The Difficult School Class

(Socialpsychological Characteristic and Coping Approaches)

Abstract

The issue of the difficult class is becoming increasingly relevant, as educators and school psychologists in Bulgarian schools are daily confronted not only with individual adolescents who are hard to manage and influence, but also with entire classes exhibiting group behavior that deviates from established norms. These student groups, as distinct social entities, represent a significant environment for the manifestation of the socio-psychological dynamics of adolescent behavior.

This book focuses on analyzing the difficult class from a socio-psychological perspective—its nature, structure, functioning, and role as a specific type of destructive human group. Such groups are characterized by a negative attitude toward the educational process, a poor socio-psychological climate, and an aggressive behavioral model. The content is organized into four chapters.

Chapter One explores the socio-psychological foundations of the difficult class, clarifying its essence and definition. It identifies the key factors contributing to the development of such groups, including parenting styles and peer group influences. The chapter also outlines situational sequences that can lead a typical class to evolve into a difficult one. Special attention is given to the emergence of leadership within these classes and the ways in which they impact the educators working with them.

Chapter Two focuses on aggression as a defining characteristic of the difficult class. It delves into the aggressive behavior patterns of these student groups, examining the structural components that foster such aggression and the primary mechanisms through which it is expressed. The chapter also considers the broader effects of difficult classes on the school's overall socio-psychological climate, as well as the social consequences for schools where such groups are present.

Chapter Three introduces specific qualitative and quantitative diagnostic tools for identifying an already-formed difficult class. It presents key findings from the author's own empirical research, which investigates individual levels of aggression, both intra- and intergroup aggression, and indicators of a class's persistent dysfunction—such as conflict, demotivation, reactivity, and arrogance.

Chapter Four has a practical orientation and offers strategies for managing difficult classes. It outlines the role of the school psychologist in working with such groups, including a brief socio-psychological training program designed for group intervention. Additionally, it presents a step-by-step algorithm for teachers, detailing effective approaches to influence and manage difficult classes constructively.

The book is intended for a broad audience of specialists and researchers in the fields of psychology and pedagogy, as well as for institutions, experts, teachers, students, and anyone interested in understanding the origins, structure, and diverse manifestations of the difficult class. It also addresses scientifically grounded approaches for achieving sustainable corrective impact on such student groups.