustment – where indicated, to take place in front of the whole class
	Consultant and trainer <i>Professionals in the field of prevention (e.g. media education)</i>	advises the team and its associates on professional issues, for example on media education or technical aspects of media
	Conflict support assistants <i>recruited among parents, teachers, community volunteers, or from external agencies</i>	conduct interviews with the conflict parties or with others who observed the conflict, assist the conflict helpers
Apart from the roles of the headmaster and homeroom teacher (regulators), <b>none</b> of the other roles are restricted to members of any particular profession and they all can be assigned, for example, to teachers, school social workers (youth support system), or school psychologists		

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### Tasks for External Support Systems

	Institution/Agency	Task(s)	
<b>Government institutions</b>	Police	work both in enforcement and prevention, have expert knowledge of penal law – particularly in dealing with offenders who are minors; are obliged to prosecute in certain cases, should only be informed in instances of severe offenses (where prosecution is obligatory) or when pedagogical measures are not possible or not sufficient, or when protection for victims cannot otherwise be ensured and it is imperative that the conflict be clarified but this can only be achieved through police investigation	external professional sources
	School psychology services	advise and support schools, students, parents, and teachers – also in crisis situations or severe instances involving violence, are obliged to confidentiality under penal code (StGB) § 203	
<b>Local youth support agencies</b>	Youth authorities	are drawn in when a case of child endangerment occurs, when parents can not or will not provide protection, or when a child can not safely or does not want to remain in the family; personnel at the youth authorities are obliged to confidentiality under penal code (StGB) § 203	
	School social work	advise and support schools, students, parents, and teachers in crisis situations, coach victims and offenders, conduct Systemic Mobbing and Brief Interventions, serve as mediators, negotiate reparation and restitution, contribute to classroom management or other school programs; obliged to confidentiality under penal code (StGB) § 203	
	Counseling services	Contribute to the stabilizing, intensive psycho-social care of children and adolescents who have been confronted with such events as severe cases of (cyber)mobbing; counselors are obliged to confidentiality under penal code (StGB) § 203	
<b>Associates (examples)</b>	klicksafe	EU initiative with headquarters at the Central Authority for Media and Communication Rhineland-Palatinate (LMK), provides comprehensive media education materials and support	
	Konflikt-KULTUR	Programs for prevention and continuing education, multi-level program, trains professionals in Systemic Conflict Management, mobbing intervention, mediation and negotiating reparation, provides trainers for socialtraining and Systemic Mobbing Intervention, serves as consultant on school development	
<b>Health services</b>	Out-patient and in-patient psychiatric/psychotherapeutic services for children and adolescents	treat children and adolescents who are traumatized and emotionally ill; obliged to confidentiality under penal code (StGB) § 203	

#### 5.4.4 Strategy for Action

Dealing with conflicts in schools is, unfortunately, too often reduced to the mere issue of methods.

The understandable assumption behind this is that competence in methods is something like a Swiss pocket knife – that can rise to almost any challenge. Our experience of the problematic circumstances surrounding (cyber)mobbing or other forms of violent behavior in schools indicates that this approach falls short.

One particularly fashionable method these days is mediation, involving no regulatory measures or pedagogical effort, and instead delegating the conflict resolution to the students. In many school cultures, handling of conflicts is effectively reduced to dispute settlement and negotiation among peers. As helpful and sensible as this can be in certain conflicts, in others it may be entirely misplaced and only exacerbate matters. The assumption that a majority of severe conflicts in schools can be treated by mediative methods alone is contradicted by our experience.

Focussing on method also harbors another risk. As Paul Watzlawick put it, “If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” This saying can help us to avoid applying a method we have acquired simply because it is socially acceptable and we we know how to use it.

We need to widen the perspective and think systemically. In terms of conflict resolution, what does it mean to think and act systemically? It means acknowledging the conflict events in their dynamic on various levels and in different subsystems that reciprocally influence one another, and on this basis developing a strategy that will have effect on all the levels of conflict (see also Chapter 2.1.2) and on the relevant subsystems and their participants. This strategy encompasses educative intervention and definition of limits along with constructive interference involving a wide range of methods to take both circumstances (school structures) and behavior into account; it perceives the involved individuals in their social environment as well as that environment itself, places equal value on both, and also regards those intervening as a significant factor in this environment.

In the following sections we would like to suggest how you can arrive at a strategy for action that is systemic, effective, and sustainable, and we will present the elements that should compose such a strategy.

#### Overview

A strategy for action emerges, in any and all circumstances, from an ongoing analysis of the conflict on its various levels. Should new developments or insights come up in the course of conflict events, this may well affect the assessment of the conflict and therefore call for adjustment of the strategy. Conflict analysis and strategy for action are inseparably and dynamically linked to one another.

We will describe the strategy for action as consisting of five elements, whereby the element “Phases of Action” is of such great significance for an understanding of SCM that we will treat it separately in Chapter 5.5.

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## Five Elements of a Strategy for Action

Mode of action developed on the basis of the "Five key questions in planning a strategy for action"	Self-regulation	Conflict scale A–B
	Regulation on request	Conflict scale B
	Compulsory regulation	Conflict scale C–D
	Threat intervention	Conflict scale E
	Crisis intervention	Conflict scale E
Direction of action	Support	Upon request, the conflict parties, their classmates and (if indicated) families are given support toward a satisfactory resolution of the conflict through coaching, mediation, reparation and loss adjustment, Systemic Mobbing or Brief Intervention, and other methods
	Regulatory measure	School headmaster and homeroom teacher interfere by introducing educative or regulatory measures to de-escalate the conflict, such as pledges to refrain from the use of violence, temporary suspension from classes, ban on mobile phones
	Package deal	Support and regulatory measures are coupled, for example: if reparation is agreed upon (support) and restitution is made, a certain measure will not be taken (suspension from class)
Level of action (the conflict level on which action is necessary)	Intrapersonal	Individual support, coaching to stabilize the conflict participants
	Interpersonal	Mediation, reparation to settle the conflict peacefully
	In the system: peer group, school class	Interventions to restore or stabilize a democratic framework of values and norms in peer groups, class or school communities; motivation of parents' representatives to engage in cooperative action with the homeroom teacher
	In the system: family	Motivation of families to engage in the educational partnership with the school, taking the respective family dynamic into account
	Institutional	Pedagogically oriented regulatory measures or sanctions, restitution to restore harmony to the school or the class
Phases of action	Phase I First response and positioning Phase II Threat or crisis intervention Phase III Conflict regulation Phase IV Follow-up and final resolution	
Methods of action	- Methods for pedagogical intervention steps, such as monitoring during school attendance, pledges to refrain from the use of violence, ban on mobile phone use, individual talks to spell out norms and risks - Methods of conflict support, such as mediation, reparation and loss adjustment, volunteer work for the school community, Systemic Mobbing Intervention or Systemic Brief Intervention (see Chapter 4)	



### The Element: Mode of Action

The mode of action in addressing a conflict is a core factor in the strategy for action. Clarifying the mode of action is the first step in addressing a conflict. A teacher might conclude in a particular situation that the students will be able to resolve the conflict on their own, and therefore decide on the mode of *self-regulation*. Or the teacher might be of the opinion that he or she needs to interfere in the conflict, whether the conflict parties want that or not: therefore, the mode will be *compulsory regulation*. In the case of a threat or crisis situation, the school has no choice. Due to the legal responsibilities that apply, the decision must be made for the mode of *threat or crisis intervention*.

In addressing a conflict, a mode of action appropriate to the conflict events is chosen. From this decision on the mode, further steps including the direction of action and the methods applied will proceed. The conflict parties should participate in this decision on the mode of action. Their participation, however, does not automatically imply that decisions on all issues rest upon them.

Whether those who are educationally responsible should interfere at all, or whether they are in fact obliged to regulate the conflict, how and when they should do so: these issues can be approached using the "guiding questions" explained below.

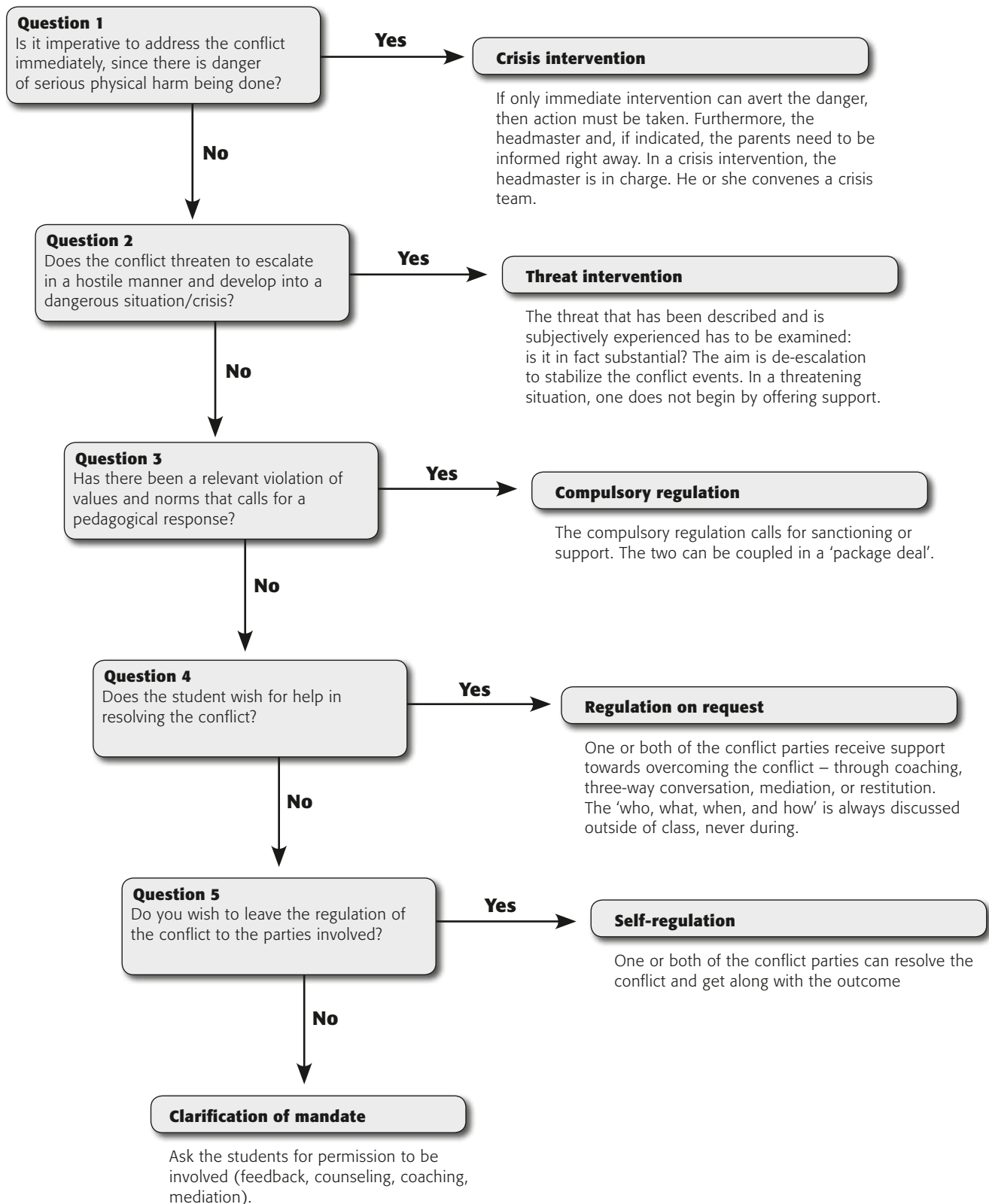
### Five Modes of a Strategy for Action

Modi	Definition	Conflict scale
Self-regulation	The regulation of the conflict is left to the conflict parties themselves.	A–B
Regulation on request	Because at least one of the conflict parties has requested support, the educator who is responsible takes action to help one or both of the parties solve the conflict non-violently.	B
Compulsory regulation	The teacher or headmaster interferes in their official capacity as a regulator, because a norm relevant to the school has been violated.	C–D
Threat intervention	The teacher or headmaster intervenes as a regulator in order to clarify or de-fuse a threat and to de-escalate the conflict.	E
Crisis intervention	An adult or the homeroom teacher or headmaster intervenes directly and immediately because an emergency is in the offing or is occurring, in order to provide emergency aid, secure the situation, and de-escalate the conflict quickly. After this incident, the conflict is addressed in a process of compulsory regulation.	E

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## Five Guiding Questions for Determining a Mode of Action



### The Element: Direction of Action

The direction of the action is an essential aspect of a strategy for action. Fundamentally, two directions present themselves as options for the regulation of a conflict: on the one hand, *pedagogical interference* involving a number of educative measures, and on the other, *social education support* for one or both of the conflict parties. There is actually a third option, as well, where a regulatory measure and support are coupled in a *package deal*. This direction of action is suggested in some school laws, but unfortunately is largely unknown in practice.

### Pedagogical Interference

Due to a violation of norms and values, the regulator – i.e. the responsible educator (teacher, homeroom teacher, or headmaster) – reacts by introducing educative measures or sanctions to fulfill the educational mandate while protecting students and teachers. In the context of Systemic Conflict Management we refer to educative measures or sanctions as interference, since they can be undertaken even without permission from the student or his parents. The aim is to protect the framework of values and norms in the school community from eroding, to minimize risks, to exercise the mandate for education, and in particular to promote pro-social personality formation in the students. We deliberately refer to these actions of teachers and headmasters as pedagogical interference, to emphasize the constructive intent and positive stimulus (as opposed to other forms of interference experienced as a disturbance or as static).

When norms are disrespected, a conflict arises between one or more of the conflict parties and the homeroom teacher or headmaster as representatives of the school. We call this an *institutionally induced conflict* (see Chapter 2.1.2 for discussion of the institutional conflict level). Every form of educative interference requires a legal foundation, must be enacted by a school staff member, and has to allow for parental participation. (Participation in this context is not tantamount to decision.) School social workers or school psychologists are not permitted to interfere in this way – with the exception of situations in which they observe an emergency, are obliged to help, and no teacher or headmaster is present.

Regarding pedagogical interference in a conflict, there are two types of interference to be taken into regard. State school laws distinguish between “pedagogical educative measures and means” and “regulatory measures and formal sanctions”. The latter are administrative acts which generally constrict personality rights of a student – even two hours of additional class (detention) would fulfill this criterion. By contrast, measures of pedagogical interference are not administrative acts and need not conform to formal procedural rules. Naturally, they must not violate fundamental rights of the students, for example by humiliating or emotionally damaging them. A pedagogical interference measure might be, for example, a reprimand during a one-on-one talk, or some additional homework. Pedagogical interference through such measures and means, wherever sufficient and effective, should always take precedence over sanctions.

The functions of pedagogical interference:

- Pedagogical interference measures are aimed at restoring harmony in the classroom or school community and at promoting the personality formation of the student. Positively speaking, their goal is enabling all the individuals at a school to live and work together harmoniously. The measures should allow children and adolescents to develop their personality freely and assist them in exercising their right to an education.
- Such measures protect members of the community from violations of their rights, particularly fundamental human rights and children’s rights, while they are living and working together at school.
- These measures have an overall preventive effect. All members of the school community are made aware that violations of values and norms have consequences. A norm is only respected within a community if violations against it can be sanctioned and the measures have an emotional impact.
- The measures provide orientation for children and adolescents and make it easier for them to adapt to societal culture (fulfilling the school’s mandate to promote social skills and enculturation).

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This is a juncture at which misunderstandings frequently can arise because victims and their parents assume it is the duty of the school to investigate and punish a student offense. But punishment is not the school's job; that is reserved to the judicial system, to the authority of the state. It goes without saying that criminal acts committed at school by students cannot be quietly tolerated. When legal norms are violated – for example, stipulations of the penal code or copyright law, which are often offended in cases of (cyber)mobbing – teachers and administrators should respond with pedagogical efforts, so that students can learn from their mistakes. Punishment and retaliation are not suitable measures for interference in conflicts. Therefore, within the framework of SCM itself, there is no emphasis on investigation or witness statements; where indicated, these are tasks for the police. In SCM, interviews are conducted, students are confronted with accusations and are held responsible. The emphasis is on listening, participation, and documentation.

### **Pedagogical Support**

Promoting pro-social personality formation and with it, personal and communicative skills, is far more successful when based on support and aid than on sanctions. Anyone who relies on keeping the students functioning – in the hope that fear of sanctions will move them to adhere to norms – is clinging to an approach that has been dismantled thoroughly by criminality research. Support and help for the conflict parties, offender as well as victim, have greater educational significance than sanctions. Conflict support enables the parties to arrive at a non-violent conflict resolution or at least to live with a conflict that will not escalate dynamically into violence. Conflict support has a number of diverse tasks to fulfill. A differentiated discussion of the available methods is to be found later in this chapter.

On the intrapersonal level, support helps

- victims to deal better with psycho-social stress factors, and thus prevent traumatization,
- offenders to become aware of their own neediness and of the consequences of their deeds,

and on the interpersonal level, support helps the conflict parties

- to define their own position in the conflict process,
- to develop non-violent defense strategies to parry attacks and to apply these strategies confidently (victims),
- to communicate non-violently in the conflict process and to articulate their own needs calmly (offenders),
- to make reparation for injustice done and damage caused, and to end the conflict on a conciliatory note – at the end of the restitution process, there is then personal recognition for the offender rather than stigmatization as an “evil person”.

On various levels, support helps

- families in dealing with the stigma of ‘victim’ or ‘offender’ in such a way that the conflict dynamic can be de-escalated,
- school classes and peer groups in taking stock of their own interactive culture and, if necessary, re-activating pro-social values,
- schools to enhance their pedagogical profile and instate conflict support methods as a prominent feature of their educational and school culture, inwardly and outwardly,
- homeroom teachers and headmasters to perceive conflict support methods as an opportunity for cooperation with external support systems, and in this way to tap new resources that reinforce the educational efforts of the school,
- to give school social workers and school psychologists a structural opening for work with and access to their clientele.

### **Pedagogical Package Deal**

Interference and support join together in the ‘package deal’ (junctim). Systems of regulation and support form a healthy synthesis. This means that the regulator makes a conciliatory offer to the conflict party, something like: “I want to see you come into your own, so I’m giving you a chance. If you make reparation, then you won’t be sanctioned!” If a student is willing to accept conflict support and “get things back in order”, then the community – represented by the homeroom teacher or headmaster – can make a suggestion of this kind.

The offender is being given a chance for support, shown a way out of blame or guilt and towards responsibility – away from justifications for the past and towards a stabile resolution for the future. To take this step, most school students need professional support from qualified conflict helpers (trained in mediation, negotiating reparation and loss adjustment). The motivation to accept the package deal is clearly reinforced by the immediate recognition it grants – discontinuation of sanctions and acknowledgement by the institution. Students who choose this option for reparation or loss adjustment usually learn something new from it and often make a step toward maturity. A school that offers the option of a package deal also enhances its pedagogical 'tool case' considerably. The principle "support is better than punishment" humanizes the school while protecting it from any naïve assumption that enlightened thinking, help and understanding could prevent violence.

In recent years, educative support efforts and regulatory sanctions have somehow parted ways in the traditional school system, and have no longer been closely related to one another. This is a loss for both types of action.

It wasn't until a few years ago that the option for making reparation was anchored in the school law of some of Germany's federal states. And in practice, there is still a long way to go.

### The Element: Level of Action

By 'level of action' we mean, in the following, the conflict level on which an active response is necessary. Determining the level(s) to be addressed is one of the tasks of conflict analysis (see Chapter 5.4.2). Deciding when to become active on what level is an essential that should not be neglected. Effective measures toward conflict resolution build on a multi-leveled approach. Although this approach is gradually becoming more common, it still occurs frequently that the methods applied during practical treatment of the conflict are limited to the interpersonal level 2 – that is, to the communication and interactive behavior of the conflict parties. However, in the long run this will not lead to sustainability, and it also neglects the aspects of victim protection and work with offenders on the intrapersonal level 1.

### Levels of Action in Systemic Conflict Management

SCM is a multi-leveled program and encompasses the subprocesses structural, personnel, and process management (see Chapter 5.3). While process management treats the conflict events on the micro and meso levels, structural and personnel management also take the macro level into account. All three levels influence one another reciprocally.

micro level	1	<b>Level of intrapersonal thinking, feelings, and wishes of the conflict parties</b>
	2	<b>Level of interpersonal interaction between the conflict parties</b>
meso level	3	<b>Level of the peer group and school class systems</b> (homeroom teacher, group dynamic, informal framework of values and norms)
	4	<b>Level of the school as an institution</b> (headmaster, structures, school and house rules, guiding policy, vital framework of values and norms, pedagogical profile, social curriculum, cooperation schemes, contracts)
	5	<b>Level of cooperation between the school and parents as educational partners</b> (informal framework of values and norms in the family and school systems, cultural background, religious affiliation, social and economic situation, family and school dynamic)
macro level	6	<b>Level of surrounding conditions in the civil community</b> Youth support planning, communal education planning
	7	<b>Level of legal statutes</b> Civil rights, penal code, school law, law on assistance for minors, UN Children's Rights Convention, Federal Child Protection Law



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When assuming a systemic perspective on (cyber)-mobbing, one cannot stop at the students but must rather go on to take the other participants into account – these are the teachers, headmasters (level 4) and the parents with whom they interact (level 5). They all have an effect on the dynamic of mobbing – sometimes as victims, sometimes as passive witnesses, sometimes even contributing to the cause.

Teachers who maintain an authoritarian style of education, based on the principle of personal subjugation, can serve as a (negative) model for students who then, becoming offenders, establishing authoritarian structures within the class. Teachers who cultivate a permissive style may, on the other hand, offer less orientation than necessary – which offenders can take advantage of when implementing a dissocial framework of values and norms. The best prophylaxis proceeds from a teaching style that is authoritative but at the same time provides the students with orientation and appreciation (see Chapter 7).

Students active in mobbing are not necessarily the ones who cause disturbances in class or criticize teachers. They can also be students with good grades who participate during lessons and behave submissively towards teachers.

There are other cases, however, as depicted in Chapter 3, where teachers can be threatened by mobbing attacks. Earlier, in chapter 2, we described the typical dynamic of mobbing, in which the offenders gain increasing sway and, with it, can also influence teachers. As their power increases, they feel confident enough to act more openly, even during class. This presents a danger for teachers in more than one respect. If a teacher contradicts these students, he or she may encounter massive resistance. But if the teacher does not react, he or she may gradually surrender the role of leadership in the class.

In constellations such as these, there is a risk that the teachers may develop a 'blind spot' and no longer take note of the dissocial behavior of certain students.

Although parents rarely appear in the everyday workings of school life, in the background they can strongly reinforce (cyber)mobbing, or even initiate it. This tends to come into play when the parents themselves, in their own personal interactions, are living by a dissocial set of values and norms and therefore give a bad example for their children, perhaps even encouraging their young to exclude and disparage others. Occasionally there are parents who enjoy watching their children use mobbing methods to attain higher social status in their school class and make good connections. If such parents succeed in taking the lead at a parents' meeting with their opinions, then the chances for intervening constructively deteriorate rapidly. In such cases, the offenders feel protected by their parents. The system of mobbing events is then mirrored on the level of cooperation between parents and the school.

On the first, intrapersonal level, one works with an individual person who needs support in dealing with him/herself. Close psycho-social attention can have positive effects in various areas – psychosomatic disorders, behavioral problems such as avoidance of school, short attention span, or lack of self-control. Interpersonal work on the second level focuses on the interaction of the conflict parties. The systemic work addresses the third, fourth, and fifth levels, aiming at adjustments of the conditions in the family, class, or school system, and the interaction among these systems.

### The Element: Methods of Action

The choice of methods is sometimes made too hastily, with the unfortunate result that they are not carefully enough coordinated with other elements of the strategy for action. In the following sections we explain how you can select, from a portfolio of methods, one that is tailor-fit to a particular conflict. Related pedagogical-psychological background can be found in Chapter 7. And two of the most effective methods for addressing (cyber)mobbing are presented in detail in Chapter 4.

### Methods of Pedagogical Interference

Methods of pedagogical interference are anchored in educational law as regulatory measures and sanctions. They are tools for affecting the course of a conflict through educative influence on the conflict parties (see, e.g., GEW yearbook 2015). For your school's portfolio of methods, we recommend the following educative and supportive measures that have stood us in good stead over the years.

### Interference by Means of Educative Measures

Educative measure	Description
One-on-one talk covering norms and risks (NaR talk)	The NaR talk does not address past events, but rather future behavior. Imparting norms is its essential significance. The addressee is informed about the potential risks and ramifications of his or her actions for himself and others.
Supervision during school breaks and recess	A student is not allowed to interact with schoolmates during breaks. He or she is personally supervised at these times.
Supervised attendance during school hours	A student is accompanied by a monitor during school hours, before and after lessons. He or she is not allowed to interact with schoolmates at these times.
Pledge to refrain from the use of violence	A pledge to refrain from the use of violence is a special form of a declaration to desist. A violation of norms that has taken place is discussed thoroughly with the student, in the presence of his or her parents. Building upon this, the aim is to negotiate with the offender to set out a personal declaration to refrain from violent behavior in the future. The student's resolve to adhere to values and norms from this point on is cross-examined, and the parents are motivated to participate actively in an educational partnership. With his or her signature, the student demonstrates his willingness to refrain from the use of violence and to accept help in his efforts towards that goal. The regulators are the official contract partners of this written declaration to desist, but it can be prepared together with the student by a school social worker, who also chairs the ensuing meeting with the homeroom teacher and headmaster.
Composition of a personal statement	Some people would call this a "punitive assignment". But the student is not requested to copy by rote any school statutes or other existing rules, but rather asked to compose a personal statement about his or her own behavior.

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### Interference by Means of Formal Sanctions

Formal sanction	Description
One or two hours of detention	The student is given one or two hours of additional instruction with the requirement that he or she compose a personal statement.
Four hours of detention	The student receives four hours of additional instruction with the requirement that he or she compose a personal statement. He or she is presented with instruction materials and questions on the issue of violent behavior.
Threat of suspension from lessons	The student is warned that he may be temporarily suspended from (not allowed to attend) classes.
Suspension from lessons (where indicated, with supervision)	The student is barred from attending classes. The suspension may last one only day, or several weeks. Wherever possible, the student should be supervised during the period of suspension (e.g., through a youth support measure or a by school social worker).
Threat of expulsion from school	The student is threatened with being expelled from school.
Expulsion from school	The student is expelled from school.
Ban on entering the school	The (former) student is barred from the school campus (where necessary, this may extend to the parents). This is an administrative act that can only be executed by a headmaster due to the house authority vested in him/her.

#### Methods of Pedagogical Support

Applying the methods of conflict support make it easier for the involved parties to come to a non-violent resolution of the conflict or to be able to live with the

conflict without having it spiral into an escalation of violence and retaliation. The available support methods come to bear on several levels, have reciprocal effects on one another, and differ in their goals.

### Support on the Intrapersonal Level

Method	Description
Counseling/coaching	<p>Victims or offenders together with their parents or guardians receive support, in an ongoing series of consultations, towards coming to terms with psycho-social strain or towards achieving certain goals, such as learning to defend oneself non-violently, preparing for a formal meeting with the homeroom teacher and headmaster, signing a declaration to refrain from the use of violence, and adhering to such a pledge.</p> <p>In cases associated with mild or moderate psycho-social strain, support can be provided within the school framework by specifically qualified school social workers or school psychologists.</p> <p>If more severe psycho-social strain or traumatization that could lead to illness are suspected, then the affected student should be referred to external support systems (counseling services, child psychiatry or psychotherapeutic professionals).</p>

### Support on the Interpersonal Level

Method	Description
Interviews	There are different types of interviews. We distinguish between interviews with a person seeking support, interviews with students accused of an offense, and interviews with observers. All three serve the purposes of first response, clarification of conflict events, analysis of a conflict, and confrontation with an accusation. Here, it is particularly productive if interviewers can comprehend the intrapersonal tensions and suggestions for resolution made by the persons involved.
Three-way talks	In a three-way talk, the conflict parties have the opportunity to express themselves freely – in a protected situation, to articulate a wish, voice a demand, or raise an accusation. The talk is not, by definition, directly aimed at reaching a resolution. It is supported by a school mediator, and the way is the goal. A three-way talk can be initiated by a teacher or the headmaster with the aim of reaching a better understanding of the conflict events as mirrored on the intra- and interpersonal levels.
School mediation	School mediation is a form of arbitration suited for de-fusing conflicts that have hardened into a chronic condition. The method is oriented towards resolution. The conflict parties are supported by a qualified school mediator following professional standards. School mediation is more extensive than a three-way talk, usually requiring several preparatory meetings and more than one mediation session. On occasion, parents need to be involved or at least informed. This aspect can also be managed via video conference.
Supervised breaks	This form of support is provided either for students who seek protection from further attack, or is mandated for certain students to prevent damage being done to others during school breaks (see above section on pedagogical interference). Sometimes, the student affected will be monitored by a person from the support system, for example, a school social worker in his or her office. If a student objects to being supervised, then one of the regulators (teacher, headmaster) has to take on the task as a formal act, since all the methods of conflict support are based on the principle of voluntary participation.
Supervised attendance during school hours	The student in question is under constant supervision (by a teacher or school social worker) during classes as well as breaks.

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Method	Description
Supervised suspension	The student is barred from attending class and instead remanded to a supplementary form of supervision (e.g. a youth support program or a school social worker). An information sheet for parents can be prepared in advance for use in this situation.
Support from buddies	If, in the course of a mobbing intervention, a student is not yet able to defend him/herself against an offender (through non-violent self-assertion), he or she can accept the support of buddies. These are classmates who actively protect the student from transgressions by others. Their assumption of this supportive role can be handled openly or discreetly. If this is done discreetly, the classmates and potentially also the victim are not aware of the protective function. If it is done openly, the victim's agreement to it serves to justify it towards the rest of the class and also as a motivation for the classmates to support the protective role of the buddies. Appointing buddies is undertaken as a way of compensating a disadvantage, with techniques to be discussed with the students serving as buddies (e.g. non-violent, supportive rather than defensive/aggressive). Support from a counselor can also be arranged for buddies.
Loss adjustment	Loss adjustment can be a part of a restitution agreement. It helps to reconcile the conflict on the interpersonal level. It is negotiated by a school mediator (conflict helper/trained in mediation and restitution) according to set standards. The school mediator helps the conflict parties to decide on a suitable form of loss adjustment for personal damage done. Realizing a loss adjustment requires voluntary participation of the conflict parties.
Reparation	Making reparation can also be part of a restitution agreement. While loss adjustment is intended to rectify matters between individual persons, reparation pertains to the pedagogical response and to resolving the institutionally founded conflict between a person and the school. Reparation is a way of making recompense to the school community and its representatives for an offensive action (a criminal offense, a violation of fundamental human rights). Often, homeroom teacher and headmaster will call for the offender to perform some kind of "community service" at the school. But making reparation is voluntary, and coercion would be out of place here. In many cases, reparation is made in front of the class. Therefore, it is not considered a means of pedagogical interference.



### Support through Systemic Intervention

Method	Description
<b>Systemic Mobbing Intervention (SMI)</b> see Chapter 4.3	In an SMI, the violent acts – or more precisely, frequent and systematic chicanery directed against a person – are exposed together with the class. During this work with the class, in general the victim is present. SMI focuses on the behavior involved in harassment and victimization, not on the offender as a person. In seven steps, the group works towards a change of perspective, development of compassion, invalidation of behavioral ‘hooks’ – often used as stereotypes to justify (cyber)mobbing – and towards formulating a pledge to desist and activating a system of helpers (buddies/human rights observers). Usually, SMI is imbedded in a two-day social training event. This increases its effectiveness.
<b>Systemic Brief Intervention (SBI)</b> See Chapter 4.4	SBI, like SMI, relies on triggering concern and compassion. But the path to them is a different one. Neither victim nor offender is openly identified. Instead, the group works with stories and metaphors. The aim of the intervention, as with SMI, is to de-escalate the systemic part of the conflict, to reactivate a pro-social framework of norms and values, to have all the classmates develop a personal pledge, and to implement a support system.
<b>Circumspect monitoring of the declaration to desist or voluntary personal pledge, conducted regularly by human rights observers</b>	During the follow-up phase, in particular after an SMI or SBI, sustainability needs to be ensured: therefore, the class elects several students charged with observing the group’s adherence to fundamental human rights and children’s rights. In declarations to desist, called for by the homeroom teacher or headmaster, students spell out that they will refrain from illegal, norm-violating, and damaging acts towards other students in the future. To guarantee effectiveness, compliance with these declarations and voluntary pledges made by the students is checked upon at regular intervals. In a voluntary pledge (contract with oneself) students state their resolve to respect human rights, for example in the class chat, without discussing past behavior or reproaching individual classmates.

A prerequisite for applying these methods is being specifically qualified to do so. Without training, supervision, and standards upheld, conflict situations can be worsened, escalate out of control, and endanger persons who have sought help. The interactive culture of a school class can be damaged, not to mention the professional status of the responsible teacher, school social worker or school psychologist.

#### 5.4.5 Building Block: Documentation and Reporting

When it comes to documentation, meticulousness pays off, since it fulfills important functions:

- Documentation serves to support memory. Especially if several conflicts have to be addressed at the same time, if many individuals are involved in a conflict and/or the events are convoluted, solid documentation will make it easier to compare differing perspectives or secure evidence.

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- In crises or cases of child endangerment, documentation is legally obliged (cf. § 8a Book Eight, Social Lawbook [SGB VIII]).
- Teachers are accountable to parents and headmasters. Documentation therefore serves toward their security and the protection of their professional status.
- A detailed documentation of all steps that have been taken enables one to reflect on one's own actions.

To optimize the documentation and reduce the work load, it is recommended to use standardized forms in a digital format. Suitable software is available at low cost in common office packages. Reporting duties – that is, who needs to report about what to whom, and when – should be definitively decided upon and stated clearly by the personnel management.

### 5.5 The Element: Phases of Action

Mountain climbing is undertaken in 'legs' – separate stretches of a route, which are clearly marked. Addressing a conflict is similar. It proceeds through typical phases in a set order. The more clearly the phases of action and turning points are defined, the more transparent the "route" for teachers, students and parents, victims and offenders.

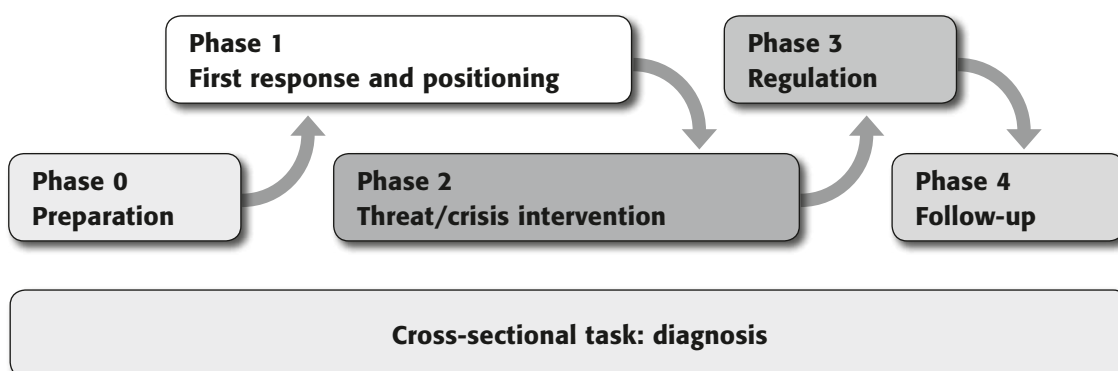
The preparatory phase of conflict resolution (*Phase 0*) is, strictly speaking, not a phase in the conflict itself. It should take place in advance of any specific conflict treatment (see Chapters 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 on structures and management).

The *first phase* consists of three separate steps. The first is to grasp the situation and provide emotional and physical support on the intrapersonal level to the person who is seeking help. In the second step, the situation is assessed and the mandate is clarified. In the third step, the professional who has been approached positions him/herself towards the conflict parties on the interpersonal level and decides for or against forming a team to address the situation.

The *second phase* is that of threat or crisis intervention. This is always undertaken in a team. The aim is, on the one hand, to secure the situation and protect the conflict parties from (further) emotional, physical, material, and social damage, and on the other hand to work towards de-escalating the conflict events. It is also possible that initial regulatory measures or sanctions will be enacted.

The *third phase* begins with the clarification of any remaining uncertainties about what has occurred. In a second step, after it has been established who is responsible for damage done to persons or for a violation of values, norms, and rules, the conflict parties are confronted with the outcome. In the third and major step of this phase, the decisions and agreements that have been arrived at are implemented.

#### Phases of Action in Addressing a Conflict



*Phase four* is devoted to follow-up. Its significance should not be underestimated. Ultimately, this is the phase that will determine sustainability. Conflict diagnosis is not an isolated phase, but rather, like

documentation, a cross-sectional activity to be pursued in all phases. The following chart provides an overview of the phases and their tasks:

### Phases of Action and their Tasks

Phase 0 Preparation	Phase 1 First response Positioning	Phase 2 Threat or crisis intervention	Phase 3 Regulation of the conflict	Phase 4 Follow-up
<b>Cross-sectional activities of conflict diagnosis and documentation</b> Ongoing assessment on all conflict levels to estimate hostility, danger of escalation, individuals involved, groups (systems and subsystems), and the readiness to accept non-violent problem-solving strategies and support; perception of any substantial indications for child endangerment, both for the victim and the offender; documentation and reporting in according with defined standards				
<b>Tasks</b>				
Creation of structures	First response, clarification of mandate, positioning	Securing the situation & de-escalating the danger	Planning & realization of conflict regulation	Monitoring and stabilizing processes
Reach decision to initiate program on the class or school level  Determine scale of involvement  Qualify professional personnel  Agree on principles, standards for procedure and methods  Assign resources  Form network with external support systems  Inform and engage students, parents, and teachers	Provide psycho-social first aid  Comprehend what has occurred and how it was subjectively experienced  Formulate first assessment, categorize the conflict on the scale of A–E  Clarify the mandate given by the person seeking help  Estimate the possibility of child endangerment  Decide on positioning in the field of individual support, conflict support or child protection  Determine which conflict levels will be addressed in what order  Agree on composition of team and assignment of roles, define requirements for documentation, reporting, and participation	Consider indications of potential threat and assess their severity  Implement measures to protect victim and offender  Lay out crisis intervention plan with direction and levels of actions, educative measures and support, and the methods to be applied  Decide on whether to involve an external support system	With the conflict parties and, if indicated, their guardians, develop a suggestion for regulating the conflict in an educative process and ending it on a conciliatory note  Work through the conflict together with the victim, offender, and school class in a pedagogical frame, applying suitable methods such as coaching, mediation, loss adjustment and reparation, Systemic Mobbing Intervention of Systemic Brief Intervention	Stabilize the process of conflict regulation on a long-term basis  Monitor the adherence of students to their personal declarations to desist and to their personal pledges  Acknowledge pro-social developments in the group  Confront dissocial impulses that crop up  Complete the process and document outcomes

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### 5.5.1 Phase I – First Response and Positioning

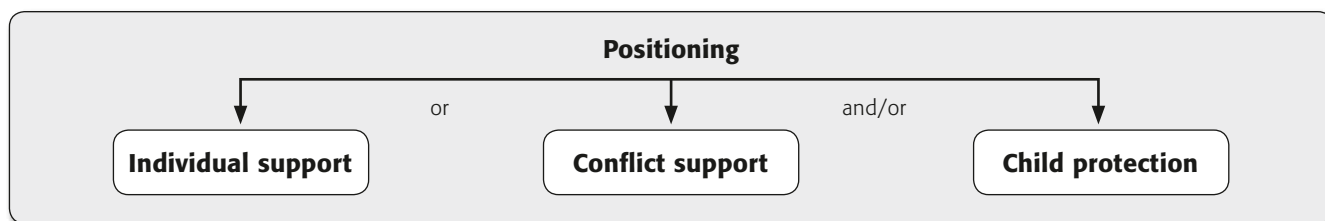
At the outset, the first step is to provide physical and emotional care for the person seeking help. The situation is laid out for the first time, and the subjective experience of it is also asked about, since this will contribute to an understanding of the needs and inner tensions of the persons involved. The documentation of a severe conflict (scale D and E) begins here and extends throughout the process until its resolution.

In a second step, the aim is to shed light on what exactly has happened, to assess the situation, and to clarify the mandate, which follows from the facts and discussion during the initial meeting.

The first priority is assessing risks and the degree of endangerment. From here on, there will be a continuous, systematic analysis of the conflict events, throughout all phases of action.

The professional who conducted the initial meeting now has to formulate precisely what he or she is commissioned to do, i.e. the mandate, and in a third step, to position him/herself toward the conflict parties. In this step, the professional person decides, in an exchange with the person seeking help, what the area of work will be: will this remain an individual counseling situation, or will the constellation be conflict support – involving other persons as well? Or, for reasons of child protection, is it indicated to plan an intervention and form a team?

#### Positioning within the Field of Work



In the area of conflict support, addressing a severe conflict will call for the assignment of roles and tasks to various persons; in the area of child protection, depending on the individual case, a team may be formed with the same set of persons. From the first assessment and positioning follows the mode of action for further treatment of the conflict on its various levels (see Chapter 5.4.4); this is discussed and decided upon by the team.

#### 1 First Step: First Response Goals/Tasks

- provide physical and psycho-social care to the person seeking help
- understand what has occurred and how it is being experienced intrapersonally and interpersonally
- assume a position in the work area of individual support, conflict support, or child protection
- document what has been reported

#### Guiding Questions

- Which persons have participated in the conflict, in what roles, and who has observed it?
- Which person seeking help describes what type of behavior from what perspective (perception of events, e.g., through hearing or seeing), and how have they experienced it (interpretation based on thoughts, bodily sensations, feelings, needs)?
- What does the person seeking help want and need? What psycho-social needs are apparent or can be assumed? What needs have been damaged? Which of these have priority and should be attended to immediately?
- What inner tensions become apparent through all this?
- What solutions does the person seeking help see towards relieving the tension? Which does he or she prefer? How great are the person's deficits with regard to non-violent paths to solution?

- Which persons are perceived by the one seeking help in what roles? Observer, damager, offender, assistants?
- In your estimation, how great is the share of the person seeking help in creating the conflict, how great is the share of the others?
- In what the person seeking help has experienced and describes, are there substantial indications of child endangerment? Am I, as a professional, mandated by law to initiate a child protection intervention?
- Is it allowed, possible, advisable, or obligatory to inform the headmaster and the parents?

### Description of Procedure

#### ■ First contact

The first person who learns about the conflict is already partly positioned by this knowledge. It predefines his or her social role, the task of first response and of clarifying the mandate. This person bears great responsibility in cases of severe, violently escalating conflicts. Aside from the formal duties, he or she has to decide whether to take on the mandate, implicitly or explicitly – to provide support beyond this first response and whether to pledge confidentiality – or to transfer the matter to a third person who could be called in. The first responder decides whether to refer the case to someone else or to begin working quickly towards the next phase. He or she also decides on what information from the initial contact will be passed on to whom, and in what form – anonymized or revealing personal identities.

An agreement to work together with the person seeking help presupposes that person's trust and is often reached implicitly. The great significance of appropriate pedagogical action in this phase is often underestimated in everyday school life. Even at this early point in time, the path to potential success of Systemic Conflict Management is being laid out.

#### ■ First response to the person seeking help

Before an extensive conversation can take place with the person seeking help, their physical and psycho-social needs have to be attended to in a first step.

If the student is bodily injured, of course the first priority is medical attention. But one must also pay attention to the psycho-social condition of the student: if he or she is very nervous, angry, sad, etc., the first thing is to calm him or her down. You can use relaxation techniques for this or simply give the student some time. Often it suffices to just be there for support.

#### ■ Grasp the events and the subjective experience

The next task is comprehending as fully as possible the situation depicted by the person seeking help, so that in the ensuing second step the situation can be assessed. Not only the events that have occurred need to be understood, but also the interpersonal events – the interaction between the persons involved – and the intrapersonal aspect of the conflict – the subjective inner experience of a person. This personal experience includes thoughts, feelings, and wishes.

#### ■ Documentation

The situation as described by the person seeking help is documented in writing "live" – in the first person, that is, from the perspective of the person seeking help, and in their presence. In this report, all the relevant persons should be named and distinguished according to the social roles they assume in the conflict (victims, offenders, assistants, observers). In addition, any behavior that has violated values and norms or caused damage to persons should be described in such a way that others can reconstruct it.

#### ■ Securing proof and leads

Discuss the measures to be taken immediately with the student. If proof of (cyber)mobbing attacks or violations of values and norms is available – for example in chat exchanges or internet forums – it should be secured immediately, with screenshots or by other means.



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### Sources of Error and Risks

- student may refuse to accept support
- student does not explain why he/she seeks help
- first responder is lacking in required skills
- too little attention paid to uncovering the events that have unfolded (hearing, seeing, smelling) and to separating them from the subjective experience (thoughts, bodily sensations, feelings, needs)
- failure to explore the events taking place in the cyber realm
- lack of engagement on the issue of child protection
- insufficient professional distance: close identification with the experience of the victim, positioning as rescuer or judge
- (moral) admonition of the victim
- lacking or inexact documentation of what was reported

## 2 Second Step: Initial Assessment

### Goals/Tasks

- Initial assessment and categorization of the conflict

### Guiding Questions

- Is there a threat or endangerment that calls for immediate action?
- What characteristics are to be perceived in the conflict with regard to hostility, lack of potential for non-violent resolution, violations of norms and values, damage to persons or property, and complexity?
- Who is responsible for escalation of the conflict?
- Is there an obligation to regulate the conflict, or is the decision to do so dependent on pedagogical deliberations (the personal judgment) of the professional who was first approached?

### Description of Procedure

#### ■ Initial assessment of the situation

This second step of the first phase consists in assessing the situation for the first time, which will have far-reaching effects for handling it. Make use of the diagram “Five Guiding Questions” on page 116. It helps in recognizing whether the case involves endangerment – in which case you are obliged to intervene immediately – or the situation is low-key enough that you need not become involved. Naturally, no five questions can serve as a

substitute for your gut feeling. Sometimes it's best to trust your native instinct and let it show you the way. However, often the situation is so entangled that it becomes difficult to keep essentials in focus and arrive at an initial assessment. Keep in mind that, at this point, you needn't produce a final analysis of the conflict: the task is now to distinguish severe conflicts or even emergencies from less serious altercations.

#### ■ Categorization of the conflict events

After initial assessment, the conflict needs to be categorized in terms of scale. For basic analysis of the conflict events, you can refer to the diagnostic diagram in Chapter 5.4.2 for support in judging how far the conflict has escalated, on what levels it has taken hold, and what options for action are available to you.

#### ■ Categorization when cyber attacks may be in course

Whenever there are indications that cyber attacks may be taking place, the conflict level 3 – the school class or peer group and its framework of values as an active factor and autonomous social entity – should be taken into the equation. In this case, you should plan to later conduct a discreet systemic survey of the group to establish whether a mobbing dynamic or mobbing phase has taken hold, and if so, who the protagonists are. The conflict parties are then further differentiated as assistants and claquers on the side of the offenders, and defenders and bystanders on the side of the victimized (see Chapter 2).

### Work Materials

- Application of the “Five Guiding Questions for Determining a Mode of Action” (see Chapter 5.4.4)

### Sources of Error and Risks

- incorrect assessment of a threatening situation, either due to trivialization or dramatization
- failure of first assessment to take the environment of the person seeking help into account, e.g. the peer group, the classmates, or the family with their respective dynamic
- lack of diagnostic skill

### 3 Third Step: Positioning

#### Goals/Tasks

- decision on positioning in the area of work and on the mode of action
- decision on whether to inform the parents and/or the headmaster, against the will of the student if necessary
- decision on whether to form a team to address the conflict
- work division (agreement on roles) within the team
- determining which conflict levels will be addressed in what order, agreement on a first strategy for action
- ensuring transparency for the person seeking help and, where appropriate, their teachers or guardians

#### Guiding Questions

- In what area of work does the professional situate the process and position him/herself in order to provide adequate support: confidential individual counseling? conflict support? (formal) child protection?
- Is it necessary to form a team?
- If so, which professionally competent persons should assume which social roles and be active on which conflict levels?
- Who may, should, or must be informed and be a participant in the process?

#### Description of Procedure

##### ■ Positioning in the area of work

Proceeding from the description of events and how they were experienced on the personal plane, the professional involved in the first encounter has assessed the situation in the second step. Now, in the third step, positioning has to follow. In cases where there is no substantial indication of child endangerment and the profession of the first responder obliges him or her to strict confidentiality (school psychologist, teacher-counselor, or social worker), then the professional can clarify together with the person seeking help whether the latter would prefer individual support or conflict support involving other persons. In the other cases, the ensuing work should be situated in the field of child protection, which can be supplemented by conflict support. Individual support, conflict support, or child protection? This positioning lays out the basis

for the strategy for action, in particular the mode of action, matters of data protection, and the participation of third parties (documentation and reporting).

##### ■ Data protections and confidentiality

In the case of individual support, no data can be shared without a legal imperative – such as substantial indication of child endangerment – or explicit permission, if the supporting professional is by legal definition a bearer of secrets (in the German penal code, § 203 sect. 1 nr. 2 and nr. 5 StGB, this includes the school social worker, school psychologist, and teacher-counselor). If the person seeking help insists on confidentiality, then it is not possible to provide conflict support, since this would involve informing others. If the first responders is a teacher and the person seeking help a student, then the first responder has to consider whether the educational relevance of the matter suggests or imperatively calls for informing the headmaster and possibly the parents of the student. If child endangerment can be assumed, the professional acting as first responder is required by (federal child protection) law to intervene, whether the person seeking help agrees to it or not. The issue is then not whether to take action, but rather how. The first responder – even if professionally bound to confidentiality – has to decide on whether to inform the parents or the teachers of a student who has sought help, and is advised to do so in cases assessed as dangerous.

##### ■ Informing the parents

Informing the parents of an endangered student, whether on the side of victims or offenders, can be legally indicated, absolutely necessary, and very helpful. However, informing parents can potentially also increase the endangerment of a young person. This therefore has to be carefully considered in the context of protecting the victim and also overall child protection.

Should there be any indication of familial violence in the home environment of a student, or if religious, ethnic, or cultural factors suggest that informing the parents would exacerbate the student's situation, it would be unwise to pass the information on immediately. First, the safety of the situation has to be guaranteed.

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If necessary, this can be achieved with the help of external partners from the network that has previously been established, e.g., the police or youth authorities.

#### ■ Transparency for the person seeking help

Every step that is taken should be lucid for the person seeking help. He or she needs to be informed about and to understand who is being involved, what is being undertaken, and why. One should never act against the will of the person affected, except in cases where this is indicated for legal reasons. But even then, you should speak openly with the student about your decision. You can attempt to persuade him/her, but should never ignore the student's needs. Otherwise, any and every method you apply may lose its effectiveness and ultimately endanger you or the person seeking help.

#### ■ Defining roles and tasks within the team

Positioning oneself in a process of conflict resolution means assuming a social role that is pre-defined or agreed upon within a team, and implies shaping one's interaction and actions in accord with this role. The overview given in Chapter 5.4.3 can be of help for positioning. It lists the various positions, roles, and their associated tasks. Naturally, it is possible for one person to take on more than one position with its tasks. With the assignment of functions in the team, the prerequisites are given for developing a differentiated and appropriate strategy for action.

#### Work Materials

- Guiding questions for determining a mode of action (see Chapter 5.4.4)
- Tasks within a team (see Chapter 5.4.3)
- Overview "Ten Basics for Emergencies" (see Chapter 5.6)
- Overview of "Pitfalls" in cases of (cyber)mobbing (see Chapter 4.5)
- Overview of methods for addressing conflicts (see Chapter 5.4.4)

#### Sources of Error and Risks

- lack of circumspection in clarifying the mandate and the area of work in which support will be situated
- acting without a formal legal mandate or a mandate from the person seeking help
- role confusion concerning one's formal role in the school realm, or lack of discipline in adhering to a role
- legally impermissible or premature sharing of data
- legally impermissible or delayed sharing of data
- individual actions without recourse to a team or a case consultant
- lack of professional competence

#### 5.5.2 Phase II – Threat or Crisis Intervention

If there are substantial indications of endangerment or even an emergency, the conflict is addressed during this second phase in the area of child protection, as a supplement to ongoing conflict support in the mode of a threat or crisis intervention. The two areas of work often overlap in many respects. If there are no such indications of endangerment, for conflicts of the scale C–E compulsory regulation is further pursued as the mode of action in the area of conflict support. Every intervention is carefully planned. The overriding aim is to secure the situation and protect the conflict parties from any (further) emotional, physical, material, or social damage. De-escalating the conflict is meant to enable level-headed, non-violent, and pedagogically productive regulation of the conflict. At this point, it may also be fitting to interfere in the conflict by enacting initial educative measures or sanctions.

#### Goals/Tasks

- clarifying the type of intervention and the accompanying methods
- setting out a crisis intervention plan
- conducting confrontative interviews
- securing and monitoring the situation
- intervention
- realization of measures to protect victims

### Guiding Questions

- What constitutes the threat? Do threatening statements made during the conflict have any actual substance? How great is the inner tension of the person who is threatening and the person threatened? Is the person voicing the threat able to back off?
- What constitutes the endangerment that calls for immediate action?
- On the basis of the initial assessment, which persons should be subjected to an accusation? Who will confront them with it – the homeroom teacher, headmaster, the other conflict party, or even the police? In what setting should this take place?
- How can the dangerous situation be alleviated quickly?
- Which families, school classes, peer groups and individuals need to be addressed and won over for agreements to stabilize the situation?
- How can effective and sustainable protection for the victim(s) be established?

### Description of Procedure

- **Formation of a crisis intervention team**  
Together with the responsible persons (homeroom teacher and headmaster, possibly also parents or professional colleagues), discuss the form of intervention that you find appropriate. Is it a case calling for threat intervention or even crisis interventions? Clarify who will be responsible for individual tasks, and in what social role, in order to secure the situation quickly. In an intervention, the persons involved should be those who can act quickly and effectively to guarantee safety.
- **Development of a crisis intervention plan**  
Set up a timeline and inform all the persons who need to know about the intervention and those who will be participating in it.
- **Tasks of the headmaster**  
Particularly in the context of a threat or crisis intervention, the school administration has special functions to fulfill. By way of office, the headmaster is the chairperson of the intervention team. His or her demeanor has to signalize that a serious violation of values and norms has occurred that is not acceptable at the school. The conflict team requires the full support of the headmaster in order to act effectively.

### ■ Conducting confrontative interviews

The phase of threat or crisis intervention usually begins with the accusation being presented to the student who is suspected of violent behavior.

The disclosure of the accusation in a case of crisis, but also in other cases, is fundamentally the task of the homeroom teacher or the headmaster. This should never be undertaken by a conflict helper. In conflicts that are not crisis-laden or not likely to escalate into ongoing hostilities, it is also possible that the damaged party voice the accusation within the framework of a mediated three-way talk.

Working with the students responsible for misbehavior is of major significance, since they can contribute a great deal to de-escalating the situation, restoring stability, and achieving sustainability, provided they are moved to pro-social acts.

The word “confrontative” shouldn’t be misunderstood here. The idea is not to hurl accusations at anyone, to scold them or shout at them. Quite the contrary. In a respectful encounter and a secure environment, the student needs to be given an opportunity to weigh the allegation, perhaps reflect on internal or external tensions that may have a bearing on it, and begin seeking (new) ways to come to peaceful terms with him/herself and the environment.

### ■ Justification strategies

Reproaches and accusation are highly unpleasant for just about everyone. To neutralize them, people react with justifications – which are important as a means of protecting oneself from an acute overload. Rectifying one’s actions soothes inner conflicts and renders superfluous any insight into emotional, social, or material responsibility for one’s deeds. However, as helpful as justifications may be towards regulating one’s own self-esteem: they can severely hinder the personality development of another person. If the justification strategies of an offender resonate in the social environment and the offender receives positive feedback for his/her behavior, it is impossible to come to any pedagogically constructive resolution. Dealing with justification strategies is one of the core competencies in method required for persons working in conflict regulation processes at a school (see also Chapter 4.3).

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#### ■ Securing and monitoring the situation

After the confrontation with the conflict event, it is very important to secure the situation and monitor it. One possibility is to protect the endangering or endangered students by restricting their mobility or their free ability to act. In many states, it is allowed to temporarily store a student's mobile phone at the headmaster's office as long as the student is on the school campus. To be on the safe side, before taking this measure you would best check its legal status in your region. Other options are monitoring the student during school hours or temporary suspension from classes, also coupled with monitoring. If a cooperative partnership with the parents is possible, measures applied at home (monitored/restricted internet access) can help to de-escalate the situation.

To protect the victim, it is of the greatest importance that any distribution or dissemination of questionable content via internet be stopped immediately. Therefore, you should contact the relevant networks or online services as soon as possible. It usually takes some time to block an account or delete content. But you should nonetheless make the attempt.

If these tasks cannot be covered by school resources alone, external services should be called upon – these could be police, youth authorities, or special counseling and emergency services. To avoid collateral damage, it is important to consider possible side effects before involving the police. This should not be done on short notice, without careful consideration. Informing the police is only required in cases where an emergency is in the offing or has already occurred, that is, when there is acute danger of a person doing harm to him/herself or others, and protection can only be ensured by police action.

#### Intervention

At the center of every threat or crisis intervention lies the protection of the victim. The aim is always to improve significantly the situation of the person affected. Two measures that can provide rapid relief are: social training that integrates Systemic Mobbing Intervention, or Systemic Brief Intervention (see Chapter 4). The aim of intervention is to de-escalate the (systemic) conflict and reduce it in scale (to C or D), to minimize the threat potential, to establish effective protection for the victim(s), and to re-activate the framework of values and norms (fundamental human rights) in the group.

#### Work Materials

- Social training with Systemic Mobbing Intervention (see Chapter 4)

#### Sources of Error and Risks

- violation of data protection rules due to impermissible sharing of data
- lack of a respectful approach in dealing with students responsible for misbehavior
- identification with the victim, which frequently leads to neglect of democratic principles
- neglect of protection for the victim
- overlooking individuals or groups relevant to the conflict
- justification strategies of the student offenders resonate with classmates and are not confronted and exposed
- inconsequential measures in response to threats of students responsible for misbehavior, or their parents
- fear of loss of reputation and popularity
- exclusion of option of informing police
- overlooking indication of child endangerment



## Threat Intervention as Opposed to Crisis Intervention

*Our understanding of threat or crisis intervention in the context of severe conflicts such as (cyber)mobbing:*

### 1. Threat Intervention

*Threat intervention is initiated when persons or groups are exposed to an intense physical, emotional, social, or material threat of harm, or when they subjectively feel that they are. This would be the case, for example, if one student threatened another in a chat, saying "You'll be dead tomorrow!" or "I'm gonna get you! I'll send your pussy pics to the whole school!" The purpose of threat intervention is to assess the content of a threat and with that also estimate the danger that it might actually be carried out, and to either successfully negotiate with the person issuing the threat a non-violent means of relieving the tension through conflict regulation, or – should that fail – to take other measures towards ensuring safety.*

### 2. Crisis Intervention

*Crisis intervention is taken up in the face of the hostile escalation of a conflict arising from damage that is imminent or has already been done and that leads to a loss of control and psycho-social overtaxation for a person, a group, or a community. The purpose of the intervention is to restore control over the situation, both in terms of how it is experienced subjectively and in terms of the objective progression of events. It is essential to intervene in the conflict and de-escalate it before it has reached a point of no return, beyond which any further escalation would cause lasting, severe damage to persons or groups.*

### 5.5.3 Phase III – Conflict Regulation

The third phase again consists of several steps. In the first of them, any questions remaining open about the previous course of conflict events are clarified. Diagnostic insights gleaned during the intervention are integrated into the ongoing assessment of conflict events. The aim is, after de-escalation on the intra-personal and interpersonal levels has been achieved, to continue working toward resolution of the conflict. This requires determining who, in what role, will take action on the various conflict levels, and in what order those levels will be addressed.

This presupposes sorting out, in the next step, how the peer, class, or family system 'ticks' on its respective level, so that priorities can be set concerning the levels of action to be addressed. If it is established that (cyber)mobbing in the consolidating stage is underway,

then work on conflict level 3 (see Chapter 2.1.2) with the school class or peer group should begin promptly.

A further aim is to clarify who is responsible for damage done to persons and for the violation of values and norms, and to confront the conflict parties with this outcome. Among all those involved (person, class, family, school) a dialogue is conducted on the following questions: with what responsibilities (victim, offender, assistant) and what direction of action (support and/or punishment), on what levels, with what methods and in what time frame will the conflict be addressed?

The decisions and agreements emerging from this exchange are implemented in the last step of this phase. The realization is coordinated and supervised by the conflict manager within the framework of a defined structure for conflict management.

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## 1 First Step: Planning

### Goals/Tasks

- Determine which of the conflict levels will be addressed, and in what order. If indicated, the class or peer group (level 3) will have to be the first level of action, before work can continue on the interpersonal level 2.
- Entry into negotiations with the conflict parties, possibly together with their guardians, to plan the regulation of the conflict; the headmaster or homeroom teacher holds informal meetings with them (if no formal sanctions are envisioned) or conducts a hearing (if administrative measures are planned)
- Development, with the conflict parties and possibly also their guardians, of a proposal for regulation that can be agreed upon by all and that employs a pedagogical approach to reach an amicable/conciliatory end to the conflict.

### Guiding Questions

- At what point in the process can this ongoing planning dock in?  
What has already been addressed in previous phases, what remains to be done?
- Which levels of conflict need to be taken into account, in what order, and how will they be related to one another?
- Which methods will help to achieve the goals of conflict regulation on the various levels?
- In what manner will the conflict parties and the others surrounding them (parents, teachers, school classes or peer groups) be involved?  
Is it imperative to conduct a formal hearing in the context of an administrative act?

### Description of Procedure

Further steps in the planning of conflict regulation emerge from the specific tasks at hand. You have come to a point that allows you to develop a plan together with the conflict parties, with their parents participating in severe cases (level 5). Planning conflict regulation presupposes that the scale of the conflict has been de-escalated to at least scale D through threat or crisis intervention. If this is not yet the case, then a crisis intervention plan is what is needed.

Planning the regulation is undertaken on the basis of thorough inquiry into and diagnosis of the conflict events. A proposal is prepared by the team and then discussed with the conflict parties and their parents. Not all aspects of a conflict regulation have to be negotiated and mutually agreed upon. If the plan foresees any restriction of the student's personality rights – for example, suspension from class or detention after school – then the participation of the conflict parties and their parents must take place in a framework of formal hearings, since in such cases the legally stipulated formalities of an administrative act must be strictly upheld.

If values and norms have been violated, then Systemic Conflict Management not only addresses the student who was damaged and the student who was responsible, but also the environment at school, in the family, and in peer groups. They all require support in overcoming the conflict. At the same time, a stimulus is given for personality and group development. The three addressees to be given precedence when selecting working methods are:

- the class (possibly the school as a whole)
- the offender(s)
- the victim

### Work Materials

- catalog of methods (see Chapter 5.4.4)

### Sources of Error and Risks

- Failure to make connection with the outcomes of previous phases of action, poor timing
- neglect of the team principle
- insufficient information, transparency, and participation for the conflict parties, their guardians, and the social groups in the environment of the conflict
- too little responsibility vested in the conflict parties and their guardians with regard to decision on support and 'package deal'
- failure to comply with legal stipulations when enacting sanctions that require an administrative act
- violation of data protection rules
- insufficient professional skill in planning a strategy for action

## 2 Second Step: Implementation

### Goals /Tasks

- Addressing the conflict in a way that enables school attendance in the future for both parties on a basis of cooperation, conciliation, and non-violence
- regulation on levels 3 and 5 (school class, family, etc.)
- development of declarations to desist (level 4) and personal Ipledges (level 3)
- pedagogical processing of the conflict together with the offender in the form of reparation (level 4) and loss adjustment (level 2)

### Guiding Questions

- How can effective and sustainable protection of victims be achieved?
- How can the victim and the school regain control over the situation?
- How can the systems and subsystems involved (class and peer groups) be relieved of tensions and prophylactically re-oriented to values and norms?
- How can student offenders and their parents be motivated to agree to a mutual regulation of the conflict?
- How can you induce the offending student to accept support? How can his/her willingness be stimulated to make restitution for the deed and the damage and to regard this as a starting point for altering his/her own behavior?
- What internal and external networks need to be / can be activated for support?

### Description of Procedure

Conflict regulation is, to a considerable extent, educational work that has to be administered, organized, and moderated. It is strenuous, and it requires good planning and professional discipline, perseverance, mutual recognition and respect.

Offenders often achieve short-term success by using violence and then rectifying it. Moving these students towards pro-social behavioral modification involves working with denials, avoidance, and justification strategies. Personal attacks on educators, disparagement and defamation, come into play fairly frequently. Victims and offenders are faced with the challenge of responding in a manner that is not entirely determined by their emotions, i.e. overcoming reactions that are

deeply rooted in human nature: struggle, retaliation, withdrawal, escape/flight towards the inside (suppression) or the outside (denial).

On all sides of the conflict – among offenders, victims, and in the environment – it is necessary to awaken readiness to work through the conflict events by applying the fundamental pro-social values of our democracy. This presupposes that the community has access to distinct value standards and feels allegiance to them. To reach this point, it is possible to work with the entire class group (level 3) through Systemic Mobbing Intervention or Systemic Brief Intervention. Zero tolerance for violence! Everyone has to be motivated to take advantage of the non-violent means made available by the school; this will only be successful if pro-social behavior is systematically anchored and promoted in the school community culture.

### Educative Process of Working through the Conflict with the Offender

Addressing intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict with pedagogical intent can be undertaken in the form of reparation and loss adjustment. This presupposes that the offender is willing to take responsibility for his/her behavior and its consequences and makes an earnest and binding decision for restitution.

In the framework of reparation and loss adjustment, the student describes in detail his/her own damaging behavior and its ramifications with respect to

- the perspective person who was damaged (emotions, needs),
- the personal rights of his/her classmates and their families,
- the values of the class and school communities, and
- penal law (where applicable).

If this is successful, the student makes an offer towards reparation and loss adjustment. He/she promises to refrain from such damaging behavior in the future, and makes a sincere apology to the victim, personally and potentially also in writing. He/she also apologizes to the homeroom teacher and the headmaster. In addition, he/she can also promise to make restitution. If reparation and loss adjustment are fully realized, the student has adhered to the agreements made and fulfilled his/her promises.

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### Sources of Error and Risks

- willingness of conflict parties and their parents to accept support has not been sufficiently secured
- lack of reliability and endurance on the part of responsible educators in implementing the pedagogical process
- insufficient professional skill in realizing reparation and loss adjustment, social training, mobbing intervention and Systemic Brief Intervention, as well as in monitoring adherence to declarations to desist and personal pledges

### 5.5.4 Phase IV – Follow-up

The fourth and last phase pertains to follow-up. Although this comprises the final phase of action, its significance should not be underestimated. Particularly in cases of (cyber)mobbing, the quality of follow-up work determines the sustainability of the resolution!

#### Goals/Tasks

- Further cultivation of processes already in course
- monitoring of adherence to human rights and to the declarations to desist and personal pledges that were made in writing
- acknowledgement of positive behavior and behavioral changes for the better
- ending the conflict through educative work with the victim, offender, and school class
- reflection on the overall process with regard to protection for the victim and behavioral changes in the student responsible for the offense

### Guiding Questions

- Was the conflict management successful?
- Are human rights now being adhered to?
- How can positive developments be secured on a sustainable basis?
- What forms of acknowledgement have the most positive effect on students and their families?
- At what point in time can the conflict be brought to an end, and using which methods?

### Description of Procedure

The purpose of follow-up is to secure sustainability and to bring the conflict to a conciliatory ending. This phase is often neglected or overlooked. But follow-up is the decisive factor for the sustainability of the entire intervention. If essential steps in follow-up are not attended to, all the effort invested in the context of conflict management may have been in vain.

### Regularly Monitoring Declarations and Pledges

If declarations to desist have been set out and personal pledges developed, adherence to them has to be monitored on a regular basis. Without monitoring, they lose their effectiveness and there is a risk that matters may return to the former status quo.

### Processes that Continue over Time

In social training, Systemic Mobbing Intervention and Brief Intervention, cognitive content is conveyed and methods are established in the form of rituals that are then repeated, reflected on, and monitored. Keeping these processes up and running, and accompanying them, is the job of participating professionals (conflict manager) and/or the homeroom teacher. The main responsibility for this lies with the homeroom teacher. It is advisable to keep follow-up issues on the agenda for quite some time – in some cases, even for a whole year. The following issues and customs should be brought up and re-iterated again and again at intervals.

### Methods, Rituals, and Processes in Follow-up

Acknowledgement of pro-social behavior / pro-social behavioral improvement	Acknowledging pro-social behavior or behavioral improvement is the most important pedagogical activity during follow-up. Students notice quickly whether the recognition they received in the week following the intervention was just a means of praising their initial progress and then returning to the status quo, or on the contrary, pro-social behavior such as compassion and civil courage will be made note of and promoted in the future.
Re-iteration of human rights	What fundamental rights do human beings have? What is their significance? How well are they adhered to in the class?
Characteristics of a good class collective	Repetition of content developed together about the attributes of a well-functioning class collective, reflection on having developed them successfully together
Monitoring declarations to desist and personal pledges	Checking on how well promises have been kept
Report by human rights observers	Human rights observers report to the conflict manager on the progress of their work and on potential violations of fundamental human rights or children's rights; possibly also repetition of elections for human rights observers
Report by buddies	Buddies report to the conflict manager or homeroom teacher on the progress of their work and on measures that may be necessary to protect the victim
Letters containing wishes and praise	Students give individual feedback to classmates in a respectful and mindful way: to whom would I like to express a wish? Who do I think deserves praise for his/her behavior? Accepting letters containing wishes, praise, or other feedback is always voluntary.
Open ranking session	Students give one other feedback in a respectful and mindful way concerning their practical commitment to fundamental human rights and children's rights. The homeroom teachers can also give feedback and accept it as well. Participation in the open ranking session is voluntary.
Rituals	Ongoing cultivation of rituals that provide security and orientation (e.g. greetings, farewells, positive feedback)

### Settlement of Conflict Events

A conflict does not have to be 'solved' in order to be brought to an end. Often it is not possible to achieve more than a regulation of the conflict that prevents violent escalation and enables ongoing interaction in the group. Even if maximal goals such as friendship or a good class collective cannot be achieved, a conflict

process can be considered resolved when both of the conflict parties manage to maintain their school attendance over a longer period of time without hostilities, making at least a minimal form of cooperation attainable. Ultimately, the regulators are the ones who must determine whether a conflict can be regarded as finally settled.



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## Reflection

Reflection on the process of conflict management is very essential for future work.

The following areas should be evaluated and reflected on by the professionals involved:

### Aspekts of Reflection

Level	Aspects	Lines of questioning
Conflict regulation on the side of the victim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ protection of victim(s)</li> <li>■ sustainability of the resolution</li> <li>■ separation of person/behavior</li> </ul>	<p><i>What went well?</i></p> <p><i>What aims/milestones were achieved? Which ones weren't?</i></p>
Conflict regulation on the side of the offender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ confrontation</li> <li>■ separation of person/behavior</li> <li>■ support or sanctions</li> </ul>	<p><i>Were the principles of action adhered to? If not, what got in the the way?</i></p>
Conflict regulation on the class/peer-group level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ framework of norms and values</li> <li>■ adherence to declaration to desist and personal pledge</li> <li>■ role played by human rights observers</li> </ul>	<p><i>Did we proceed systematically, step by step, and conform to the structured phases of conflict treatment?</i></p>
Conflict regulation on the level of the educational partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conflict regulation with parents – information shared with parents' representatives or with all parents</li> </ul>	<p><i>Were the modes of action chosen well?</i></p> <p><i>Which methods proved suitable in practice? Is our methodological competence sufficient for cases yet to come?</i></p>
Conflict regulation on the level of the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ cooperation with headmaster</li> <li>■ cooperation with homeroom teacher</li> </ul>	<p><i>What should have been better?</i></p> <p><i>What should not have happened?</i></p>
Cooperation within the SCM team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ division of tasks</li> <li>■ reliability</li> <li>■ professional posture</li> <li>■ feedback culture/handling mistakes</li> <li>■ cooperation with external partners</li> </ul>	<p><i>What can I/we improve the next time around?</i></p> <p><i>Do we need more training or developmental consulting?</i></p> <p><i>Which outcomes should we discuss in the faculty meeting, the school bodies, with internal and external partners?</i></p>
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ professional posture</li> <li>■ delimitation</li> <li>■ self-efficacy</li> <li>■ resources</li> </ul>	<p><i>What should be made public?</i></p>
Operative process management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ principles of action</li> <li>■ phases of action</li> <li>■ methodology</li> <li>■ documentation</li> </ul>	



When reflecting on a work process with a school class, the diagnostic instruments described in Chapter 5.4.2 can be used. Viewing the documentation that has been produced in the course of addressing the conflict provides a suitable foundation for analysis.

### Integration of Experience into Conflict Management

After evaluating and reflecting on the insights gained through experience, these points need to be integrated into ongoing conflict management. It is recommended to undertake this in the context of a steering group meeting at which the individual phases of action are discussed and new insights are incorporated into the existing management scheme.

#### Sources of Error and Risks

- neglecting this phase of action
- insufficient presence and monitoring
- lack of recognition for pro-social behavior
- insufficient counseling of human rights observers and buddies
- no reflection on the conflict management process
- lack of reliability and endurance on the part of educators in fulfilling follow-up tasks

## 5.6 Ten Basics for Emergencies

Many schools are not yet applying Systemic Conflict Management. We therefore provide, in the following, ten points that can be of use in an emergency.

When a case of (cyber)mobbing occurs, it is essential to act immediately in order to put an end to the suffering of its addressee and to prevent lasting damage to the person's emotional health. What you should certainly *not* do in such an acute case is discussed in Chapter 4.5 ("Pitfalls"). The following emergency steps indicate what you can do if you are the first person bearing educational responsibility who learns about the problem. Due to legal regulations, in individual cases there may be major differences in the steps you can undertake, depending on whether you are a schoolteacher or a school social worker/school psychologist/teacher-counsellor (see Basics Nr. 3 and 8).

### 1. Offer the student who is affected a trustful relationship and a safe environment

Ask about what has happened and how the victim experienced it. Confirm to the student that it was a very good idea to come to you and get help. Let the student know that you are concerned and want to support him/her.

### 2. Consider whether anyone is in danger of being hurt or hurting themselves

Don't hesitate to ask about thoughts or actions that could be damaging to others or self-damaging. In doing so, you are protecting the mental and physical health of this student and others. If the student who was victimized is informing you directly, you can ensure – at least for the moment – that he or she will not endanger themselves with any kind of rash action. Should there be indications that self-damage or damage by or to others might occur, consider together with the affected person how the grave state of affairs can be alleviated and the dangerous situation can be de-escalated, and which persons could be called in to help. In this case, have a careful look at the advice given in Basics Nr. 4 and 6 – 10.

### 3. Clarify with the victim what your mandate is and explain what you are legally allowed or required to do

Ask the person what their wishes are in this situation. Explain the options that you have for accommodating these needs. Be cautious about proposing solutions of your own. Make it clear that you will not take any steps without informing her/him or, if indicated, asking for her/his permission (see Basic Nr. 8). Usually, (cyber)-mobbing can't be stopped without informing and involving other teachers, the headmaster, and school-mates. In this case, ask for permission to contact other persons about it so that de-fusing the conflict will be effective. Some arguments in favor of such contacts:

- There has to be an unmistakable signal sent out: "(Cyber)mobbing will not be tolerated here, and we are doing something about it!"
- Teachers can only deal effectively with cyber attacks if they are informed about the case.

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- Only systemic intervention can stop the spread of digital material. Such intervention can't be undertaken without informing other teachers and the principal, or in some cases even the police.

If you can exclude the possibility of an emergency situation or child endangerment and you are a school social worker, school psychologist, school counsellor or youth counsellor, you are obliged to observe strict confidentiality (according to German law, § 203 Penal Code). In most cases, it is not allowed that you pass on any information without the consent of the victim, or also the offender! This has the advantage that you can concentrate fully on forming a trustful relationship within the framework of individual counseling. The disadvantage is that your access to support in the form of conflict resolution is restricted. Any release from confidentiality should be given expressly by the student, at least orally, and documented in writing. A release always applies only to the person(s) named in it and is thus non-transferable.

Note well: The confidentiality rule on this sweeping scale does not apply to you if you are a teacher or another type of monitor. Here, you are obliged to act in most cases by informing the headmaster and the parents. This does not preclude individual counseling or conflict resolution, providing that you have permission to pursue them.

### 4. Involve other students as peer counselors

If you are told about the problem by other students or by adults, ask them to encourage the victim to get competent help. Request that these persons get back to you with information on whether their efforts have been successful. Should you yourself come in question as a professionally qualified helper, you can ask a third party to facilitate the victim's contact to you.

### 5. Get in touch with a victim who is refusing to accept help

If the victimized person refuses to get in touch or to accept help, you should take up direct contact in order to assess their frame of mind. You are actually obliged to do this if there are indications that the person might be endangered by himself or others.

### 6. Encourage the victim to put up a fight

Reinforce the victim's resolve to defend herself/himself against (cyber)mobbing using nonviolent means. Appeal to the person's self-respect. Possible talking points:

- Mobbing damages people – sometimes even much later in life. It can't be tolerated and has to be put to an end, as quickly as possible.
- It may be that other students are also being targeted. They will be encouraged to step forward and report on it if a climate of resistance against (cyber)mobbing is cultivated at the school.
- It can get worse if you don't do anything about it.

Offer coaching. This should be the first and most important step. Back up the victim and escort her/him through thick and thin. If you succeed in building a trustful relationship, it is much more likely that the victim will decide to become active. One prerequisite for this is transparency at every step. If the affected person has difficulty in deciding to act, take that seriously! Together, explore the factors that could be holding the person back.

### 7. Document what has occurred

Have the events explained to you for as long as necessary until you've understood them fully. Remember that what you are hearing is a subjective account – things may sound different when described by others. But under all circumstances: take the account seriously. Make a detailed documentation of what has occurred and how it was experienced. The more information you get down at the outset, the better. Should there later be an intervention by a qualified specialist, you will have done decisive groundwork that benefits the overall outcome.

### 8. Consider whether you need to inform parents, other teachers, or the headmaster

Some conflicting parties – victims as well as offenders – don't want parents, other teachers, or the principal to be informed. It is important to understand that wish, but not always to agree with it. You are required (at least by German law) to comply with this request if these two conditions apply, otherwise you would commit an offense by complying with the victim's wish:

- a) if you are a school social worker, a school psychologist, a school counsellor (§ 203 StGB) or a youth counsellor,  
 b) if no substantial indications of child endangerment (§ 8a SGB VIII) are known to you.

Also, is it essential that in your estimation, the child (e.g. of primary school age) is mature enough and in an emotional and mental condition enabling him/her to understand and take responsibility for his/her own decision against informing parents or the school principal.

Consult experts on this issue by presenting the case in anonymized form.

However, if there are substantial indications of child endangerment, you are also permitted to speak to teachers, other parents or caregivers in order to estimate the endangerment more correctly. In such a case, it is wise to discuss this in advance with the victim so that you can act consensually. Whether the victim agrees to it or not, you should first inform the legal guardians of the victim, as you are required by law to do so. The younger the victim, the more emphasis is placed on this duty to inform the parents/guardians. Exceptions are allowed only in cases where the information would lead to further endangerment. This could be the case if you have reliable indications of violent behavior on the part of the parents, for example if the student might be exposed to beating, kidnapping, or even forced marriage. Depending on the age of the student, in such a case you should inform youth authorities or the police. Again, the fundamental principle applies here: wherever possible, act with the consent of the student and not without his or her knowledge.

Should you be unsure or in doubt, e.g. when it comes to estimating the degree of endangerment, you can take recourse to a qualified adviser (in German law "sufficiently experienced professional") with an anonymized version of the case. Contact to such a person versed in the protection of minors can be established through the youth authorities or other youth welfare organisations.

In the event of an acute emergency, for example someone threatening to kill a (cyber)mobbing victim during school time or a victim threatening to commit suicide, it is always imperative to first inform and call in those who can resolve the emergency quickly – even if the threatened person does not consent. At school, this is usually the headmaster, who in turn can call in the police.

The situation is different if you are a teacher or other educational staff member, since you then have the responsibility – regardless of whether there are substantial indications of endangerment – to inform the parents or the school principal whenever normal lessons are impeded or essential concerns for the education and care of the child are affected, for example when crimes or punishable offences against school rules have occurred or need to be prevented in the school. Here again, there is the caveat about not informing parents if that might lead to an endangerment of the student. In such a case, ensuring the safety of the student has the highest priority and might even speak for temporary placement of the student in the custody of youth authorities.

### **9. Consider whether you should inform the police or advise others to do so!**

Registering a complaint with the police should generally be undertaken by the victim or the parents. Doing so is indicated if and when

- the conflict events cannot be de-escalated using educational means and the police can have a de-escalating effect,
- an emergency situation has arisen which can only be remedied by police action,
- the perpetrators have been identified, are committing offences, and only police measures can prevent them from harming the victim,
- the offenders can only be identified using police techniques,
- mediation has failed and internal (school) educative and regulatory measures have proven ineffective,
- offenders are not part of the school community and cannot be influenced by educational efforts.

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If *none* of the reasons given above apply, it may be advisable to refrain from informing the police. Arguments against informing the police can include:

- After an official complaint, ramifications for the offender and other involved parties can take a long time to have any effect, because the time span between making notice and an indictment or conviction can be very long.
- An official complaint can lead to further escalation.
- In (cyber)mobbing, there are deeds done that are not punishable by law.
- Viable proof is not available or insufficient.
- Police action would block off pedagogical efforts to work the matter through constructively.
- Police measures would not put an end to the (cyber)mobbing, since it is probable that other persons would continue pursuing actions that are, strictly speaking, within the legal realm.
- Police presence would result in the victim being ostracized by the community.
- Since the police are obliged to investigate this particular type of criminal offense, the victim and her/his family might have little or no control over the conflict resolution.
- A pedagogical approach to dealing with the matter could be pushed aside heedlessly while legal aspects take the fore and lawyers determine the further course of events.

All of these aspects can have the effect of worsening the victim's situation after an official complaint, marginalizing educational considerations and the protection of the victim, and blocking timely corrective work with the offender. Take into consideration that, in many cases, the police are required to investigate and prosecute. Initially, police measures may relieve the pressure on educators, but in the long run can produce incalculable 'collateral damage'.

## 10. Build a network of competent persons inside and outside your school!

Never walk alone! Whenever possible, work in a team – even where a final decision may rest on you. See to it that all the roles in the team are in good hands (see Chapter 5.4.3). Bring in essential decision-makers, experienced professionals, and persons significant to the victim. Members of the team must have access to the personal information surrounding the case. You should always, if possible, elicit consent for that in advance.

Police can potentially be of aid in consulting roles. However, you need to be careful when describing the hard facts of a case to them, as they may be legally required to take up proceedings. Portray the case to the police in an anonymized, hypothetical version, using the subjunctive mode. Get information about external sources of support. Are there counseling centers in your area? What conceptions do they apply in their work? Take full measure of the fact that options for effectively putting an end to (cyber)mobbing are significantly expanded when you have outside help.

Establish contact with such a center and ask about the possibility of scheduling counseling or an intervention, and also about costs that would be incurred and potential sources of funding.

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