

Action Research and Training for Future Teachers to Act Against Bullism at School: Activities Report

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Introduction

Although the works on violence in school have been growing all over the last years in Portugal, we still consider there is a lack on this subject regarding the point of view of the students who are directly affected. Thus, questions like how they consider violence, on what degree, and according to what circumstances, how they face the different types of violence existing in schools and on what stand do they identify them, in what kind of environment violence operates with more incidence and who are the main protagonists, are some of the aspects we put forward for consideration. In this way, we made interviews next to children aged between 6 and 12 years from schools of 1st cycle (6 to 10 years old) of the District of Aveiro, and next to their teachers too, with the main purpose of analyzing the reality so as to know better how to step in.

It is then necessary to mediate with teacher training for the future teachers students who are studying in the 4th year of Degree in Primary School, so as to be better prepared to the incidence of situations of violence in schools.

It was created a Unit of Training for future teachers students entitled “Violence in schools: form to interfere, interfere to prevent”, and the organization of a Seminary on “Violence in schools - throwing chairs out of the window”. Either the Unit of Training or the Seminary was developed according to theorist and practical components.

On a first time we began to analyze the phenomenon of Violence on all its various features, according to psychological, sociological, philosophical, anthropological and pedagogical standpoints. On a second time, we developed, on a consciousness and reflective way, a combination of competencies experimenting promoter strategies of prevention of violence in schools.

This is the reason why the NOVAS RES Project is of great interest and indispensable to get a better quality of teaching and learning at schools.

1. Violence in Schools: a project for teachers training

Violence in schools is not a recent observable fact; however, knowing its nature and complexity, violence presupposes numerous features and configurations for the one who experiments violence, either considered the victim - agent of violence - or considered mere spectator. Anyway, there is no doubt that the nature of its behaving is essentially subjective as it is not regarded as an easy problematic to define especially for someone who consider children as being the best target. Since the situation of violence happen commonly in school situation, often witnessed, ignored or even well covered by adults, it is not always easy to survive in a world where the prevailing law is the law of the strongest. As a consequence, it was necessary to give to children the possibility of expressing themselves.

Most of the time, violence remains covered or unspoken by the teachers and the whole educative community. That's the reason why we decided to make a research with the following objectives:

- better identify its suffering and nature of experiences,
- understand its reasons and necessities with a view to positively mediating in that particular environment in which they are integrated so as to obtain new social and relationship competencies (e.g. mediators).

It is also important to consider how teachers deal with situations of violence and what are the explanative issues presented regarding the nature of those issues - coming from the running of school, its system of norms and rules, or even due to an external problem to school.

It is then possible to identify preventive or recovery standpoints.

3. The Research

Research Target:

- Students of 1st cycle (6 to 10 years old).

Research Objectives:

- Identify situations of violence in scholar context, particularly, in society;
- Contribute to pacific experience at school;
- Mediate positively for the resolution of situation of violence between students.

This work on violence was realized next to 3 Primary schools of the District of Aveiro and tried to obtain evidences of children - aged between 7 and 10 years old - about the types of demonstrations of violence in schools; these children belong to classes considered problematic (body injuries inside and outside of the classroom, outrages, mere robberies...).

A total of 20 children (10 girls and 10 boys) 8 go to schools situated in the city (1) and the rest of them go to schools situated in the periphery of the city (2).

The main objective of this work is to identify and understand how violence is, not only defined but also lived by the children, and investigate the nature of the explanative reasons that were attributed to the phenomenon. To do so, we used the following methodology: half-structured interview (students and teachers) and a questionnaire (trainee teachers); we considered the following aspects: sex, age, social environment, school places (classroom, corridors, playground, gymnasium). Regarding the future teachers students of the University of Aveiro, the Department of Didactic and Educative Technology, 4th year of Degree in Primary School, on a total of 18, the main objective of the intervention was to be aware of the phenomenon, acquire capacities of positive resolution when faced to situations of violence.

This intervention was made next to 6 schools of the District of Aveiro including a total of 120 children (6-12 years old), during one semester.

It is important to underline that the teachers responsible for the schools received training.

As for the methodology, the instruments we used to collect the data and which were chosen according to the function of the problematic works of violence are the following: half-structured interviews and questionnaire in order to obtain a better representation of reality at school. Due to the complexity and the dynamic aspect of the phenomenon studied, we used a qualitative methodology as well as the data analyze, following the procedures of Bardin (1995); it is essentially thematic and was developed according to three points: categories, themes of speech and interpretation of the results.

The construction of the themes and categories was concretized from elements of speech presented by the interviewed students; then, the categories used in the table come from a list of various themes of speech of the students considered as identical.

We chose the place of work: classroom and gymnasium because it is proved to be places where situations of violence happens with frequency. Moreover, a selection of schools was made according to the following aspects:

1) Schools belonging to urban or rural area so as to underline the importance of each one of these aspects on a behaving level 2) Existence of a significant number of children with school experience and better reflection regarding the comprehension of reality in which they are integrated. In this way, the future teachers students received training according to the system of units on the Violence in schools: form to interfere, interfere to prevent from discipline in Pedagogical Practice in a Degree in Primary School.

Moreover, they participated in a Seminary Violence in schools: throwing chairs out of the window developed in the framework of an European Project called NOVAS RES - it took place in May 2001 at the University of Aveiro.

3.1. Analysis of the collected data.

3.1.1 Representations of students on violence in the classroom.

The objective was to know better the problematic of violence in the school context and according to the standpoint of students. We will now present the results obtained with the table of thematic/categorical analyze.

Table 1- Violence in the classroom: repartition by themes

Categories	School. Oliveirinha (Classroom A)	School. S. Bernardo (Classroom B)	School. Alumieira (Classroom C)	School. Glória (Classroom D)	School. Glória (Classroom E)
Violence in the classroom:					
1. Non-respect of the rules.	87.5%	37.5%	87.5%	25%	25%
2. Threats	100%	50%	87.5%	25%	37.5%
3. Throw objects	50%	25%	87.5%	25%	25%
4. Others	87.5%	25%	50%	12.5%	25%

The attitudes described in the Table 1 and assumed by children and witnesses present a confrontation of situation of violence as it is possible to note with some remarks of threat such as "once outside you will see!" (9 years old); "wait and see when we'll be on the playground"(9 years old).

From the analysis made on Table 1, we can say that the children of the classroom B, D and E are less subjects to violence (29%) regarding the classroom as the children of Classrooms A and C are the ones who are more exposed to situation of violence and aggression (91.5% and 78.1%). In all the classrooms of that Table it is possible to say that the "non-respect of rules" (65.6%) and «threats» (75%) represent the higher levels of violence.

3.1.2. Representations of students on violence in the playground.

To evaluate the appreciation made by the children during the playground we present the following sentences: « where I see more violence it is on the playground » (9 years old); « I hide myself because I don't want the other to tear off my clothes" (8years).

Most of the children express their liking for playing tricks and joking on playground because it is the time when they do different things compared to the activities in the classroom and they can talk with friends. Different. However, some of them are victims of aggressions that come from « our classroom but also from other older children who hit us (8 years). The reasons why they have violent behaviors is because the children receive a cultural image of patriarchal society which is: "it is good to hit such as in the films of Digimones and Pokemones » where force is associated to masculine image.

Table 2- Violence in the playground: repartition by themes.

Categories	School. Oliveirinha (Classroom A)	School. S. Bernardo (Classroom B)	School. Alumieira (Classroom C)	School. Glória (Classroom D)	School. Glória (Classroom E)
Violence in the playground					
1. Discriminate	75%	25%	100%		25%
2. Hurt physically	100%	25%	75%	25%	25%
3. Insult	100%	50%	100%	37.5%	50%
4. Be evil	100%	50%	75%	50%	37.5%
5. Tear off clothes	50%		100%	37.5%	25%
6. Others	75%		50%		

With the analyze of the table we can say that « be evil » (62.5%) and « insult » (57.5%) represent the biggest indicators of violence in the playground of all the schools followed by the physical aggression (50%).

3.1.3. Illustrations of the students about violence in the corridors

According to the Table above referred we can see that « hit» (67.5%), « trip up » (67%) e « insult » (60%) continue to be maximum values of violence happening in the corridors.

Table 3- Violence in the corridors: repartition by themes

Categories	School. Oliveirinha (Classroom A)	School. S. Bernardo (Classroom B)	School. Alumieira (Classroom C)	School. Glória (Classroom D)	School. Glória (Classroom E)
Violence in the corridors:					
1. Hit	100%	37.5%	100%	50%	50%
2. Trip up	100%	50%	87.5%	50%	50%
3. Insult	100%	50%	75%	25%	50%
4. Be obliged to	75%	25%	75%	25%	25%

give things					
5. Others					

Due to the transitory aspect of the corridor, compared to the classroom and playground, situations of violence happen almost immediately when the students get out of the classroom: « they hit the others in the corridors » (8 years old); « the children are rough and do not leave us in peace ... and they are not joking because I know when they are joking and when they hit us rudely » (8 years old).

3.2 Conclusion

The experience of violence in the school context brought about by the children is significant either when they assume the role of aggressors or when they assume the role of victims: the existence of a climate of insecurity felt by the girls, bring them to not be involved in a direct resolution of these situations increasing « conscience of power » practiced by some students. Nevertheless, they seem to know what to do in each case; for example, « think about stopping to act so (hit...); apologize; give a hug; call the teacher; separate the children and make peace with each other; watch films without violence; there should be more respect in the corridors and on the playgrounds».

The aggressors for most of the boys seem to share a combination of positive convictions about violence transmitted by the culture of violence in modern society; parents and teachers have an important responsibility to perform.

4. Teachers Training Program

Training Target:

- Future teachers students

Training Objectives:

- Identify the school reality in all its configurations;
- Understand that school can strongly contribute to the resolution of situations of violence;
- Touch by various typologies of violence and demonstrations;
- Analyze the various features interfering and explanative of the complex observable fact of violence;
- Evaluate the consequences of that complexity on a learning level and on personal and social training of the child.
- Build up communicative competencies in the organization of violence.
- How to control situations of violence happening in schools?

4.1 A Unit of Teacher Training: “Violence in schools Form to interfere Interfere to prevent”

General objectives:

- Characterize the phenomenon of violence on the 1st cycle level (6 to 10 years old);
- Identify the phenomenon according to its various typologies and manifestations;
- Understand the experience of problematic of violence according to all its agents and dimensions (victims, aggressors, school climate, family, society);

- Reflect about the central importance of prevention from situations of violence;
- Develop capacities to positively interfere when facing violence;

Program:

- 1.The problematic of Violence: conceptual difficulties.
 - 1.1.Violence and bullying
 - 1.2.Aggressivevness.
 - 1.3.Hyperactivity.
 - 1.4. Define the concept of violence.
2. Characterization of violence
 - 2.1. Forms of victimization.
 - 2.2. Places of victimization.
 - 2.3.Aggressors and victims.
3. Contribution to explanative factors of violence in schools
 - 3.1. Individual factors
 - 3.2.Familyu factors
 - 3.3. Institutional factors
 - 3.4.Violence and Power: the underlined logics of violence
4. Violence in schools: forms of intervention and prevention
 - 4.1. Intervention in the playground.
 - 4.2. Intervention in the corridors.
 - 4.3. Intervention in the classroom.
 - 4.4.Other for ms of prevention (sport, dance, theatre)
 - 4.5. Analyze of cases
5. Non-violence considered as ethic -philosophical exigency (Girard/Levinas)

4.2 Seminary: “Violence in schools throwing the chairs out of the window”

Objectives:

The main objective of this Seminary is to analyze and understand the phenomenon of school violence in all its dimensions and contexts of life. We consider that school represents an important factor of change thanks to its principal agents, but our objective is also to indicate some practical measures of educative intervention able to contribute to the decreasing of this phenomenon.

Target:

This Seminary is for students/students frequenting the last year of the Degree in Primary School.
Organization by: Ana Paula Pedro; Hermínia Pedro; Jacques Houart

Program:

- 09.30- Inscription and delivery of the dossiers
- 09.45- Opening of the session of works/ Moderadora (Hermínia Pedro/DDTE. University of Aveiro)
- 10.00-Famíli, Violence and School (Alte da Veiga/ Univ. Minho)
- 10.10- For a non-violent culture: philosophical reflections (Ana Pedro / University of Aveiro)

- 10.20-Management of students indiscipline (Alexandre Ventura/ University of Aveiro)
- 10.40-Violence in schools - a sociological view (Neto Mendes/ University of Aveiro)
- 11.00- Coffee
- 11.30- Violence and anthropology (Jacques Houart/University ofCoimbra)
- 12.15- Discussion
- 13.00- Lunch
- 14.00- Reports on violence in school context
- 15.00- Comments (Fátima Lemos - Psychiatrist)
- 15.45-Coffee
- 16.00 "Throwing chairs out of the window"
- 17.30- Conclusion and closing session of the Seminary

4.3 Others Training Tools: CD-Rom, Videos -teachers and students; WebSite; brochures

Beyond the strategies referred in 4. and 4.1, other strategies were developed according to a largest perspective in time, with the objective of exploring themes of varied form, either with videos, CD-Rom, or with brochures and the site on the internet where interactivity prevails and where a forum of discussion makes possible the exchange of information.

4.4 Conclusions

Throughout the work we became conscious with some mistakes either regarding the concept of violence or regarding its identification as well as about factors of resolution of violence in schools, namely, from the teaching group. Nevertheless, we can also underline that sometimes children, and most of the time, find some difficulties in asking their teachers for help so as to resolve situations of violence in schools - particularly in the playground and corridors - and prefer tell their fellows.

One of the mistakes consists in considering that the solution of the problem remains exclusively outside of the school. In other words, it deals with a problem that can be exclusively solved by society: are we coping with the passivity of society?

On the other hand, if it does exist some sensibility coming from a reduced number of teachers regarding the problem of violence and its manifestation, most of the time the tendency is to devalue and in worst cases, to justify or ignore: culture of silence?

5. Violence in schools: what measures of intervention /prevention?

Considering that the problem of violence is only one of the dimensions of life at school, it is normal to see violence influencing and being influenced by others dimensions, because to solve problems all the intervenient have to be taken into account, not only the victims such as the aggressors, but also the school climate, the family and the society.

According to the works of Pereira and Pinto (2001), 5 aspects of intervention at school are possible so as to reduce violence, that is to say the educative project of school; sensitization and teacher training, parents, auxiliaries of educative action; free times in school; monitoring of the playground; support and help to children both victims and aggressors.

Beyond those aspects we consider very important, there are other ones we would like to mention in an enumeration such as: 1) Rules of schools; 2) assemblies of classes; 3)

Pedagogical environment open to discussion; 4) Coherence of speech/practice at school; 5) values passing through hidden topics; 6) importance of school DO NOT transmit an idea of indifference

regarding the situations of violence; 7) Safe and secure atmosphere (activities / non formal curriculum); 8) Areas of non-disciplinary topics (Civic Training and Area of Project).

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