

Dialogue

School Violence: A matter of Rights

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Promoting a culture of peace at school is also responding to the structural violence which is carried out through inequality, social injustice and discrimination. It is opening up public spaces which promote peaceful coexistence.



ABSTRACT

For those of us who work in the field of education, expressions of violence with the school as the backdrop have become a constant subject of reflection and analysis. The concept of violence itself is the subject of debate, its being a multi-causal, political phenomenon. However, there is general consensus as to the role the school plays not only as a producer and reinforcer of violent behavior, but also as a reproducer of the violent situations which surround it. That is, the school acts as a generator of situations of violence or as a vicious sounding board of the surroundings.

Within this apparently desolate scene, the solution resides in finding possibilities of change, improving education, reinventing the sense of educational community, thinking of school from the standpoint of responsibilities, but above all from the point of view of possibilities which are put forward by the task of educating every day

INTRODUCCIÓN

For those of us who work in the field of education, expressions of violence with the school as the backdrop have become a constant matter for reflection and analysis. The concept of violence itself is still the subject of many debates, its being a polysemous and multicausal phenomenon. However, there is usually a consensus on the role the school plays as a producer and reinforcer of violent conduct, but also as a reproducer of violent situations of the scenery in which it is placed. That is to say, the school acts either as a generator of situations of violence or as a fierce sounding board of the context.

In the face of the apparently bleak scene, the proposal lies in finding possibilities for change, improving educational work, reinventing the meaning of the educational community, thinking of the school from the standpoint of its responsibilities, but above all from the standpoint of the possibilities which emanate from everyday educational work.

LOOKING GLASSES FOR OBSERVING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Violence in schools takes on complex forms; frequently its multiple expressions appear confusing and overwhelming. The tendency, almost always, consists of offering a close-up of the problem which reduces its causes to only one thing (in general to only one person, the "problem" student), linear or cause and effect. Besides, the role played by the adult is central: in the face of the conflict, he or she assumes the position of the expert, who gives solutions from the dogmatic, adult-centered viewpoint. This approach ignores the multiple sub-plots of meanings in an episode of violence, the actors involved and their perceptions.

Much has been written on the nature violence takes on in schools; however, I will share some approaches which I

consider should always be put on the table when talking about the subject:

- We must understand violence as a learned behavior in a specific culture, and a specific place in time. Positions which argue in favor of the biological origin of the expressions of violence ignore the central role played in the cultural context in day to day practice.
- An act of violence infringes on the physical and psychological integrity, but also infringes on social ties. It breaks relations, harms the people involved, no matter what role they play.
- There is a kind of normalization of violent acts which, being considered permissible behavior, are socially legitimized and validated. In school it is frequent to hear, "it's child play" which





EXIGIMOS:

LA NACIONALIZACIÓN INMEDIATA DE LA ESCUELA
EDUCATIVA (CASTRO)
DE ALTO NIVEL A LA INTELIGENCIA ESCOLAR POPULAR
CENTRAL EN CONTRA DEL MALGRADO
NUESTRO PRECATIVO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN MEDIA
Y SUPERIOR
SOPORTE DE LAS ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS CON
ECONOMÍA DE PERSONAL
AUTONOMÍA DE LAS INSTRUCCIONES PARA EL
BONO BIENESTAR Y LA COMPARACIÓN ESCOLAR
CON LA CÁMARA DE BAMBÚ Y CEMENTO
POR LOS ESTUDIANTES

ESCUELA

LMYE
DUB

Soylo
Escuela

naturalizes violent practices and allows them to continue to take place.

- Besides, in the array of expressions of violence, mistreatment which is played out in silence is still unknown territory; it is not thought of as violence, it is not lived nor perceived as such and, therefore, it is not talked about. The exclusion which some students live with is an example of a form of quite subtle violence, hard for educational actors to perceive, but with harmful consequences for the person who lives the situation. That is why it is important to shed light on this form of violence, denaturalizing it and making its impact visible.
- Key to its understanding is the fact that there are not only more episodes of violence within schools, but also that these forms are new, they did not exist before. A clear example is the use of new information and communication technologies to perpetrate violence on a classmate. Thus, the answers we thought we had before to confront violence, must be reconsidered today in the light of these new forms of violence.
- In the face of any episode of violence, violence itself seems to be the strategy most used. This from absolute places, from places where dialogue is not probable, where vertical ties predominate, places of hierarchy and subordination.
- Without a doubt, the commitment should be prevention. Earmarking time and resources for preventive strategies makes an impact on the school sphere quickly, promoting the learning of peaceful coexistence.

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Education can be understood as an inalienable right, which does not "expire", but es-

pecially as a multiplier, which opens the door to exercising other rights (economic, cultural, etc.). Far from being a "service" offered by the State or a private sphere, education emerges as a fundamental right, which opens the game to other rights (Muñoz, 2011) and which allows us to build a decent life.

Nevertheless, it is well known that at school serious violations of the fundamental rights of children take place. The present-day school, sadly, is usually thought of as a space where children are deposited, as a stage filled with hopelessness, under the law of "every child for himself". Today the very sense of going to school is blurry, diffuse.

The challenge consists of returning the sense of the task of the school, reconstructing the educational community and recovering the type of education which respects dialogue, participation and diversity.

School produces subjectivity; it creates social ties, and can help us to learn to get along with others, building a foundation for any kind of learning: trusting each other in order to dream together of a different scenario. At school, we can be the subject of rights and being subjects of rights is the same as participating and acting in a public space. School can allow us to recover that social being, in order from that point on, to mend hope and build democratic scenarios in which the right of all of its integrants are not only respected, but in which they may be taken on as a new way of life, as a daily practice. (Klainer, 2007)

Thus, school is a privileged space in which we may learn about human rights and values, and live them, with a strong sense of congruence. That is to say, learning to be respected, living this respect on a daily basis; learning to be supportive, living that support, etc. And it is also possible to look at oneself critically, with the purpose of proposing to open up the game to change.



Promoting a culture of peace at school is also responding to the structural violence which is carried out through inequality, social injustice and discrimination. It is opening up public spaces which promote peaceful coexistence.

It is a complex challenge, but the answers are relatively simple. It is necessary to build a conscience on the need to educate for coexistence, with a focus on human rights, which will spearhead our strategies, our actions. Debardieux (2001) talks about the so-called "school effect", whose main idea is the following: it is sufficient for there to be a school that improves something, even minimally, for this to really improve. That is to say, the school can definitely become a space for the prevention of violence, and an instrument for peace. The debate, without a doubt, should take place within the community itself, which will lend meaning to the educational project, adopting it and putting it in progress.

Then, thinking of today's school brings us brutally near a scenario of hopeless-

ness from which to begin to think about how to build hope, reconstruct the social fabric, rearm ourselves and work together for honorable and lasting peace based on social justice, in which we may go from fear and mistrust to a democratic culture of peace. Maybe the main question to ask ourselves is how to make human rights the ethical foundation of society, which would act as guidelines for daily ties, at school, in the neighborhood and in the community.

And then I find in these words the point of departure for change: let nothing that goes on in school be outside our vision. Let us become outraged with injustice, learning to be rebels and to answer, in a non-violent way to what challenges us, what moves us. Let us look at the other (the one who is the same and the one who is different) through looking glasses of respect, thinking of him or her as an ally, another member of the educational community, an actor of shared change.

Bibliography

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