

THE TEACHERS' ROLE IN DEVELOPING STUDENT'S MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES

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Abstract. Upbringing as a procedure of creating humans mind and character has always profoundly influenced the youth. Quality teachers are considered to be those individuals whose pedagogy is grounded in values and beliefs that lead to caring positive teacher-student relationships, embedded in trust and high standards of professional ethics. This study explored Macedonian teachers' attitudes towards introducing Ethical education in the primary education and their competencies for developing students' moral and ethical values. A Likert scale was used to determine teachers' attitudes towards interpersonal relationships in the classroom. Research showed that the initial teacher's education is not enough for quality pedagogical work. Teacher's ethics contains moral norms regarding his behavior in society, attitude towards students, towards colleagues, towards his own work. The practice implemented by competent teachers is an ideal environment and model for developing the knowledge, skills and abilities that support the ethical concept. Teachers needed continuous professional development throughout the participation in seminars, trainings, courses, and projects that will provide them with the necessary information, knowledge and skills and enable them to compete pedagogically in the field of: intercultural and multicultural education, democratic education, inclusive education, ethical education, global education.

Keywords: ethical education; students moral; ethical values; teacher competences

1. Introduction

The issues and problems of moral development and upbringing and the creation of positive ethical values have always been relevant not only in pedagogical science but far beyond it. In modern society, in conditions of multiculturalism, the different models of communication, liberalization and democratization of society, theories and understandings of morality and upbringing, social and individual ethical values, methods, procedures and content of morality and ethics are changing.

The value system of one individual depends on what is positively valued in the family, but also on what are the dominant values in the environment in which he/she lives. Big societal change involves re-examining the existing values and embracing new ones, which can be a long-term process. We are witnessing the current crisis of values, which is visible not only individually but also socially.

Schools play a major role and responsibility in education of young people. The school can fulfill this responsible role only if the upbringing is based on adequate goals and objectives that represent universal and human values, appropriate teaching methods, means and procedures, in conditions of democratic upbringing. Practice shows a reduced upbringing role of the school in relation to education. Students' ethical values and their overall behavior cannot be created only through the content provided in the curriculum and theorized by the teacher about what is good and what is bad; what is an acceptable behavior, and what is not - the teacher's whole personality, his/her knowledge, actions and reactions, emotions, moral-ethical views, should be in line with what he/she is saying and teaching the students. Teacher's ethics contains moral norms regarding his behavior in society, attitude towards students, towards colleagues, towards his own work. The practice implemented by competent teachers is an ideal environment as well as a model for developing the knowledge, skills and abilities that support the ethical concept. Ethical competence can be understood as the psychological skill that supports teachers to find morally adequate solutions to daily professional problems. We argue that ethical competence is not just a simple professional skill, but rather fundamental and constitutive for the teaching role. Ethical competence includes knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that support the teacher as a reflexive actor and moral model for the students. The teaching profession means, therefore not just successful transmission of information from a sender to a group of receivers, but a constant intellectual and moral effort, a decision-making process and a struggle to follow an axiological path. The appropriate approach to the ethical competence for teachers should resort both in theoretical and practical knowledge (Ghiatau, 2015).

The European Union and European society in general are centered on particular core values, namely human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, respect for human right and the rule of the law. These values are enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and are reiterated in the Paris declaration (or Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination through education) as key values in the context of education: those values are common to the Member States in a European society in which pluralism, nondiscrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. They call for renewed efforts to reinforce the teaching and acceptance of these common fundamental values and laying the foundations for more inclusive societies through education – starting from an early age. The primary purpose of education is not only to develop

knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes and to embed fundamental values, but also to help young people – in close cooperation with the parents.

Are these guidelines only for their implementation in education generally, or specifically in the field of ethics education? Early in 2018 a Proposal for a European Council recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching, was put forward that may help to bridge this gap in the future. Its core message aligns with what we have already emphasized above when discussing Ethical Education. These are the relevant recommendations in relation to these of core values.

1. Increase the sharing of the common values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union from an early age and at all levels of education to strengthen social cohesion and a common sense of belonging at local, regional, national and union level.

2. Continue to implement the commitments of the Paris Declaration, notably through: (a) promoting citizenship and ethics education as well as an open classroom climate to foster tolerant and democratic attitudes; (b) enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the internet and social media, in order to raise awareness of risks related to the reliability of information sources and to help exercise sound judgment; (c) developing structures that promote the active participation of teachers, parents, students and the wider community in school governance; and (d) supporting opportunities for young people's democratic participation and an active and responsible community engagement (Centa, 2016).

All of these mentioned above are based on the recognition of interdependence and the fact that, as European society is becoming more diverse, the role of education in promoting and transmitting shared values is more significant than ever.

In the developing of any kind of curriculum, including the one for ethics and moral education, the four key questions that must be posed are the following: 1. What are the key educational aims and purposes the training should seek to attain? 2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these aims and purposes? 3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized in a given context? 4. How can we determine whether these aims and purposes are being attained after the end of the training? (Tyler, 2005). These questions can be posed both in relation to the initial education or continuous training of teachers and educators as a whole, as well as for particular modules or study contents. It is also helpful to make them as explicit as possible since they are more than relevant also for their work with students, since they structure the learning activities in a way that they are comprehensible and manageable. Furthermore, there are several approaches how to structure and organize the ethics and values education for teachers and other educators, which differ in a relation to the focus one puts at the center of them. One way to develop the curriculum is to follow the quite standard distinction in ethics between “the good, the right and the virtuous”, which can be understood

as three basic ethical concepts as well as the areas of ethics. The first dimension focuses on values, the key question stands for what is good and how do we attain it. The second dimension is primarily focused on our conductivity, emphasizing right actions as opposed to the morally wrong one. The third dimension focuses mainly on our characters and tries to provide an answer to the ancient question of how we should live. The ethics and values of education - but in relation to the teacher and educators' training as well as teaching about it in schools – how can that be organized around these three concepts or dimensions. The key thing to have on mind is that they are not separate or independent ethical domains, but are closely interconnected and form the so-called ethical triangle.

Among the many questions that have in some ways been the subject of conflicting discussions and opinions that have always anonymously and pedagogically reinforced pedagogical theory is what attitude should we take on the dilemma of introducing ethics as a separate subject or skillfully implementing it through all teaching subjects to the extent, scope and depth as their nature permits. A related approach would organize the curriculum in terms of some more specific topics and questions identified as most central. The first model involves studying ethics as a separate subject with a specific curriculum, relevant goals and selected content.

The other model of curriculum and its contents organization follows a model of cognitive domains used for categorization of educational goals, e.g. a revised version of Bloom's model (Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating). This model can be useful in structuring the contents of the ethics and moral curriculum in a way that it interconnects some basic knowledge e.g. about ethical theories, ethical concepts, and history of ethics (remembering and understanding) with more high-level goals related to skills like that of evaluation morally relevant situations, analyzing our own values and evaluative positions of others (individuals, cultures) to creative decision making.

The third model of curriculum organization would follow the “ethical circles” approach, which places the individual in the center and then situates her or him into an ever widening circles of ethical concerns as demonstrated in the picture below. The model of such an “expanding circle” - made famous by a book by Peter Singer with this very title - can be modified in various ways, but the key thing is that such a model could help to structure the contents of education about ethics and values in a way that it does not only differentiate between the inner circles but also highlights their interconnectedness and ethical importance.

The last model of the curriculum for teachers and educators takes the integrative and structural approach of first differentiating between: the goals and aims of ethics and values education,

– the subjects/students/learners as the central focus and guiding point for the instruction;

- the content(s)/components/topics of ethics and values education;
- the methods of/approach to ethics and values education;
- and the processes of assessment and learning outcomes and then organizing the curriculum according to these aspects.

In initial teacher's training about these aspects can be pursued in more or less distinct or modular ways, covering each of the aspects separately, or in an integrative and transversal manner, combining them and then following the smaller learning steps.

1.1. Significance of the Study

The school is an important factor in the socialization and development of the young person, but the practice has shown a reduced upbringing role of the school in terms of education. The complex process of personality upbringing and the various goals and tasks in developing and forming the intellectual, emotional, moral, physical and many other human qualities in their entirety cannot be successfully and qualitatively realized without the appropriate expertise and competence of the teaching staff. Modern schools require multidisciplinary educated teachers who will have adequate pedagogical, psychological, sociological and ethical qualities and values. Ethical education is an indispensable teaching area, which is embedded in the system and forms of education in all countries of the world. As it is about the ethics of life, the valuable and activist dimensions of morality, it is necessary for the younger generations to understand their duties and responsibilities towards themselves and everyone else.

The research results presented in this paper show how teachers are prepared and how they implement content, methods and strategies of work that foster the development of students' moral ethical value. The research shows how the initial education helps teachers to develop their ethical competencies.

2. Results from previous research

The idea that teachers' quality and quality teaching are linked with teacher's values and beliefs is widely held (Arthur, 2010; Clement, 2007; Gore et al., 2007, Lovat, 2007; Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Lovat, Toomey, Clement, Crotty & Nielsen, 2009; Rowe, 2004; Westcombe-Down, 2009).

The significance of beliefs for understanding human behavior is well documented. Cordelia Fine (2006) distilled a number of psychological research studies into a book illustrating the links between beliefs, stereotypes and behaviors. In an earlier review of the research on teachers' beliefs, Pajares catalogued several sources supporting the notion that "beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (Pajares, 1992: 307), noting the strong links between teachers' beliefs, their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices. He emphasized that beliefs are "far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors

of “behavior” (Pajares, 1992: 311). The social organization of life in the classroom experienced by learners is crucial for their outcomes and depends upon the managing teachers’ commitment. This commitment, characterized by particular and distinct behaviors, is underpinned by, and is a function of the teachers’ beliefs and professional ethics (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

We are convinced that our attention in teachers’ education must shift considerably to the formation not only of knowledge and skills but also of the moral sensibility that underlies them. The moral nature of teaching cannot be conflated with the knowledge and skills which are important for teaching; neither can it be neatly separated from them. As we have known throughout the ages yet also frequently ignore, the morality is always in play in classrooms, in teachers’ actions, whether intentionally or not, and the complexity of the classroom environment-its immediacy and ever-changing activities make demands on teachers that reveal their orientation to their work in a myriad of daily acts. Because of the lack of connection, explicit attention to the moral formation of pre-serviced teachers is crucial. (Burant et al., 2007: 408).

A support for this point of view is found in Campbell (2008). She lamented that “teacher’s education neglects the teaching of ethics” (Campbell, 2008: 372) and urged that more emphasis must be placed on moral and ethical education because teacher training programs are “the initial place to acquaint new teachers with the moral dimensions of their chosen profession” (Campbell, 2008: 373). Education aims to change people in particular ways, and uses methods which involve close, personal, hierarchical relationships, teaching is an occupation where ethical issues are central and therefore the provision of ethics education to support the code of professional conduct of teachers is crucial.

Wescombe-Down (2009) maintained that the mark of equality teacher is centered on ‘pedagogical fitness’. A pedagogically fit teacher ‘establishes and maintains a positive, inclusive and safe learning environment’ (Wescombe-Down, 2009: 20) where student beliefs, confidence, skills and values can be fostered and developed. Reporting research, Rowe (2004), Rowe, Stewart & Patterson (2007), Lovat and Toomey (2007) and Hattie (2009) similarly states that in addition to teacher’s subject knowledge and competence, desirable teacher qualities most often cited by students were demonstrated with sense of care and trust. As Arthur (2010) explains, students perceive in their teachers’ pedagogy dimensions of genuine caring underpinned by their ethical and moral positions.

Empirical studies consistent with these notions suggest that better teacher-student relationships may have an impact upon learning, behavior and attendance (Arthur and Wilson, 2010; Sakiz and Woolfolk-Hoy, 2009; Gorard and See, 2011), whereas poor student- teacher relationships are often characteristic of those students with problems in school (Boon, 2008). Hattie’s (2009) meta-analysis of 50,000 studies, including studies reporting direct student appraisals of their teachers,

endorsed the notion that quality teachers had high expectations of their students and demonstrated care for them.

Of particular interest in this context is a study reported by Gore, Ladwig, Griffiths & Amosa (2007) designed to specifically examine the mechanism linking student attainment and teacher-student relationships. Study involved 3000 school students as they progressed through four years of schooling. Their findings suggest that when the pedagogy applied by teachers was paired with high expectations and beliefs that were socially inclusive and morally defensible the most vulnerable students in their classes, those from a lower SES background, Indigenous and ethnic minority students, benefitted the most. Gore et al. (2007) argued that it was the approach with which teachers tackled their professional duties that made a difference. An approach based on commitment to their students' learning, underscored by a commitment to social justice. They surmised that teacher commitment to student learning sprang from an internalized value system, underscored by particular values and beliefs. They argued that teachers' values and beliefs determine teacher quality, and emphasized the need for teachers to reflect upon their beliefs, and for training to provide the space for this to happen.

The results of a 2014 research project "Development of Children and Youth in the Republic of Macedonia" confirmed that there is a gap between "old" and "new" values among young respondents, which showed that young people are aware of the conflict of values in Macedonian society. Hence the new position of upbringing and education should be in the function of forming citizens and independent persons who themselves can distinguish good from evil. The society and the schools should promote lasting values such as: respect for human rights, religious, ethnic, racial and cultural tolerance, solidarity, collective responsibility, freedom and so on.

3. Methodology of the research

3.1. Goal of the research

The main goal of this research is examination of the teachers' attitudes towards introducing Ethical education and upbringing in the first cycle of a nine-year primary education in Republic of Macedonia and their competencies for developing students' moral and ethical values.

3.2. Methods and Sample of the research

Research was conducted with implementation of a questionnaire for examination of teachers' attitudes and opinions about: introducing Ethical education into the first cycle of nine-year primary education and their competencies to develop the moral ethical foundations of teaching. The questionnaire contained closed type questions, and Likert's scale of a series of claims about teachers' attitudes towards interpersonal relationships. Likert's scale determined the degree of agreement or disagreement, on a three-step scale: "Never", "Sometimes", "Very often".

The sample of the research consists 104 primary school teachers from ten primary schools in the Republic of North Macedonia – 33 teachers or 31.73% of first grade, 35 teachers or 33.65% of second grade and 36 or 34.61% of third grade teachers.

3.3. Data processing

The data were processed quantitatively and qualitatively using the EXCEL and STATISTICS computer programs. They were grouped according to the number of matching in certain categories and then placed into tables. The data were calculated with frequencies for which a percentage was calculated. In order to popularize certain statistics, they are represented by graphs.

3.4. Limitations of the Study

The study examined the attitudes and competencies of the teachers in 10 primary schools in the Republic of North Macedonia about ethical education and upbringing. The obtained results do not fully reflect the role of the teacher in the development of certain ethical values and how much curricula includes contents to develop ethical values in the elementary education in the Republic of North Macedonia and should not be generalized in other countries. The research only reflects the views of teachers, but not the views of other stakeholders in the educational process as well as educational policy makers. Practitioners and theorists are constantly referring to the exploration of the competences that a teacher should possess. The constant return to them is not accidental and is due to the change in the role that the educational process itself has in terms of what it should accomplish as an educational mission in relation to the young population.

4. Results

Ethical education is indispensable area of instruction that is embedded in the system and forms of education in all countries of the world. As it is about the ethics of life, the valuable and activist dimensions of morality, it is necessary for the younger generations to understand their duties and responsibilities for themselves and for everyone else. Among the many questions that have in some ways been the subject of conflicting discussions and opinions that have always anonymously and pedagogically reinforced pedagogical theory is what attitude should we take on the dilemma of introducing Ethics as a separate subject, or skillfully implementing it through all teaching subjects to the extent, scope, depth as their nature permits. This dilemma arose when trying to introduce Ethics as a separate subject in primary education in the Republic of Macedonia.

Most of the teachers, 55% believe that ethical education should not be taught as a separate subject in the first cycle of primary education. The most common reasons for such an opinion are: extensive and overwhelming curricula, which they consider to already include ethical content in other subjects, as well as the young age of students and the difficulty in explaining some ethical concepts to them and be understood by students.

Most of the teachers, 83% believe that ethical content should be realized through activities within all teaching subjects.

The problem of education and upgrading of educational staff, teachers, pedagogues and other professional profiles of educational organizations is a problem that has always attracted the attention of social, expert, scientific and pedagogical workers. Namely, the level of education, profiling, duration and representation of general educational, vocational and closer pedagogical, psychological and didactic-methodical education has always caused discussions between educational workers.

The next two questions are about initial teachers' education; we aim to see how it develops ethical competencies for teachers.

Table 1. Studying Ethics as a subject in teachers education study programs

	Yes	No
	%	
Methodology of educational work	59	41
Pedagogical ethics	7	93
Basic of ethics	28	72

The results show that there is a small number of teachers who, during their initial education, have studied subjects that form the basis of ethics and are closely related to the development of their ethical competences as teachers. Only 7% of the teachers studied Pedagogical Ethics, and 28% Ethics as a subject.

Table 2. Initial education develop ethical competencies

	How much initial education do teacher's ethical competencies develop
	%
Nothing	2
Little	13
Enough	66
Very much	19
Completely	0

Although most teachers believe that initial education develops enough ethical competences, from their further responses we have noticed that there is a small number of teachers who have studied Ethics and Pedagogical Ethics, subjects that are crucial and closely related to acquiring first general concepts and knowledge of ethics, and then the acquisition of pedagogical-ethical skills and competences. The acquisition of pedagogical – ethical competences should begin during the initial education with the acquisition of theoretical preparation first and then practical

training. Although, in the opinion of the teachers, they are generally ready to deal with the challenges that the classroom faces on a daily basis, there is still a large space that remains incomplete even after completing initial education. That is why many teachers at least those who are serious about their own and their students' success ask themselves the question: "What should I do now?". It is precisely those who admit to themselves that they lack the relevant training and preparation to deal with certain aspects important to the ethical basis of teaching.

With the next question we wanted to get information about the informal forms of education, seminars and trainings that teachers received during their work that helped them develop their ethical competencies.

The results show that most of the teachers, 79%, have not attended trainings to develop their ethical competences. In the opinion of teachers, the most effective way to develop their ethical competences is to include them in a number of trainings, seminars and workshops that will better and more closely acquaint them with ethics as a science and improve their pedagogical-ethical competences, which will help them devising and delivering teaching based on an ethical concept.

The interpersonal relationships that are established between the subjects in the educational process greatly influence the quality of the same. From the quality of these relationships, one can largely conclude about the quality and the degree of accomplishment of the ethical component of teaching. That relationship comes down to the teacher-student relationship, the student-student relationship, the teacher-teacher relationship.

One of the aims of the research is to discover teachers' attitudes towards interpersonal relationships, using a 23-point Likert scale.

Table 3. Realized interpersonal relationships

	Never	Sometimes	Very often
	%		
I told the truth to my students	/	6	94
During the classes there is a dialogue between the subjects	/	16	84
In conflict situation I try to find the best solution	/	4	96
I ask students to listen to each other	/	4	96
The rules of conduct I arrange with my students	2	9	89
With example I show to students how I want to work in my class	/	8	92
I want my students to see me like a strict teacher	25	59	16
I continue the lesson only when peace and discipline prevail	27	67	6
I punish the restless students	43	45	12
I favor well educated students	26	40	34

I have confidence in my students	/	19	81
I respect the economics, social and religious differences of all students	6	14	80
In the school there is friendship among students of different ethnicity	1	8	91
It's difficult to interact with students from minority groups	60	20	20
I direct students to have proper behavior in groups	/	8	92
I consider student suggestions when planning my work	3	29	68
Avoid working in pairs	56	31	13
To my students develop responsibility for their actions	/	10	90
The school must be a place with positive social climate	/	6	94
My behavior is example for students, parents and colleagues	1	4	95
The school promotes, encourages and organizes teamwork among all subjects	2	16	82
I respect different opinions of my colleagues	/	18	82
I inform parents about the work, success and behavior of student	/	1	99

In the following, we examine the attitudes of teachers in terms how curriculum content and the organization of educational work in the first cycle of primary education develop students' ethical values.

Table 4. Student's ethical values

	Little	Enough	Very much	Completely
	%			
Tidiness	3	27	38	32
Decency	2	24	39	35
Moderation	5	31	35	29
Stability	3	40	22	35
Responsibility	4	29	28	39
Discipline	6	33	24	37
Respect	7	24	33	36
Honesty	2	29	32	37
Socialization	2	20	44	34
Democracy	4	25	41	30
Love	5	17	41	37
Help	5	23	39	33

Trust	2	22	36	40
Tolerance	5	25	36	34
Nonviolence	7	21	36	36

Results show that there is heterogeneity in teachers' attitudes about how the teaching content and the organization of educational work develop ethical values in students. The divergence in teachers' attitudes is approximated from the "sufficient" modality to the "complete" modality for most ethical values. The results of the teachers' responses show that they have positive attitudes about how the teaching content and the organization of educational work develop student's ethical values.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

A very important factor in the development of ethical education, moral and ethical values is the teacher himself. The teacher's attitude towards work, teaching and learning, the attitude towards students and other subjects in the educational process greatly influences the building of the students' ethical profile. Therefore, the teacher should first of all know his / her profession well and constantly improve it. Research shows that initial teacher education is not enough for quality pedagogical work. Therefore, continuous professional development of teachers is required through participation in seminars, trainings, courses, and projects that will provide teachers with the necessary information, knowledge and skills and enable them to compete pedagogically in the field of: intercultural and multicultural education, democratic education, inclusive education, ethical education, global education. A solid pedagogical education, but above all an ethical education that should be an integral part of the curriculum of the Pedagogical Faculties is a prerequisite for building a moral and ethical culture. In teacher education, special attention should be paid to the spiritual – ethical aspects of the teacher's personality on the basis of universal humanistic and cultural values. Many teachers believe that what they are called to in their profession is their success in transmitting the knowledge which students need to adopt. However, they must recognize that the success of the work is much more than simply measuring the amount of adopted facts and more importantly is that teachers must have serious competences over many other things.

In pedagogical literature, practitioners and theorists have repeatedly referred to the exploration of the competences that a teacher should possess. The constant return to them is not accidental and is due to the change in the role that the educational process itself has in terms of what it should accomplish as an educational mission in relation to the young population. Over the course of rapid dynamic social change and social development in general, this role is increasingly complex and gaining in quantity.

The personality of the teacher and his/her example is the strongest educational tool. While teachers need to have a positive attitude towards developing ethical values, they should also be ideally focused and base their work on well thought

out methodology. Teachers should be more objective and not see their students as good ones or bad ones. Teachers should pay close attention to getting to know their students, their true qualities and values, while focusing their work on building positive ethical values for their students and building awareness of themselves, their values, strengths and weaknesses.

5.1. Recommendations for teachers

– The teacher as a model. The teacher is an important role model for students. To encourage student empathy, the teacher needs to show compassion and respect, and in all situations to be willing to listen and understand others - in communicating with students, parents, and colleagues.

– Safety for all students. Clear and agreed rules of conduct, defined by the active participation of all students in the class at the beginning of the school year, are the foundation for building trust and confidence for all students in the class.

– Using educational moments in teaching. Working and interacting with students creating moments, planned or unplanned, that have great educational potential. Current situations, or themes that are elaborated in the lesson (characters from book, literary works) can be used, students can discuss about feelings that have arisen in a given situation, encouraging them to think about a particular feeling and how they would feel in a particular role.

– Indication of values and needs. Differences in the classroom are natural and should not be hidden, but it is important for students to point out anything that is similar, common and related (e.g sharing games, hobbies, respecting rules).

– Talking about diversity. It helps students understand and accept differences. It is very important that conversations take place in a warm and secure environment – by respecting the opinions and feelings of others (tolerance).

– A personal example. As it is good for children to hear their parents' own stories, it is useful for the teacher to share their own stories (behavior in a particular situation).

– Creating opportunities for collaboration (teamwork). When students work together on a well-thought task, project, play, motivation to achieve a common goal increases their connection. Working together, students share thoughts and feelings, learn how to resolve misunderstandings and conflict.

NOTES

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