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Education, Intelligence and Creative Thinking for Managing Conflicts in Our World

ISTVAN ZOLTAN SIPOS*
Intelligent Consulting Services
Szentendre, Hungary

Abstract

This paper presents a conceptual and practice-oriented argument for using creative thinking as a method for understanding and addressing major conflicts in contemporary society. It begins from the view that many global conflicts are not caused by nature itself, but are created, maintained and reproduced by human systems, including education, politics, economics, governance, social expectations and institutional habits. The paper argues that the development of intelligence should not be understood only as the accumulation of information, technical knowledge or formal qualifications. Rather, intelligence is treated as a broader human capacity involving awareness, ethical judgement, emotional balance, responsibility, freedom, creativity and alignment with sustainable life.

The central claim is that education has a decisive role in either preserving or weakening human intelligence. When education encourages fear, conformity, competition, excessive memorisation and uncritical acceptance of existing systems, it may contribute indirectly to the continuation of conflict. By contrast, an education system that develops creative thinking, reflection, responsibility, dialogue and humane judgement can support individuals and communities to identify the causes of conflict and imagine more viable solutions.

The paper proposes a creative thinking method for conflict analysis. The method involves identifying the conflict, examining its causes and effects, exploring possible solutions, clarifying stakeholders and implementation conditions, identifying barriers, assessing feasibility and formulating a final course of action. The method is then applied conceptually to selected areas of conflict, including war, religious and worldview tensions, inequality, water scarcity, environmental damage, health, food systems, lack of freedom, fear, winner-loser cultures, urbanisation and governance without clear performance responsibility.

The paper concludes that conflict resolution requires more than technical solutions. It demands social innovation, educational renewal, ethical reflection and cooperation among research, education, business, government and civil society. It also argues that artificial intelligence should be guided by human and natural intelligence so that technological progress

serves peace, sustainability and human potential rather than deepening existing conflicts.

Keywords: Creative thinking; Conflict resolution; Education; Human intelligence; Social innovation; Sustainable society.

1. Introduction

Human beings have created extraordinary systems of knowledge, technology, organisation and communication. At the same time, they continue to live with conflicts that appear increasingly difficult to resolve. Wars continue, social inequality widens in many contexts, environmental damage accelerates, political systems struggle to earn public trust, and many people experience anxiety, insecurity, competition and loss of freedom in everyday life. This contradiction raises a fundamental question: if humanity regards itself as intelligent, why does it continue to create and maintain conditions that are harmful to human life, social wellbeing and nature?

This paper explores that question through the relationship between education, intelligence and creative thinking. The argument is deliberately broad and reflective. It does not claim to provide a finished scientific model or a complete empirical study of all global conflicts. Rather, it offers a conceptual starting point for discussion, education and practical reflection. The aim is to provoke creative thought about how conflicts are identified, how their causes are understood, and how individuals and societies might begin to move towards more humane and sustainable solutions.

The paper is based on two connected ideas. First, education is not neutral. Education can help preserve curiosity, responsibility, imagination and moral awareness, but it can also train people to copy existing systems without asking whether those systems are wise, fair or sustainable. Second, many conflicts are not inevitable. They are often connected to human decisions, institutional arrangements, social values, economic interests and political choices. If conflicts are created and maintained by human systems, then human beings also have responsibility for transforming those systems.

The concept of intelligence used in this paper is wider than academic achievement or technical problem-solving. Intelligence is understood as a living human capacity that includes awareness, balance, freedom, responsibility, love, ethical judgement and the ability to act in harmony with the wider world. In this sense, intelligence is not simply the intelligence of the brain; it is also the intelligence of the heart, the community and nature.

The central purpose of the paper is therefore to propose a creative thinking method for conflict analysis. This method can be used in education, work, public life and private life. It invites learners, teachers, researchers, leaders and citizens to move beyond complaint, fear and passive acceptance. Instead, they are encouraged to ask: What is the conflict? What

causes it? Who benefits from its continuation? Who suffers from it? What solutions are imaginable? What prevents their implementation? What would make them feasible? What kind of education could prepare people to think and act differently?

2. Scope and Character of the Paper

This paper should be read as a conceptual conference paper rather than as a conventional peer-reviewed empirical article. Its purpose is not to test a hypothesis through a dataset, nor to offer a technical policy blueprint for every conflict area. Its purpose is to organise a large and urgent set of ideas into a readable argument that can stimulate discussion among educators, researchers, policy actors, creative thinkers and citizens.

The style is intentionally reflective. It draws attention to moral, educational and social questions that are often pushed to the side when problems are treated only as technical or administrative matters. In doing so, it asks readers to consider whether current systems of education, governance and economic life are developing the forms of intelligence most needed for peaceful and sustainable living.

The paper also uses strong normative language because it is concerned with the gap between what humanity is capable of doing and what it continues to allow. This does not mean that every conflict can be solved quickly or simply. On the contrary, the paper recognises that entrenched interests, fear, money, political power and social habits make transformation difficult. However, the starting point remains hopeful: if conflicts are human-made and system-maintained, then they can at least be studied, reimagined and gradually changed by human beings acting with greater creativity and responsibility.

3. Education, Intelligence and the Human Condition

The original question behind this paper is simple but demanding: what can education do for intelligence? Education may protect intelligence, weaken intelligence, restore intelligence, increase intelligence or redirect intelligence towards useful purposes. The answer depends on how intelligence itself is understood.

If intelligence is defined only as information, examination performance or technical competence, then education may appear successful when learners memorise facts, pass tests and enter professions. However, such success can be misleading. A society may have many qualified people and still reproduce destructive systems. It may have advanced technologies and still fail to ensure peace, fairness, clean water, healthy food, meaningful work or care for the environment. This suggests that intelligence must be understood more deeply.

The paper proposes that all human beings are born with a form of natural intelligence. Children are curious. They explore, ask questions, play, imagine, test possibilities and seek connection. In this early state, intelligence is closely linked to creativity and life. Over time, however, social systems may weaken this intelligence. People may be trained to fear mistakes, obey without thinking, compete without compassion, desire unnecessary things, pursue status, dominate others or accept injustice as normal. When this happens, intelligence becomes narrowed.

Education is one of the most powerful forces in this process. It can either support the natural development of intelligence or redirect learners into rigid systems of thought. In many settings, education is still heavily organised around memorisation, competition, ranking and the reproduction of established knowledge. Learners are often rewarded for giving expected answers rather than for asking difficult questions. They may become skilled at adapting to existing systems, but less able to imagine alternatives.

A more intelligent education would not reject knowledge, discipline or expertise. Rather, it would connect them to wisdom. It would help learners understand themselves, others, nature and society. It would teach them to think critically about rules, institutions and economic systems. It would develop emotional intelligence, ethical responsibility and the courage to search for original solutions. It would ask not only, "What do we know?" but also, "What kind of world does this knowledge help us create?"

In this view, education should help people to avoid greed, fear, domination and unnecessary competition. It should support individuals to take responsibility for their own lives, recognise present opportunities, live more simply where possible, value cooperation and develop their own path. It should also help people understand that intelligence is not merely a tool for individual success. Intelligence becomes meaningful when it contributes to the wellbeing of others and to the sustainability of life.

The relationship between education and intelligence is therefore central to conflict resolution. If education prepares people only to function within existing systems, it may reproduce the very systems that generate conflict. If education develops creative and humane intelligence, it can become a foundation for social transformation.

4. From Technical Intelligence to Natural and Ethical Intelligence

Modern societies often confuse technical capacity with intelligence. A country may be able to build weapons, expand cities, increase production, process data, design artificial intelligence systems and generate wealth, yet still fail to protect human dignity or the natural environment. Such development may be clever, but it is not necessarily intelligent in a deeper sense.

This distinction is important because many contemporary conflicts are maintained by sophisticated systems. War is supported by advanced

technology. Consumerism is supported by highly developed marketing and logistics. Environmental damage may be produced by efficient industries. Political manipulation can be strengthened by data systems and communication technologies. In these cases, creativity and technical competence are used, but not always wisely.

The paper therefore distinguishes between narrow intelligence and natural or ethical intelligence. Narrow intelligence solves problems inside a given system. It asks how to produce more, compete better, win faster, control more effectively or expand existing power. Natural and ethical intelligence asks whether the system itself is healthy. It asks whether actions are sustainable, humane and aligned with a greater purpose.

Nature provides an important metaphor for this argument. In natural systems, each element exists within a larger whole. Nothing survives independently of its environment. Human beings are part of nature, not masters above it. When human systems ignore this relationship, they become unstable. Environmental damage, overconsumption, urban stress, unhealthy food systems and resource conflicts can all be read as signs that human society has moved away from natural intelligence.

Natural intelligence is also connected to sustainability. What is genuinely intelligent should be capable of supporting life over time. If an action creates short-term gain but long-term harm, its intelligence is questionable. If a policy increases economic output but damages health, freedom or ecological balance, it must be reconsidered. If an education system produces skilled professionals who cannot challenge destructive systems, then the intelligence it develops is incomplete.

Ethical intelligence adds another dimension. It asks whether people deserve what they receive, whether power is used responsibly, whether freedom is protected, whether weaker groups are heard and whether systems serve human flourishing rather than domination. Without ethical intelligence, creativity may become dangerous. It may create more effective means of exploitation, manipulation or conflict.

The challenge is therefore not simply to create more intelligent individuals in the conventional sense. The challenge is to create conditions in which intelligence is whole: cognitive, emotional, ethical, social and ecological. This requires a transformation of education and a new approach to conflict analysis.

5. A Creative Thinking Method for Conflict Analysis

The paper proposes a creative thinking method that can be used to examine conflicts at different levels, from personal and organisational conflicts to national and global conflicts. The method is not intended as a rigid formula. It is a practical framework for guiding inquiry, dialogue and solution development.

The first step is to identify the conflict and describe its nature. This requires more than naming the problem. It involves asking what kind of conflict is present: social, political, economic, cultural, environmental, educational, spiritual, technological or personal. Many conflicts are mixed. For example, water scarcity may be environmental, economic, political and health-related at the same time.

The second step is to identify the causes that sustain the conflict. These causes may include unequal resources, fear, greed, lack of knowledge, weak governance, harmful rules, competing interests, historical trauma, distorted values or absence of education. The aim is to move beneath visible symptoms and examine the deeper structures that reproduce the problem.

The third step is to evaluate the impacts of the conflict. Who is harmed? Who benefits? What are the short-term and long-term effects? What happens to human life, freedom, health, dignity, learning, social trust and nature? This step helps to clarify why the conflict matters and why delay has consequences.

The fourth step is to search for solutions that could reduce or eliminate the causes and negative effects of the conflict. This is the stage where creative thinking becomes especially important. The purpose is not only to repeat familiar policy answers, but to imagine alternatives that may initially appear unrealistic, naive or difficult. Many future realities begin as ideas that once seemed impossible.

The fifth step is to describe the conditions for implementation. A solution is not complete until practical questions are addressed. Who must participate? What resources are needed? What institutions are responsible? What is the timeframe? What legal, educational, financial or cultural changes are required? How can stakeholders be involved?

The sixth step is to identify factors that may jeopardise, hinder or exclude implementation. These may include profit interests, political power, public fear, weak education, lack of trust, corruption, institutional resistance, social habits or short-term thinking. Naming these barriers is essential because many logical solutions fail not because they are wrong, but because the systems around them prevent implementation.

The seventh step is to evaluate whether the barriers themselves can be reduced or transformed. This may require education, negotiation, new incentives, changes in law, social movements, public awareness, research evidence, international cooperation or new models of finance.

The final steps are to record the proposed solution, evaluate feasibility and define the expected result of implementation. The process may need to be repeated several times. Creative thinking is iterative. The first answer is rarely the best answer. Group work, dialogue and interdisciplinary cooperation can improve the quality of the final solution.

Table 1. *Summary of the Creative Conflict Analysis Method*

Stage	Guiding question	Expected output
1. Identify	What is the conflict and what kind of conflict is it?	A clear description of the conflict area.
2. Analyse causes	What deeper factors maintain the conflict?	A list of causes, interests and structural drivers.
3. Evaluate impacts	Who is harmed, who benefits and what are the long-term effects?	A human, social, environmental and ethical impact statement.
4. Create solutions	What solutions could reduce or remove causes and effects?	A range of possible responses, including unconventional ideas.
5. Plan implementation	Who must act, when, with what resources and under what conditions?	A practical implementation outline.
6. Identify barriers	What could block, weaken or delay implementation?	A risk and constraint analysis.
7. Test feasibility	Can the barriers be transformed and the solution made workable?	A refined and feasible action proposal.

6. Applying the Method to Major Conflict Areas

The original concept paper identifies a wide range of conflict areas, including war, religion, inequality, lack of water, environmental damage, disease, unhealthy food, life and world views, lack of freedom, fear, winner-loser cultures, urbanisation and governance without performance responsibility. The present paper summarises these areas to demonstrate how the creative thinking method may be applied.

War is one of the clearest examples of unintelligent conflict. It is often justified through fear, security strategies, geopolitical interests, resource competition, ethnic or religious antagonism and political power. Its negative effects are immediate and devastating: people die, societies are destroyed, resources are wasted and fear deepens. The ultimate target would be lasting peace. However, barriers include arms industries, political interests, national security doctrines and public fear. Creative thinking would ask how education, diplomacy, equitable development, tolerance and economic transformation could reduce the reasons for war rather than merely manage its symptoms.

Religious and worldview conflicts arise when difference becomes threat. Religion can support meaning, ethics and community, but it can also become a source of division when tolerance is weak and people are taught to reject others. Education, interfaith dialogue, shared work and personal development can help cultivate acceptance. The target is not to eliminate difference, but to make difference liveable.

The gap between wealth and poverty is another major conflict. It is linked to economic structures, unequal opportunities, greed, weak employee power, different levels of education and global imbalances. Poverty damages health, dignity, freedom and hope, while extreme wealth can generate arrogance, political influence and social distance. Creative solutions may include investment in poor regions, fairer economic systems, stronger education, more ethical business models and greater employee participation. Yet barriers remain powerful because money often flows towards profit rather than need.

Water scarcity demonstrates the connection between environment, health and justice. The target is simple: every person should have access to safe drinking water. The barriers are not only technical. They include financing, distribution, political will and the tendency to wait for catastrophe before acting responsibly. Creative thinking would connect research, technology, public investment, community participation and global responsibility.

Environmental damage shows how unintelligent systems can appear economically successful while harming the basis of life. Pollution, climate pressure, waste, fossil fuel dependence and overconsumption are connected to profit interests, weak regulation and inadequate measures of progress. A society that measures success only through production and consumption may ignore damage to air, water, soil and human health. Creative thinking should therefore include new indicators of wellbeing, new technologies, reduced waste, stronger responsibility and education for ecological wisdom.

Health and food systems also reveal structural conflicts. Disease, unhealthy food, artificial additives, long supply chains and profit-driven production raise questions about what society values. If food and healthcare are guided mainly by competition and profit, the wellbeing of people may become secondary. The target should be healthier lives and prevention, not only treatment after harm has occurred. This requires research, education, responsible business and public policy.

Conflicts over freedom, fear and winner-loser thinking operate at both personal and social levels. People may lose freedom through dictatorship, poverty, manipulation, dependency, over-regulation, workplace domination or family pressure. Fear is often used to maintain control. Winner-loser cultures appear in education, politics, business and social life. They teach people that success requires defeating others. A more intelligent soci-

ety would promote win-win thinking, cooperation, shared dignity and the reduction of unnecessary fear.

Urbanisation creates further tensions. Cities may offer jobs, services and cultural life, but they can also produce pollution, stress, overcrowding, crime, loss of green space and rural decline. Creative solutions would not romanticise rural life or reject cities. They would seek balanced development, attractive rural opportunities, better infrastructure, green urban planning and new forms of work that allow people to live well outside overcrowded centres.

Finally, governance without clear responsibility is a major source of conflict. If governments have no transparent performance criteria, if citizens cannot evaluate results, if corruption is hidden, and if elections become struggles for power rather than responsibility, democracy weakens. Creative thinking points towards stronger public reporting, clearer goals, participatory decision-making, ethical leadership and education for citizenship.

7. Common Barriers Across Conflict Areas

Across the conflict areas, several common barriers appear. The most important is the direction of money and power. Private money tends to move towards profit. Government money often protects political stability or power. Banking money usually moves towards activities that are financially returnable. As a result, resources may be spent on maintaining systems in which conflicts are embedded, rather than on transforming the causes of conflict.

This does not mean that business, government or finance are necessarily harmful. Rather, it means that their current incentives may not be sufficient for solving deep social problems. If peace, health, freedom, education and sustainability are not treated as central measures of progress, then investment will continue to follow narrower interests.

A second barrier is rigid thinking. People become accustomed to existing systems and may find it difficult to imagine alternatives. They may accept war, poverty, environmental damage, competition and political manipulation as permanent features of life. Education can reinforce this rigidity when it teaches learners to adapt to systems without questioning them.

A third barrier is fear. Fear prevents people from thinking freely. It can be used by governments, employers, families, institutions and media systems to maintain obedience. People who are afraid may choose security over truth, silence over participation and survival over transformation.

A fourth barrier is the winner-loser mentality. If individuals, schools, companies and political parties are trained to win by defeating others, cooperation becomes difficult. Conflict resolution requires a different imagination: one in which success is shared and the wellbeing of one group is not built on the humiliation or exclusion of another.

A fifth barrier is lack of coordinated responsibility. Many conflicts require cooperation among researchers, educators, businesses, governments, civil society and citizens. Yet these groups often work separately. Research may not influence education; education may not influence policy; business may not serve social goals; governments may not act with long-term responsibility. Creative conflict resolution requires a more integrated approach.

8. Social Innovation and the Role of Education

The paper argues that social innovation is urgently needed. Technological innovation has advanced rapidly, but social innovation has not kept pace. Humanity has developed sophisticated tools, yet many of its social systems remain trapped in fear, competition, inequality and domination. This imbalance is dangerous.

Social innovation means developing new ways of organising relationships, institutions, values and responsibilities. It includes new forms of education, governance, work, community life, economic cooperation and public participation. It asks how society can become more humane, sustainable and intelligent.

Education is central to this task because it shapes how future generations think. A new educational approach should place conflict analysis, creative thinking, ethical reflection and social responsibility at the centre of learning. Students should not only learn about existing systems; they should learn how to evaluate them. They should not only prepare for employment; they should prepare for responsible participation in society.

A curriculum for intelligent conflict resolution could include several elements: understanding human needs and dignity; analysing social systems; learning dialogue and mediation; exploring ecological interdependence; developing emotional intelligence; examining economic and political structures; practising creative problem-solving; and designing feasible solutions to real-world problems.

Such education should be lifelong. Adults, professionals, leaders, managers and citizens also need opportunities to rethink their assumptions. Workplaces can become spaces of creative learning if they encourage reflection, cooperation, responsible innovation and ethical decision-making. Public life can become more intelligent if citizens are supported to understand policy, evaluate performance and participate meaningfully.

The purpose of education, therefore, is not only to prepare individuals for existing jobs. It is to develop people who can contribute to better systems. This is especially important in an age of artificial intelligence. AI can support analysis, creativity and efficiency, but it can also intensify manipulation, inequality or conflict if guided by poor human values. Artificial intelligence must therefore be directed by natural and ethical intelligence. It should help identify harmful patterns, support responsible decision-making and expand human potential rather than replace human responsibility.

9. Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

The argument of this paper has several implications. For research, it suggests the need for interdisciplinary study of conflict areas. War, inequality, water, environment, health, food, freedom, urbanisation and governance should not be treated as isolated problems. They are connected through systems of value, power, money, education and intelligence. Researchers from education, sociology, economics, psychology, political science, environmental studies, technology and ethics need to work together.

For policy, the paper suggests that governments should develop clearer performance criteria related to human wellbeing, sustainability, freedom, education and social trust. Economic indicators alone are not enough. If public systems are judged mainly by growth, production or electoral success, deeper harms may remain hidden. Policy should be evaluated by whether it reduces conflict, increases dignity, protects nature and improves the quality of life.

For education, the implication is that creativity must be more than artistic expression or innovation for business. Creativity should be understood as a human capacity for transforming harmful systems. Learners should be encouraged to ask difficult questions, recognise hidden causes, imagine alternatives and test solutions. This requires methods that are participatory, reflective and connected to real life.

For business, the paper suggests a broader understanding of responsibility. Enterprises cannot be evaluated only by profit. They influence work, environment, food, health, technology, communities and political systems. Businesses should be encouraged and required to contribute to the reduction of conflict rather than benefit from its continuation.

For individuals, the paper offers a practical challenge. Conflict resolution begins not only in institutions, but also in personal life. People can examine their own fear, greed, ambition, habits of competition and tendency to accept harmful systems as normal. They can practise creative thinking in families, workplaces, schools and communities. Small changes in thinking may contribute to larger social change when shared collectively.

The paper does not claim that such transformation is easy. Many solutions may appear unrealistic under current systems. However, what appears unrealistic today may become necessary tomorrow. The alternative is to continue maintaining conflicts that future generations may judge as avoidable.

10. Practical Use in Education, Work and Public Dialogue

The creative thinking method proposed in this paper can be used in several practical settings. In schools and universities, it can become the basis of classroom projects in which students select a conflict area and work through the stages of analysis. For example, a group may choose water

scarcity, unhealthy food, urban stress or fear in the workplace. They would describe the conflict, identify causes, examine who is affected, propose solutions, identify barriers and present a feasibility judgement. This would move learning beyond memorisation and help students connect knowledge with responsibility.

In higher education, the method can support interdisciplinary learning. Students in education, economics, engineering, health, politics, environmental studies and technology could work together on the same conflict from different perspectives. Such work would help them see that real-world problems rarely belong to one discipline. It would also help them practise the kind of collaborative intelligence required in the future of work.

In workplaces, the method can be used for organisational reflection. Many workplace conflicts arise from fear, competition, unclear responsibility, unequal power, unhealthy cultures or short-term thinking. Rather than treating these as personality problems only, organisations can examine the systems that produce them. This may lead to better leadership, healthier communication, more meaningful employee participation and stronger ethical responsibility.

In public dialogue, the method can support community conversations. Citizens often feel that large problems are beyond their control. A structured method helps people move from frustration to analysis, and from analysis to possible action. Even when citizens cannot solve a global conflict directly, they can learn to recognise causes, challenge harmful assumptions, support better policies and act responsibly in their own spheres of influence.

The method can also be used as a conference workshop activity. Participants can be divided into groups, each working on a different conflict area. They can then compare causes, barriers and solutions across groups. This would reveal repeated patterns: money moving towards profit, power protecting itself, fear limiting imagination, education reproducing old systems and technology serving narrow interests. Such a workshop would make the paper participatory and would turn its argument into a shared process of inquiry.

11. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the conflicts of the contemporary world require a deeper relationship between education, intelligence and creative thinking. Many conflicts are not natural necessities. They are produced and maintained by human systems, values, decisions and habits. Because of this, they can also be examined, challenged and transformed by human beings.

The central problem is that humanity often uses creativity and intelligence in narrow ways. It creates technologies, institutions and economic systems, but does not always ask whether they serve life, freedom, peace

and sustainability. The result is a world that may be technically advanced but still unintelligent in its treatment of people and nature.

Education has a decisive role in changing this direction. If education continues to prioritise memorisation, competition, obedience and adaptation to existing systems, it may reproduce conflict. If it develops natural, ethical and creative intelligence, it can help people identify the causes of conflict and imagine better alternatives.

The creative thinking method proposed in this paper offers a practical framework. It asks learners and citizens to identify conflicts, analyse causes, evaluate impacts, design solutions, consider implementation, identify barriers, assess feasibility and formulate final action. It can be used in schools, universities, workplaces, public institutions and community settings.

The paper has also shown that major conflict areas share common barriers: money directed towards profit, power directed towards self-preservation, rigid thinking, fear, winner-loser cultures and lack of coordinated responsibility. Overcoming these barriers requires social innovation, not only technological innovation. It also requires cooperation among research, education, business, government and citizens.

The final message is both simple and demanding. If human beings have created and maintained many of the conflicts that damage the world, then human beings must also accept responsibility for transforming them. This transformation begins with thinking differently: more creatively, more humanely, more ethically and more intelligently. The method described here is offered as one contribution to that task. It invites educators, researchers, leaders, workers, students and citizens to use creative thinking not only to solve technical problems, but to help create a more peaceful, free and sustainable world.

Correspondence
Istvan Sipos
Intelligent Consulting Services
Szentendre, Hungary
Email: tico.sipos1@gmail.com

Author note: *This conference-paper version preserves the core ideas of the original manuscript while revising the language, structure and tone for readability and non-peer-reviewed publication. No external references have been added.*