

SCHOOL BULLYING

GUIDELINES FOR POLICY MAKER

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Introduction

The role of policy makers is to prevent and intervene against bullying that, as a risk factor for dropping out, needs to be considered by the educational institutions like other fundamental problems. Such a task of facilitating the adequate action to be taken against bullying depends on the level of knowledge of the problem to be coped with, the comprehension of the complexity of the institutions to which the policies designed are directed, their sensitivity to the variety of target groups involved, and the ways of confrontation. Therefore, it is necessary that all policy makers make efforts to progress in the above-mentioned aspects before designing the policies of action from which not only obligations and precise actions of other professionals will follow, but also consequences for the pupils involved.

Understanding the Complexity of Bullying

At first sight, bullying can be seen as a simple phenomenon of aggression by a pupil or group of pupils towards other pupils or group of pupils. However, it is more complex than that. Bullying is a problem of psycho-social nature that is sustained by two rules: the rule of dominion-submission and the rule of silence. The Dominion-submission rule can be explained in the fact that the link that is established between the pupils involved does not follow any expected equality and symmetry. Silence is also a particular rule of peer relations, as it is of common thought that things that happen between pupils must be kept among them. As a matter of fact, it is not well thought of by peers to inform adults about bullying episodes, and the informant is seen by his/her mates as a snitch. Moreover, over the last years a new form of bullying has appeared due to the use of the ICT and virtual social networks that must be also understood. Accordingly, before acting against bullying we must understand:

- The characteristics of the phenomenon
- The roles that are implied
- The rules that facilitate and sustain it
- The direct and indirect forms that it may adopt

Online Publications

- [Bullying: description and analysis of the phenomenon](#)
Article in which you can find a summary of the phenomenon published on Electronic journal of Research in Educational Psychology.
- [Cyberbullying in Europe Research Report](#)
A synthesis of what is known so far about cyberbullying. It was developed within the CyberTraining project.

Knowing the Action line to Work with Parents

In order to legislate about and regulate the implementation of programs to prevent and intervene against bullying, it is important to understand the possibilities that each of the groups susceptible of being involved has to act. In this respect, families are a fundamental pillar for an adequate action. Socio-moral education is a key for prevention considering that, although it is mostly developed in the family context, the school may serve to compensate inequalities. For intervention, the collaboration of the families of the victims and the aggressors is essential, so that all of the efforts for re-education go in the same direction. However, even though the relevance of the families is unquestionable, they are the most difficult group to involve - whether individually or in groups. Moreover, the families that are more involved in the schools tend to be those that are already sensitized about the problem. Therefore, policy makers should:

- Know the difficulties to get the families involved.
- Analyze the campaigns of sensitization to cope with bullying.
- Investigate about the existing initiatives to train the families.

Website

- [Self-directed online courses for parents](#)
Course designed in the framework of the Cybertraining Parents project: parents who are interested to learn more about the topic of cyberbullying and how to deal with it.

Knowing the Action Line to Work with Students

Working with pupils is obviously necessary. But not only with those who are directly involved, that is victims and aggressors. Action with pupils shall be educative and, for such purpose, the inclusion of the objectives of the prevention within the curriculum objectives or the general programs of action will ease the task. The intervention with the pupils involved consists of specific programs with pupils that are already aggressors or victims, or that are at risk. It has been demonstrated that, with this kind of programs, the involvement of peers tends to be effective. That is to say, mates help other mates involved. Such programs are commonly known as peer support programs. The steps would be as follows:

- To know the educational measures aimed at preventing bullying.
- To explore specific programs created for victims and aggressors.
- To analyze peer support programs.

Website

- [Pacer Center's teens against bullying](#)
Website where you can find one way to work with student: images, videos, stories, etc.

Knowing the Action Line to Work with Teachers

Teachers are the key target group for prevention and intervention. They, predictably, will coordinate and/or develop the actions directed to pupils and families. Therefore, the main objectives of sensitization, training and recognition must be centered on teachers. Teachers' training will be encouraged from different point of views: congresses, seminars, specific courses, etc. However, it is important not only to encourage training, but also to achieve the fundamental goal that teachers do not feel competent only to teach traditional educational contents, but also to cope with such problems. With a similar training level, those who feel competent for action tend to do it better.

Website

- [Working with teachers](#)
Material designed in the framework of European Vista Project in which you can find a summary of how to develop teacher training.

Knowing the Action Line to Work with Principals

Principals may encourage or make it difficult to take action against bullying and prevent early drop out. On some occasions principals are also teachers and on some they are not. This is a fact that is important to consider, as dealing with pupils on a daily basis gives a particular knowledge that helps to take adequate decisions about lines of action and timing. Principals, whether teachers or not, are managers and management may ease or make it difficult the efforts made by other groups, teachers over all. For such purposes, although training of principals is the same as that for the rest of the teachers, it must contain management matters in order to encourage and optimize the work developed by their fellow teachers.

Report

- [Transnational report on School Bullying](#)
Report developed in the framework of the "I am Not Scared" Project in which you can find the answer of headteachers to more than one hundred bullying episodes.

The Experts' Training

One of the most complex tasks to optimally develop prevention and intervention programs is to have personnel with experience in these programs, particularly intervention programs. For such purpose, it is crucial for policy makers to select, among their personnel, those that may have an adequate previous training (psychologists, for instance) and that are willing to specialize in programs of intervention against bullying. As a result, we would have a group of experts that might serve as advisors to the teachers that may request it, and as teachers' trainers. According to the above-mentioned practice, it is important to provide this kind of figure in the organization chart of the institutions.

Website

- [Resource Package for Trainers](#)
Material designed in the framework of the Cybertraining Parents project to develop a training course to prevent and to cope with bullying.

Good Practices and Experiences Based on Evidence

Policy makers' action should be based on the knowledge that science is gradually offering effective patterns of action to cope with bullying, as well as programs the results of which are outstanding, under certain conditions. It is necessary that policies are based on principles of action that have empirically been tested. What is known as evidence-based practices are the following: resources, programs or materials that have been rigorously tested and whose evaluation is positive in relation to what was thought to accomplish with them. That is the way to eventually guarantee that policies are effective with reference to the objectives that they aim to reach.

Online Publications

- [School climate and bullying prevention](#)
Chapter in the book "School Climate Practices for Implementation and Sustainability" in which you can find the keys for an Effective Practice.
- [Tackling bullying in schools: a guide for governors](#)
Guide made by the Anti-Bullying Alliance which identifies the need of a specialist guidance for school governors in relation to anti-bullying work. It can be very useful for policy makers in general.

Preventive Action Model: Whole School Policy Approach

Empirical research and best practices have shown that the most suitable line of action against bullying is to adopt a perspective focused on the whole policy approach (WPA). That is to say, programs that include, at the same time, lines of action with all of the groups involved. At least, with families, pupils and teachers. This must not be an objective to cover from the very beginning, but it means that the objective of a policy maker must be that the action policy against bullying will be global. The new measures cannot be implemented at one time, but gradually, in order to achieve the goal that institutions and individuals involved become familiar with them.

Website

- [Vista: A Whole School Approach \(WSA\). How to embed the WSA: the challenge of implementation](#)
Material designed in the framework of European Vista Project in which you can find a summary of what is WSA and some keys to develop it.

Direct Intervention Strategies

Although most overall actions should be preventive, the whole policies have to be prepared to address potential bullying episodes. Interventions will be needed with the aggressor, the victim and with students at risk to be involved as both, aggressor or victim. For such purposes, it is advisable that policy makers design action programs for this kind of pupils and proceed to identify them. The variety of offers is wide: development of empathy, assertiveness, the Pikas method, Quality Circles, etc. It is not necessary to choose one of them, but to offer to the educational community a great choice, so that teachers may choose on the basis of their pupils and the specific conditions and circumstances.

Websites

- [8 Ways Educators Can Support Victims of Bullying](#)
In this website you can find how you can support victims of bullying.
- [Dealing with bullies](#)
Website of the Nemours Center for Children's Health Media of the Nemours Foundation in which strategies are offered to children on how to respond to bullies.

Networks of Exchange of Experiences

Intervention programs with outstanding results in certain schools may be useful to other schools with similar conditions and circumstances, or just with certain adaptations of materials or procedures. However, in many cases, good teaching practices fall into oblivion or registration of anecdotes. It is therefore important that all experience is told and published for other colleagues' advantage. For such purposes, it is important that policy makers facilitate this exchange by offering adequate environments for publishing.

Online Publication

- [Stop@Bullism! COMMON BOOKLET](#)
Synthesis of the Leonardo Da Vinci Lifelong Learning Project named "Stop@Bullism". One example of how you can share the experience and knowledge with others.